

This is an excellent example of a high school level super-essay.

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A Captivating Land

As far as the eye could see, there was land. A couple thousand Spanish Mexicans inhabited this land and reaped abundant bales of cotton from the dark, rich, fertile soil of Texas. Life for the Spaniards and their families was simple and *untroubled- until* the Americans arrived. Texas was soon discovered by settlers from the United States, and they scrambled to establish new homes in the land with the glorious soil. *“Who do these Anglo think they are, coming into our homeland and planting in our soil? They promise to respect our laws and obey our rules, but who knows?”* the Spaniards complained to one another in the privacy of their haciendas. The swarming settlers would soon be the cause of many years of strife and conflict between the Mexicans and the Texans. Ultimately, it would lead to a bloody battle at a little Spanish mission called the **Alamo**, and an aggressive **war** that would lead to Texas’s independence.

Before Texas became independent, its vast lands were ruled by Mexico, and its inhabitants consisted of Spanish farmers, priests, and cowboys. However, as the years passed, Americans began to develop an interest in Texas, and settlers quickly swarmed to start new lives there. While the Mexican government expected the new settlers to heed their strict laws about religion and citizenship, Texas continued to tantalize Americans with its enormity and rich soil despite the heavy hand of the government. Gradually, the American **empresarios** began to cause discord between themselves and the **Mexicans** by veering to other religions and

laws instead of converting to Catholicism and obeying the Mexican laws as they had promised. While the empresarios brought issues, another significant event was taking place in Mexico city: a popular general named **Santa Anna** had won the election over the previous president. In later years, his actions and **laws** would be despised by many Texans. This conglomeration of events ultimately led up to a bloody **battle** between the American settlers and Santa Anna's army in **San Antonio**, but the battle of the Alamo was a necessary event in order for the Texans to gain freedom from Mexico.

Mexico had barely become independent from Spain when they began to encounter **issues** with one of its states, Texas, and the uprising of new American settlers in the **empresarios**. [2] In 1820, a Missouri banker, Moses Austin, requested permission from San Antonio officials to establish a colony with other Americans in Texas. [3] Regrettably, Austin died before his ambition could be effectuated, so his son, Stephen F. Austin, guided three hundred eager families into Texas without his father. [4] Approving the continuation of the empresarios in Texas, the United States agreed that the Americans would comply to the Mexican laws, become citizens, and convert to Catholicism. [5] While the Mexicans expected their rules to be heeded, the settlers deprecated the regulations and refused to amend their religion, not to mention the fact that they illicitly brought slaves into Mexico. [6] The settler's rebellion quickly escalated. 1830 only brought additional **exasperation** against the **empresarios**, so the **Mexicans** impeded the constant flow of immigrants to Texas, but little did they know that their actions would bring unpredicted consequences.

[5] As the Texans and Mexicans continued to create pandemonium, a general by the name of Antonio Lopez de **Santa Anna** was elected president of Mexico, but his future and administration of **new laws** would cause numerous Texans to abhor him. [4] Defeating the

previous Mexican president in the election, Santa Anna surely felt empowered because the year following his inauguration he appointed himself dictator. Boldly, Santa Anna contravened the promised freedoms of the Mexican constitution, much to the population's dismay. Santa Anna then passed a new law, stating that Texans would not be allowed to own a gun without the permission of the Mexican government. [6] The Texans were livid. [2] In 1835, the Texans revolted, which muddled the situation even further. [3] Furiously, they refused to obey this dramatically outrageous law and gathered together fifty-nine delegates and formed a constitution for Texas, and then they commissioned a burly and stalwart man named Sam Houston to be the general of their new army. Despite the ridiculous **new laws** that their controlling **dictator** had implemented, Texans strove for the unconstrained life that they had always hoped for.

1836 held unforeseen loss for the Texas army in the **battle** against the Mexicans in **San Antonio**. [4] Prepared for battle, the Texans awaited the arrival of Santa Anna and his men while assuming they were weeks away. The Mexicans marched on San Antonio, surprising the Texans, who were now only hours away. [3] Hastily, William Travis led the Texas army to the Alamo, which was encircled by walls of stone. [5] As the Mexicans drew closer, Travis sent a rider to deliver a plea for help, saying, "I shall never surrender or retreat...If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due his own honor and that of his country. VICTORY OR DEATH" (Bauer 369-370). [6] A reply never came. [2] For twelve days, both sides mercilessly battled each other, but on the thirteenth day, the Mexicans burst through the walls of the fort, killing all of the Texans in only half an hour. The battle of the Alamo in **San Antonio** left one soldier,

a sparse number of women and children, and a single slave alive to tell the story, but **1836** was not over yet, and victory was on the horizon for the Texans.

The occurrences that followed the Texans' downfall were anything but peaceful. The defeat of Travis's army in **San Antonio** only enraged other Texans. Thoughts of revenge consumed their minds. Despite his victory, **Santa Anna** was incandescent over the empresarios who continued to ignore his **laws**. He snarled threats against not only Texans, but the United States as well. Maintaining their courage, the Texans continued to fight for their independence. Another **battle** was to come, only this time Santa Anna's army would be vanquished.

The battle of the Alamo may have been over, but Texas had yet to claim victory. Texans were anxious to gain independence from the oppressive Santa Anna, and **Houston** was their ticket to **victory**. In San Jacinto, the despised dictator undoubtedly built up some bitterness towards the Texans. Although he signed a treaty recognizing Texas as independent, Santa Anna was not going to cease fighting against them until all of his hope was depleted. Texas **joined** the **United States** in 1845 after much advocating from Houston. Unanimity was not reached until after a brief **war** that would end the tumult between Mexico and Texas.

In the same year that all of the Texans were brutally slaughtered by the Mexicans at the Alamo, **Houston** would have a chance to **retaliate** against Santa Anna in **San Jacinto** and claim a much desired victory. [3] Menacingly, Santa Anna threatened the Texans by declaring that he would cut them all into pieces if they fought against him (Bauer 370). [2] In April of 1836, Houston gathered nine hundred brave men to fight Santa Anna, and although they knew that they were considerably outnumbered, the Texans were clever. [4] Camped near the Texas army, Santa Anna underestimated the meagerly-sized ragtag group of Texans and disregarded

any precautions that he could have taken to protect his own army, including putting watchmen around the camp. [5] As the Mexicans dozed during their siesta hour, incognizant of their vulnerability, the Texans assailed the camp, leaving Santa Anna and his followers understandably flummoxed. [6] The attack was remarkably quick. In less than twenty minutes, the supposedly inadequate Texans had captured seven hundred men and killed seven hundred more, which was a legitimate reason for the Mexicans to surrender. **Houston reciprocated** the taste of defeat to Santa Anna in **San Jacinto**, and surely this victory would indicate independence and a secession from Mexico.

Independence for the **Texans** was not obtained easily, yet they vigorously persisted in their endeavor, which eventually led to them **joining** the **United States**. [5] After the battle in San Jacinto, Santa Anna was forced to sign a treaty that would recognize Texas as independent. The new republic of Texas held its first election, which resulted in Houston being elected president. [2] As president, Houston wanted Texas to join the United States, but one problem stood in his way. [3] Immediately, the issue of slavery surfaced as Congress raised concerns about the dilemma of voting. [5] If Texas were to become a state, Southern states would have more votes in Congress than the North, and talk of this spread across the country and left everyone in a quandary. [6] Years of fervent arguing ensued. [4] Agreeing to accept **Texas** as **part** of the **United States** on March 1, 1845, Congress wrote, “Be it resolved that a state, to be formed out of the present Republic of Texas...with two representatives in Congress...shall be admitted into the Union...on an equal footing with the existing states” (Bauer 372).

[5] While many may have believed that peace would be restored to the two countries once Texas became independent, chaos was round the corner yet again as the **war** between **Mexico** and the **United States** was about to begin. Mexico wasted no time in protesting that

Texas had stolen their land, so the United States declared war on Mexico, which caused a terrible disturbance in Congress since many Congressmen disapproved of the war. [3] Courageously, an abolitionist named Frederick Douglass wrote about how those who were rejoicing over bloody battles and triumphing in taking Mexico's land should hang their heads in shame (Hakim 64). [2] According to Walt Whitman, then a young journalist, "America knows how to crush, as well as expand" (Hakim 65). [4] Riding through Mexico, Santa Anna begged for volunteers to fight against the United States, saying, "...I will devote myself til death to the defense of our liberty and independence" (Bauer 372-373). [6] His hope was brutally destroyed. Abraham Lincoln, a fairly new Congressman, believed it was wrong to demolish Mexico and send an army "into the midst of a peaceful Mexican settlement, frightening the inhabitants away, leaving their growing crops and other property to destruction" (Bauer 372). Santa Anna retreated and the United States celebrated a spectacular triumph once again, but it was said by Ulysses S. Grant that this war was "one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation" (Hakim 68).

The decision to declare war on Mexico after **Houston's** attack on **San Jacinto** and Santa Anna's objections to Mexico's boundary rights was a difficult one. Several members of Congress opposed the idea of war, but the majority ruled to attack Mexico. A few people believe that the **war** was cruel and unjust to the **Mexicans** and their homeland. Despite this, the United States did whatever it took for Texas to be free from Mexico. Equitably, the United States paid Mexico fifteen million dollars for Texas at the end of the war. The Mexican-American War was short, but it was essential to the **liberty** of **Texas**.

It may be hard to believe now that Texas was once a quiet nation filled with peaceful communities that were inhabited by humble priests, Indians, and nonviolent Mexican families.

Certainly the Mexicans were uneasy about the great multitude of Americans flooding into their homeland. The result was a terrible battle at the **Alamo** that led to a cruel **war**. Additionally, the only things Texas could offer to settlers were miles and miles of fertile soil. *Why would Austin bring three hundred families to a nation where there was no gold, no religious freedom, and established requirements for obeying the Mexican regulations?* His reasoning is somewhat peculiar, but one thing is for sure. Texas was a land of mystique and excitement, captivating adventurous settlers to explore its sweeping plains and infinite potential.

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Liberty for All?