

Section

1

The U.S.–Mexican War

Main Ideas

1. The United States and Mexico went to war over issues involving Texas and California.
2. Many Texans took part in the U.S.–Mexican War.
3. The United States defeated Mexico in 1847.

Why It Matters Today

Despite efforts from some Americans, the United States and Mexico went to war in 1846. Use current events sources to learn about peace efforts around the world today.



TEKS: 4C, 9A, 9C,
21B, 21C, 21D, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the Mexican War.

Key Terms and People

- Zachary Taylor
- John S. “Rip” Ford
- offensive
- Winfield Scott

The Story Continues

U.S. lieutenant Napoleon Dana was stationed with his fellow soldiers along the Rio Grande. He had been sent there from Louisiana by the government, which expected war. There he waited, anticipating a fight with Mexico. Many of the troops were becoming anxious, eager to prove themselves in battle. Dana, who dearly missed his wife, wrote a letter home. “Here we are at a dead standstill, doing nothing. . . . I wish I had all of my glory and was on my way home again.”



Fighting Breaks Out

The border conflict in which Dana took part arose from tensions between Mexico and the United States. Many Mexicans were unhappy about the annexation of Texas. They feared that annexation was just the first step and that the United States wanted to take over all of Mexico.

The conflict between Mexico and the United States was not new. For several years, Mexico had claimed that the Nueces River was the boundary between the two countries. The United States, on the other hand, maintained the old Republic of Texas claim to the Rio Grande as the boundary. In addition, the Mexican government had ordered many American settlers to leave California, which was still a Mexican territory. Many U.S. citizens also wanted to be paid for damage done to their businesses and property in Mexico.

In November 1845 President James K. Polk sent John Slidell to Mexico to settle the disputes. Slidell was authorized to purchase New Mexico and California. However, Mexican officials refused to meet with him. With conflict brewing, Polk ordered General **Zachary Taylor** and thousands of soldiers to Texas. Their mission was to protect the new state from any attack. When Taylor's troops arrived along the Rio Grande in March 1846, they discovered Mexican troops camped across the river. Taylor ordered his men to build a fort near what is now Brownsville.

In early April, a Mexican general sent a message to Taylor, ordering him to return to the east bank of the Nueces. Taylor refused. In response, Mexican cavalry crossed the Rio Grande and attacked. Several U.S. soldiers were killed or wounded, and many more were taken captive.

The next day, Taylor sent word to Washington that fighting had begun. When Polk heard this news, he asked Congress to declare war. Congress acted swiftly, and the U.S.–Mexican War was declared on May 13, 1846. The war is also called the Mexican–American War or simply the Mexican War. Even before the declaration of war reached the border, though, more fighting had broken out. On May 8 and 9, U.S. troops fought General Mariano Arista's advancing forces at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma near Fort Brown. Taylor won both battles.

Reading Check Analyzing Information What role did the Rio Grande play in the outbreak of the U.S.–Mexican War?



VIDEO

The Mexican–American War

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The U.S.–Mexican War, 1846–1848

Interpreting Maps After only a few months of fighting, U.S. forces had gained control of much of the territory north of Mexico City.

1. Place and Regions What region of Texas saw the most conflict during the U.S.–Mexican War?

2. Drawing Inferences and Conclusions How do you think geographic factors such as mountains, rivers, and gulfs affected the war?



Interpreting Visuals

The U.S.–Mexican War. One of the most critical moments of the war came when General Winfield Scott captured the Mexican port of Veracruz. What information about conditions during the war can you gather from this painting?

Analyzing Primary Sources

Finding the Main Idea Why does DeMorse believe that Texans would support the war against Mexico?



Texans in the War

Thousands of volunteers rushed to join the army when the call for war came. In Texas, many people welcomed a chance to fight against their old rival Santa Anna. They wanted to get revenge for the suffering Texans had experienced during the Revolution. One Texas newspaper editor expressed delight at the coming of war.

TEXAS VOICES

“There is at last . . . an opportunity to pay off a little of the debt of vengeance which has been accumulating since the massacre of the Alamo. . . . We trust that every man of our army . . . will think of his countrymen martyred at the Alamo, at Goliad, and at Mier.”

—Charles DeMorse, quoted in *Documents of Texas History*, edited by Ernest Wallace

Some 6,000 Texans volunteered to fight in the U.S.–Mexican War. Even Governor James Pinckney Henderson temporarily left office to serve in the army. Former president of Texas Mirabeau B. Lamar and Texas revolutionary Albert Sidney Johnston also volunteered. However, a few Texans, including Juan Seguín—a veteran of the Texas Revolution—fought for Mexico. Seguín had fled Texas in 1842 after being accused of aiding Mexican troops attacking Texas. When he arrived in Mexico, he was forced to fight or be arrested.

Several of the Texas Rangers who joined the U.S. forces during the war served as scouts. As one Ranger claimed, “[we] were . . . the eyes and ears of Taylor’s army.” The Rangers’ fame as fighters spread quickly. Several Rangers, including **John S. “Rip” Ford**, Jack Coffee Hays, and Ben McCulloch, were recognized for their leadership and bravery.

Some Rangers’ actions caused problems, however. At times they refused to follow the orders of U.S. Army officers. Rangers occasionally attacked Mexican villages with little reason, prompting General Taylor to threaten to throw all the Rangers in jail. Many Mexicans feared the Rangers, calling them *los diablos Tejanos*—“the Texas devils.”

Reading Check Evaluating How did Texas Rangers participate in the war?

★ A U.S. Victory

After winning a few battles in Texas, Taylor began an **offensive**—a major troop advance—into northern Mexico. He defeated a Mexican army at Monterrey and pushed farther into Mexico. In 1847 Taylor's troops met a larger Mexican army at Buena Vista. After two days of fighting, Santa Anna's forces retreated. Texas Rangers played key roles at Buena Vista and Monterrey.

Because of his success at Buena Vista, Taylor became a national hero. President Polk was not happy about the general's new popularity, and he decided to replace Taylor as commander of the army. The new commander was **Winfield Scott**.

Scott chose to pursue a different strategy than Taylor had. He sailed to Veracruz, which had the strongest fortress in Mexico. After a long artillery battle, Scott took control of the city. He then moved inland. Santa Anna tried desperately to stop the U.S. advance, but he failed. By August 1847, Scott had reached Mexico City.

Scott ordered a massive attack on the city. Fighting took place in the streets and even on the rooftops. Finally, on September 14, 1847, Mexico City fell. U.S. troops raised the American flag over the National Palace in victory. Of the approximately 116,000 U.S. soldiers who served in the war, nearly 13,000 lost their lives. Most of these soldiers died not in battle but from disease. More than 60 Texans died in battle, and more than 270 more died from disease or accidents. The war with Mexico had cost the United States nearly \$98 million. In Mexico, countless lives were lost, and much property was destroyed.

Reading Check Sequencing List in order the events that led to the U.S. victory in the U.S.–Mexican War.

BIOGRAPHY

Jack Coffee Hays

(1817–1883) John Coffee "Jack" Hays became one of the most famous of the Texas Rangers. According to one legend, while fighting American Indians at Enchanted Rock, Hays became separated from his men. He held off the Indians for more than an hour until he was rescued. Hays's fame grew during the Mexican War. He and the Rangers fought hand to hand with Mexican soldiers at Monterrey. Hays also fought in other important battles. He died in California in 1883. **How did Hays make a place for himself in Texas history?**



Section 1 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- offensive

2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following in Texas history:

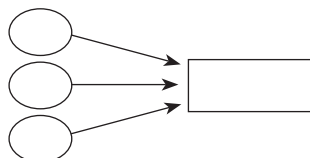
- Zachary Taylor
- John S. "Rip" Ford
- Winfield Scott

3. Locate on a map:

- Rio Grande
- Brownsville

4. Identifying Cause and Effect

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show what problems arose between the United States and Mexico, and what the outcome was.



5. Finding the Main Idea

- a. What issues led to the outbreak of the U.S.–Mexican War?
- b. How did Texans and the Texas Rangers participate in the U.S.–Mexican War?

6. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Supporting a Point of View Write a story from either the Mexican or Texan perspective about the political and military events that led to the U.S.–Mexican War.

Consider the following:

- the causes of tension
- the U.S. and Mexican troops stationed along the Rio Grande