

Texas Geography Theme (Grades 4 – 7)

Introduction –

The Texas Rangers were founded more than twenty years before Texas joined the United States. While the physical geography of the state has remained largely unaltered since 1823, the way that people use the land around them has changed significantly. Westward expansion, the livestock industry and the discovery of oil all helped to alter the face of our great state. Students in grades four through eight will explore the physical and cultural geography of Texas in relation to such concepts as scale, direction, land formations, population and regions.

Objectives –

- A. Examine historical photos, drawings, maps and other primary source documents pertaining to the Texas Rangers.
- B. Analyze how the effects of migration, industrialization and urbanization have impacted the responsibilities of the Texas Rangers. Consider the impact of these phenomena on the tools and modes of transportation of the Rangers.
- C. Recognize, through reasoning and critical thinking, how immigration, economic variables and physical geography determined the location of historic Ranger outposts as well as modern Ranger company headquarters.

Preparation and Materials–

Preparation:

The heritage of the Texas Rangers can be traced back to the histories of many great cultures and nations, including Mexico, the Republic of Texas, the Confederate States of America and the United States. The story of the Rangers is reflected in the expansion and settlement of the North American West. It contains within its pages the stories of heroes that fought and died for what they believed was right. Though political boundaries have changed numerous times since 1823, the Texas Rangers continue to interact with the surrounding environment on a daily basis.

Materials:

Specific activities in this thematic unit will require the following materials:

- Multiple chains in lengths of 20 feet; you may substitute lengths of chain for strands of string, yarn or ribbon. It is recommended that you have one chain or length of yarn or ribbon for every four students.
- Quarter inch graphing paper
- Rulers; may be substituted with another straight edge
- Clipboards or other writing surface
- Directional compasses
- Pencils
- Additional pads of paper for notes

Vocabulary and Key Terms –

Absolute Chronology

Altitude

Artifact

Battleground

Chronology

Climate

Culture

Cardinal Directions

Compass

Economy

Elevation

Emigration

Immigration

Industrial Revolution

Oil Boom

Landform

Latitude

Longitude

Population

Primary Source Documents

Region

Relative Chronology

Revolver

Secondary Source Documents

Scale

Surveying

Transportation

Vara Chain

Pre-Program Activities

- 1) Assign each student a modern Texas Ranger company ("A" through "G") and ask them to research several facts about their assigned group (e.g. where their headquarters is located, who the commanding officer is, the number of Rangers currently serving in the company, etc.). Ask students to determine what geographical region of Texas the company is located in, as well as the nature of the landscape around them (e.g. whether the area is largely urban/suburban or rural, what types of flora and fauna live in the area, what the climate is like, etc.). When the research is complete, students should create a poster or presentation board featuring a map of the region they researched as well as pertinent information regarding the company and geographical region. Alternatively, a PowerPoint or other multimedia presentation containing similar information can be developed and presented.

Presentation and Lesson

Introduction

- 1) Ask students what they think the primary responsibility of the Texas Rangers was between the years of 1823 to 1877.
- 2) Show historic photographs and other images of the Texas Rangers (see supporting images below). How did the clothes they wore and the equipment they carried fit in with the frontier lifestyle and the climate of Texas?
- 3) Discuss how the role of Texas Rangers has changed since 1935 and how the Ranger's have incorporated advancing technologies into their daily duties. Explain to the students how it is necessary for the Rangers to keep up with new technology because criminals may also have access to it. The advancements in automotive technology and aviation led to the widespread incorporation of automobiles, airplanes and helicopters into the Rangers arsenal, though the Rangers still use horses from time to time.

Lesson

- 1) Modern Texas Rangers do not go on patrol. Instead, they use cutting edge technology and many years of special training to track down and capture criminals wanted for crimes such as robbery and murder. However, the Texas Rangers were originally established in 1823 by Stephen F. Austin to provide frontier defense to settlers from attacks by Native Americans.
- 2) Early Texas Ranger forces were quite diverse in ethnic heritage, especially compared to the Ranger forces of the mid-twentieth century. These groups of men were often made up not only of white men, but men of Hispanic and Native American ancestry. Show historic photographs and images of the Rangers to the class. Ask students to comment on the Ranger's style of dress, as well as the equipment and tools they may be carrying. Because early ranging companies were very mobile, they were regularly exposed to varying environmental conditions.
- 3) Take a class tour or virtual tour of historic sites where important skirmishes and battles between Texans and Mexicans or Native Americans took place during the nineteenth century. Some of these battlegrounds are now honored as state parks or historic sites. Make note of key geographic features that may have played an important role in the conflict.

Assessment Activities

- 1) Create a new company of Texas Rangers and headquarter them in a city that does not currently serve as a modern Ranger company's headquarters. Rationalize the reason for locating the company in the new city. Provide support for the proposal by addressing issues such as population, economy, landforms and natural resources. Remember that modern Texas Ranger companies may be headquartered in one city but that their officers regularly work in a wide number of surrounding counties.
- 2) Research the manufacturers of historic or modern firearms, such as Colt, Winchester and Smith and Wesson. Where were their weapons made? What role did the introduction of the Colt Paterson and Colt Walker revolvers play in the defense of the Texas Frontier? Determine the distance from which your school is located to the city in which these firearm production facilities were located.
- 3) Graph the average temperatures and precipitations of cities with modern Ranger company headquarters. How do they compare with one another? How is a Ranger's job affected by the temperature or rainfall in a certain area? Write a short essay accompanying the graph that explains how historic ranging units may have dealt with the oftentimes harsh climate of the Texas frontier.
- 4) Utilizing equipment similar to that which historic Ranger surveyors used in the nineteenth century, including a compass and chain, draw a scaled map of your classroom or an outdoor area near your school. You will use the chain to measure distance (one chain is 20 feet long). Make sure to include a compass rose on your map to provide directions. Include any important landmarks such as walls, trees or playground equipment. *The "Preparation and Materials" section of this document lists the materials necessary for this activity.*

Additional Resources

A. Literature

Erath, Lucy A. The Memoirs of Major George B. Erath: 1813-1891. Texas State Historical Association, 1923.

Jordan, Terry J. Texas, a Geography. Westview Press, 1984.

Moore, Stephen L. Savage Frontier: Rangers, Riflemen and Indian Wars in Texas: Volume I. Republic of Texas Press, 2002.

Moore, Stephen L. Savage Frontier: Rangers, Riflemen and Indian Wars in Texas: Volume II. University of North Texas Press, 2006.

Moore, Stephen L. Savage Frontier: Rangers, Riflemen and Indian Wars in Texas: Volume III. University of North Texas Press, 2007.

Newcomb, W. W. The Indians of Texas: From Prehistoric to Modern Times. The University of Texas Press, 1961.

B. Web Links

www.texasranger.org

Official Site of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

www.txdps.state.tx.us

Official government site of the Texas Department of Public Safety

http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director_staff/texas_rangers/

Official government site of the Texas Department of Public Safety: Texas Rangers

www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/

The Handbook of Texas Online (Texas State Historical Association)

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/rivers/>

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department: Texas River Guide

www.amesinstrumentcompany.com/other.html

Ames Instrument Company; producer of historic surveying equipment

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Alignment

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, comprise the state-mandated curriculum that establish what every student, from elementary school through high school, should know and be able to do. They were developed to comply with §28.002(c) and (d) of the Texas Education Code and can be found in the Texas Administrative Code in Chapters 113 and 118.

This section is intended to inform teachers and administrators of the alignment of this theme to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. The Texas Geography thematic unit has been developed for use by teachers of students in the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh grades, though it is adaptable to accommodate students of other grade levels.

Alignment:

- 4.6 – The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze and interpret data.
- 4.7 – The student understands the concept of regions.
- 4.8 – The student understands the locations and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people live.
- 4.9 – The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment.
- 5.8 – The student understands the locations and patterns of settlement and the geographic factors that influence where people will live.
- 5.9 – The student understands how people adapt to and modify their environment.
- 6.5 – The student understands how geographic factors influence the economic development, political relationships and policies of societies.
- 6.7 – The student understands the impact of interactions between people and the physical environment on the development of places and regions.
- 7.8 – The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze and interpret data.
- 7.9 – The student understands the locations and characteristics of places and regions in Texas.
- 7.10 – The student understands the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas during the 19th and 20th centuries.