

The Texas and American Revolutions: A Document-Based Essay Question (DBQ)  
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### **Background and Procedure**

This document-based question is similar to those found in the Advanced Placement U.S. History exam. It presents students with a series of primary source documents and requires them to answer a question using both their own knowledge of a given topic and the information within the provided sources. Prior to writing this essay – which I would give as a take-home, ‘open book’ assignment due to the breadth of information required – students will have already completed units of study on both the American Revolution and the Texas War for Independence. Because the events that those two topics entail took place decades apart, the optimal time for this assignment would be immediately following the study of the Texas Revolution, or at the conclusion of the semester in which both the Texas and American Revolutions have been addressed.

### **Objectives**

Through the completion of this assignment, students will:

- Demonstrate their knowledge of both the American and Texas Revolutions
- Interact with and utilize primary source documents from the periods 1775-1783 and 1835-36
- Practice academic writing, with a focus on the document-based question format

### **Adaptations**

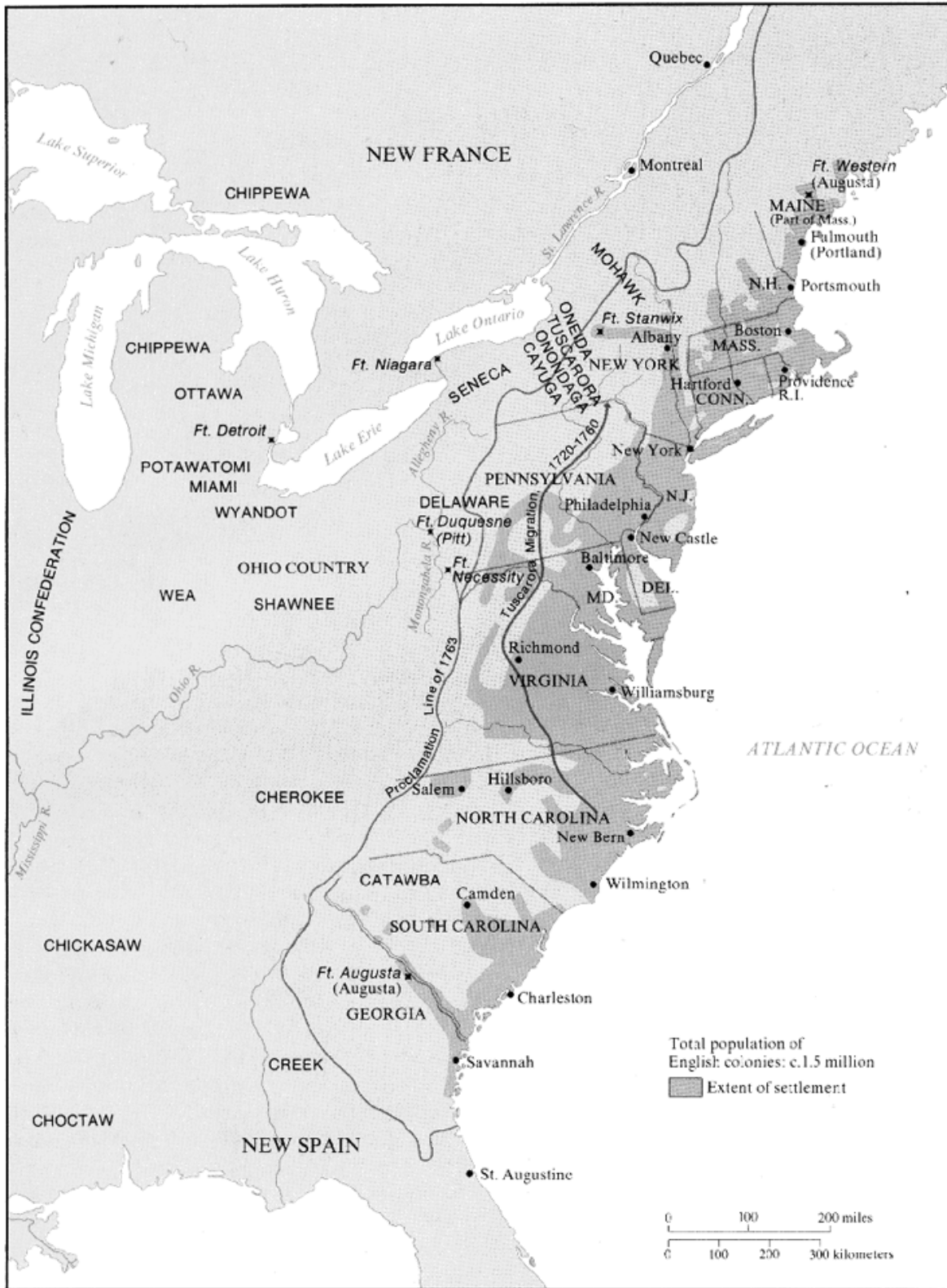
Special education students and English language learners may struggle to comprehend the primary source documents, or may experience difficulty beginning the assignment itself. For all students, a teacher-led pre-writing session in class (brainstorming, as a group, possible similarities and differences between the two revolutions through the construction of a ‘T chart’ on the chalkboard) may be beneficial upon issuance of the assignment. The teacher may also wish to provide struggling students with a shorter list of primary sources, as well as guiding questions that will allow the student to identify the most useful information within each source. Gifted or advanced students should be encouraged to locate and employ additional primary sources in the construction of their essays.

### **Grading Procedures**

I place a heavy emphasis on writing technique and mechanics, and will have my students peer-review one another’s essays (albeit for writing mechanics, not content). They will then submit a final copy of their essays. I have not provided a rubric with this lesson because the grade and skill level of your students (and the depth of your study of each topic) will determine appropriate grading procedures. Regardless, grading should reflect student knowledge of each topic, meaningful use of primary sources, ability to identify commonalities and differences between each revolution, and writing mechanics.



Document B: Atlantic Colonies in 1750



## Document C: Excerpts from the Texas Declaration of Independence (Adopted March 2, 1836)

The Mexican government, by its colonization laws, invited and induced the Anglo-American population of Texas to colonize its wilderness under the pledged faith of a written constitution....In this expectation they have been cruelly disappointed, inasmuch as the Mexican nation has acquiesced in the late changes made in the government by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who having overturned the constitution of his country, now offers us the cruel alternative, either to abandon our homes, acquired by so many privations, or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny, the combined despotism of the sword and the priesthood....

It has sacrificed our welfare to the state of Coahuila, by which our interests have been continually depressed through a jealous and partial course of legislation, carried on at a far distant seat of government, by a hostile majority, in an unknown tongue.....

It incarcerated in a dungeon, for a long time, one of our citizens, for no other cause but a zealous endeavor to procure the acceptance of our constitution, and the establishment of a state government.

It has failed and refused to secure, on a firm basis, the right of trial by jury, that palladium of civil liberty, and only safe guarantee for the life, liberty, and property of the citizen.

It has suffered the military commandants, stationed among us, to exercise arbitrary acts of oppression and tyranny, thus trampling upon the most sacred rights of the citizens, and rendering the military superior to the civil power.

It has dissolved, by force of arms, the state Congress of Coahuila and Texas, and obliged our representatives to fly for their lives from the seat of government, thus depriving us of the fundamental political right of representation.

It has made piratical attacks upon our commerce, by commissioning foreign desperadoes, and authorizing them to seize our vessels, and convey the property of our citizens to far distant ports for confiscation.

It denies us the right of worshipping the Almighty according to the dictates of our own conscience, by the support of a national religion, calculated to promote the temporal interest of its human functionaries, rather than the glory of the true and living God.

It has demanded us to deliver up our arms, which are essential to our defence, the rightful property of freemen, and formidable only to tyrannical governments.

It has invaded our country both by sea and by land, with intent to lay waste our territory, and drive us from our homes; and has now a large mercenary army advancing, to carry on against us a war of extermination.

It has, through its emissaries, incited the merciless savage, with the tomahawk and scalping knife, to massacre the inhabitants of our defenseless frontiers.

## Document D: Excerpts from the United States Declaration of Independence (Adopted July 4, 1776)

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury: For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

**Document E: Broadside to Recruit Volunteers for the Texas War for Independence (1836)**

*FREEDOM'S call once more summons us to action! Humanity beckons-Philanthropy beseeches-Duty Commands us to hasten to the rescue of our fellow countrymen!... to fly to the succour of our fellow citizens, and avenge the slaughter of our butchered brethren.*

*The Texians are, emphatically, "blood of our blood, and bone of our bone:" they confidently cast their eyes to the United States for assistance in their struggle for Independence. Shall they be disappointed? Shall the blood of Fannin, Travis, Bowie, Crockett, and a host of other martyrs of Freedom, have been shed in vain? Look to yon fearful pile upon which are stretched the yet struggling forms of those victims of Mexican duplicity, and worse than savage barbarity!-See! the torch is applied, and now the awful, deafening shriek ensues! Anon, the curling smoke ascends towards Heaven, and bones and ashes are the sad remnants of our countrymen! Who does not cry aloud for vengeance? Who does not burn with impatience to chastise the Mexican bloodhounds?....*

*Each Volunteer serving 3 months, shall receive 320 acres of land...2110 acres of land if a single man-and if a married man he shall receive 5240 acres of land.... History does not furnish so wide and fertile a field for enterprise as ever having been presented to the view of any People.*

*Rally, Fellow-countrymen, rally! Thousands of our citizens from the South and from the West are pouring into Texas-some of our greatest and best men are to be found among the number; will you be backward when the cause of Freedom is at hazard? No! I know you better: -You will prove true to your ancestors, true to yourselves, and true to your posterity!*

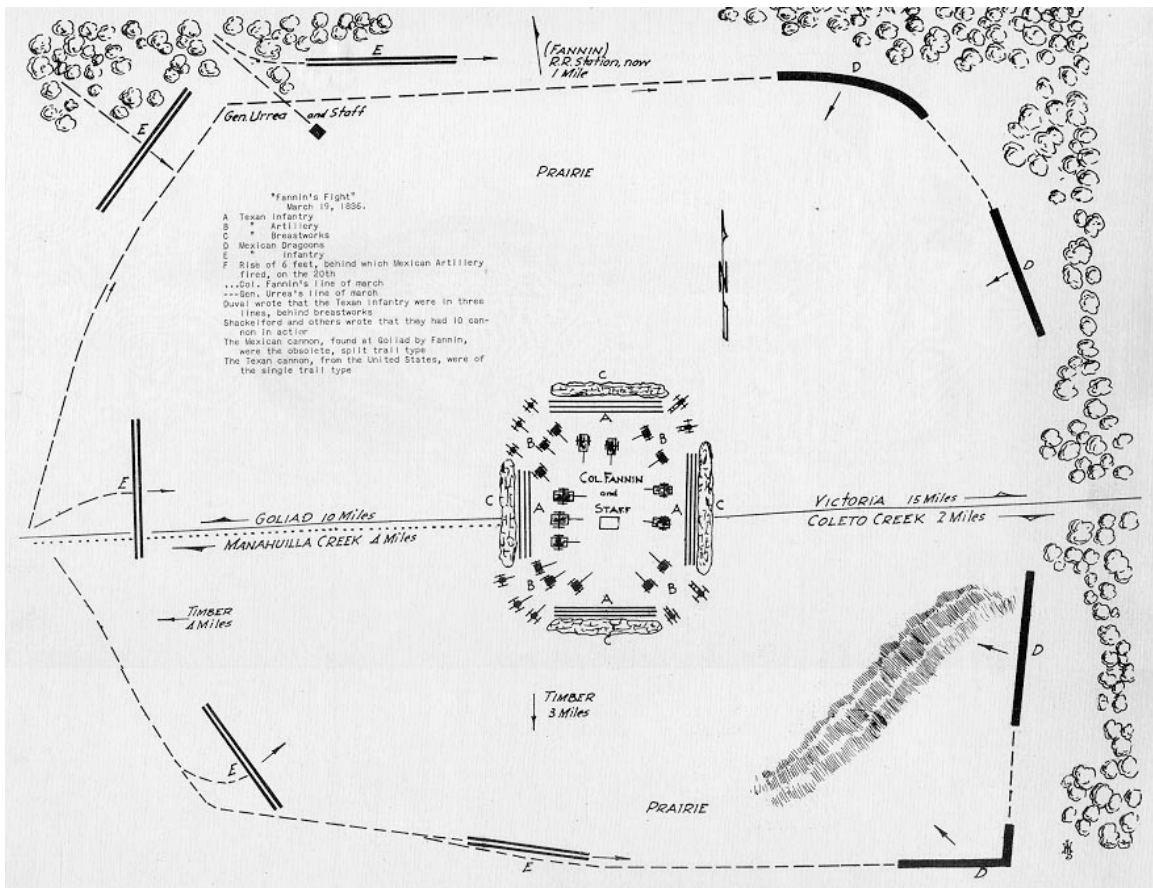




**Document G: Account of the Battle of Goliad (La Bahia or Coletto) by Andrew A. Boyle (1836)**  
**Map by unknown Illustrator**

On the 17th of March the enemy appeared on the opposite side of the River from us. We sent over a skirmishing party of one company under Capt. Shackelford's command I think, who had an engagement with the enemy, we watching from the ramparts with the most intense anxiety... On the following day the enemy appeared in force at the same place, orders were given by Col. Fanning to bake bread sufficient for several days and carry dried beef sufficient for the same length of time, the guns were taken down from the bastions and orders were also given to be ready to march before day light in the morning; from some cause unknown to me, we did not evacuate the Fort until between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning; we marched down the river and crossed at a ford below which we effected without difficulty. Our object in crossing below instead of at the upper ford in front of the Old Mission, was to avoid if possible an action with the enemy, (he outnumbering us at least six to one) and to get into the interior of Texas and join Genl Houston's Army; we continued our march until we crossed a creek called Manawee distant from the crossing of the river about three miles, we traveled slowly, our cannon and baggage wagons being drawn by oxen, a halt was called and we ate some breakfast.

After breakfast the march was continued, nothing new transpiring until about 12 o'clock, P.M., the Mexicans were then descried on our left and rear, their cavalry approached us rapidly, seemingly with the intention of cutting us off from the timber of the Colett creek, they fired a few shots at us... we then unlimbered our pieces (six in all) formed ourselves into a hollow square, placing the baggage wagons, hospital wagon and magazine in the centre.... I was shot in the right leg, a little above the ankle about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. After the enemy retreated then commenced our real trouble, the wounded cried for water and we had none to give them, some of our men dug for water, others threw up entrenchments expecting to continue the fight the next day.... Col Fanning was slightly wounded in the thigh, I lay close by him that night and hearing my groans, he kindly offered me his good leg for a pillow.



### Document H: Passages From the Diary of Albigenice Waldo, Surgeon at Valley Forge (1777)

December 8: All at our Several Posts. Provisions and Whiskey very scarce. Were Soldiers to have plenty of Food and Rum, I believe they would Storm Tophet...

December 11: At four o'clock the Whole Army were Order'd to March to Swedes Ford on the River Schuylkill, about 9 miles N.W. of Chestnut Hill, and 6 from White Marsh our present Encampment. At sun an hour high the whole were mov'd from the Lines and on their march with baggage. This Night encamped in a Semi circle nigh the Ford. The enemy had march'd up the West side of Schuylkill - Potter's Brigade if Pennsylvania Militia were already there, and had several skirmishes with them with some loss on this side and considerable on the Enemies....

I am prodigious Sick and cannot get anything comfortable - what in the name of Providence am I to do with a fit of Sickness in this place where nothing appears pleasing to the Sicken'd Eye and nauseating Stomach. But I doubt not Providence will find out a way for my relief. But I cannot eat Beef if I starve, for my stomach positively refuses to entertain such Company, and how can I help that?

December 12: A Bridge of Waggons made accross the Schuylkill last Night consisting of 36 waggons, with a bridge of Rails between them each. Some skirmishing over the River. Militia and dragoons brought into Camp several Prisoners. Sun Set - We were order'd to march over the River - It snows - I'm Sick - eat nothing - No Whiskey - No Forage - Lord - Lord - Lord. The Army were 'till Sun Rise crossing the River - some at the Waggon Bridge and some at the Raft Bridge below. Cold and uncomfortable.

### Document I: The Treaty of Velasco, as negotiated by Santa Anna and the Republic of Texas (1836)

Articles of an agreement entered into between his Excellency David G. Burnet ~~of the~~ President of the Republic of Texas of the one part & His Excellency General Antonio Lopez de Santa Ana President General in Chief of the other part--

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna agrees that he will not take up arms nor will he exercise his influence to cause them to be taken up against the People of Texas during the present War of Independance--

All hostilities between the Mexican & Texian troops will cease immediately both on land & water-- The Mexican troops will evacuate the territory of Texas passing to the other side of the Rio Grande del Norte

The Mexican Army in its retreat shall not take the property of any person without his consent & just indemnification, using only such articles as may be necessary for its subsistence....

That all private property including cattle, horses, negro slaves or indentured persons of whatever denomination that may have been captured by any portion of the Mexican Army or may have taken refuge in the said army since the commencement of the late invasion shall be restored to the Commander of the Texian Army or to such other persons as may be appointed by the Government of Texas to receive them--

The troops of both armies will refrain from coming into contact with each other & to this end the Commander in Chief of the Army of Texas will be careful not to approach within a shorter distance of the Mexican Army than five leagues

That all Texian prisoners now in possession of the Mexican Army be forthwith released & furnished with free passports to return to their homes in consideration of which a corresponding number of rank & file now in possession of the Government of Texas shall be immediately released.....

Genl Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna will be sent to Vera Cruz as soon as it shall be deemed proper --

### **Document J: Passages from the Yorktown Article of Capitulation (1781)**

Settled between his Excellency General Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the combined Forces of America and France; his Excellency the Count de Rochambeau, Lieutenant-General of the Armies of the King of France.....and the Right Honorable Earl Cornwallis.....

#### **Article I**

The garrisons of York and Gloucester, including the officers and seamen of his Britannic Majesty's ships, as well as other mariners, to surrender themselves prisoners of war to the combined forces of America and France. The land troops to remain prisoners to the United States, the navy to the naval army of his Most Christian Majesty....

#### **Article IV**

.... It is understood that any property obviously belonging to the inhabitants of these States, in the possession of the garrison, shall be subject to be reclaimed....

### **Document K: Passages from the Treaty of Paris (1783)**

It having pleased the Divine Providence to dispose the hearts of the most serene and most potent Prince George the Third.....and of the United States of America, to forget all past misunderstandings and differences that have unhappily interrupted the good correspondence and friendship which they mutually wish to restore, and to establish such a beneficial and satisfactory intercourse, between the two countries upon the ground of reciprocal advantages and mutual convenience as may promote and secure to both perpetual peace and harmony....

His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States... to be free sovereign and independent states, that he treats with them as such, and for himself, his heirs, and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety, and territorial rights of the same and every part thereof.

And that all disputes which might arise in future on the subject of the boundaries of the said United States may be prevented, it is hereby agreed and declared, that the following are and shall be their boundaries, viz.; from the northwest angle of Nova Scotia, viz., that angle which is formed by a line drawn due north from the source of St. Croix River to the highlands; along the said highlands which divide those rivers that empty themselves into the river St. Lawrence, from those which fall into the Atlantic Ocean, to the northwesternmost head of Connecticut River.....etc.....

There shall be a firm and perpetual peace between his Britannic Majesty and the said states, and between the subjects of the one and the citizens of the other, wherefore all hostilities both by sea and land shall from henceforth cease. All prisoners on both sides shall be set at liberty, and his Britannic Majesty shall with all convenient speed, and without causing any destruction, or carrying away any Negroes or other property of the American inhabitants, withdraw all his armies, garrisons, and fleets from the said United States, and from every post, place, and harbor within the same; leaving in all fortifications, the American artillery that may be therein....