

Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence

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Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence

Standards: 4.62, 8.59

Essential Question: What roles did Sam Houston and David “Davy” Crockett play in Texas’ independence movement?

In the 1820’s Texas was a vast unsettled territory that belonged to Spain. To encourage settlement, Spain offered large tracts of land to agents, called *empresarios*, who promised to bring families to settle on the land. American Moses Austin received a land grant in 1821, but before he could claim it, Mexico declared its independence from Spain. Mexico eventually confirmed the grant which passed to Moses’ son Stephen Austin after Moses’ death. Austin selected 300 families to settle the land along the Brazos and Colorado rivers. To encourage settlement, Mexico offered the land at very low prices and promised not to tax the settlers for 4 years. In return settlers were supposed to learn Spanish, obey Mexican law and convert to Catholicism. However, few settlers kept these promises. Mexican authorities hoped to encourage citizens from other parts of Mexico to move to Texas, but the majority of the settlers were Americans who saw the potential for growing cotton in the fertile soil of East Texas. Most of the settlers were Southerners and many immigrated with their slaves.

By 1830, the Mexican government was fearful of the growing American influence in Texas and took measures to stop it. Mexico passed laws to stop the immigration of Americans, and placed a high tariff on goods imported from the United States. These new laws, along with Mexico’s decision to abolish slavery, created even more tension in Texas. Some American settlers began to call for independence, but Austin and others looked for a peaceful resolution. A number of small scale conflicts between Texans and the Mexican military occurred between 1830 and September, 1835. Due to the rising tensions, the Mexican military commander decided to retrieve a cannon that had been loaned to the town of Gonzales for its defense against Native American attacks. The citizens refused to return it and a battle resulted. The Texans were able to defeat the Mexican force and consider the Battle of Gonzales to be the first battle of the Texas Revolution. Following the Battle of Gonzales, Texas called for volunteers to join its army. Two Tennesseans, Sam Houston and David “Davy” Crockett answered the call.

Houston was already an well-known figure when he moved to Texas in 1833. Houston had served under Andrew Jackson in the Creek War and was wounded at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend. Jackson, impressed by Houston’s courage, became his mentor and launched his political career. Houston served as Indian agent to the Cherokee, was elected to two terms in Congress, and was elected governor of Tennessee in 1827. Houston was forced to resign the governorship in 1829 due to a marriage scandal. He then moved to Arkansas to live among his Cherokee friends where he ran a successful trading post. Economic opportunities soon drew Houston to Texas where he was selected to lead the army in 1835.

Like Houston, Crockett also served in the Creek War under Jackson and served in Congress. However, Crockett disliked Andrew Jackson and openly opposed him on a number of issues while serving in Congress. Crockett's opposition to Jackson's Indian Removal Act likely caused him to lose his bid for reelection in 1835. Crockett then went to Texas where he hoped to jumpstart his political career.

By the time Crockett reached Texas, the revolutionaries had divided themselves into pro and anti- Jackson factions. Not surprisingly, Crockett supported the anti-Jackson faction which opposed Houston's appointment as commander of the army. When Houston told the men holding the Alamo, an old Spanish mission near San Antonio, to abandon it, they refused. Crockett decided to join the anti-Jackson/Houston defenders in the fort in early February. On February 23, Santa Anna, commander of the Mexican army, laid siege to the fort. William Travis sent numerous messages asking for reinforcements and supplies, but none came. On March 6, 1836, Santa Anna attacked. The 150 defenders in the Alamo held off two attempts to breach the walls by the much larger Mexican force, but were overwhelmed by the third assault. Santa Anna had ordered that the Alamo's defenders be given no quarter, meaning that all the men were to be killed. While sources disagree about the exact circumstances of Crockett's death, he and the other defenders were killed.

By the time news of the Alamo reached Houston, he had regained control of the army and Texas had formally declared its independence from Mexico. Fearing another Alamo, Houston ordered the troops at Goliad to abandon that fort and rejoin his command. The fort's commander, James Fannin, ignored Houston's order until it was too late. When his forces finally abandoned the fort, they were captured, returned to the fort and executed. The people of Texas saw the men of the Alamo and Goliad as martyrs, people who died for their beliefs. In the meantime, Houston was leading his army and a large number of civilians on a strategic retreat. Houston eventually launched a surprise attack on Santa Anna's forces on April 21, 1836 at San Jacinto. The Texan forces shouted "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!" as they attacked. The Texans defeated the army and captured Santa Anna who signed a treaty recognizing Texas' independence on May 14, 1836. Houston was quickly elected as president of the new Lone Star Republic.

One of Houston's first acts as president was to seek annexation by the United States. Southerners favored the addition of new slave state, but most Northerners opposed annexation because it would have tipped the balance of power in favor of the South. President Van Buren wanted to avoid both conflict over slavery and war with Mexico and therefore declined to annex Texas. Houston served two terms as President of the Lone Star Republic before Texas became a state in 1845. He later served as a Senator and governor of Texas, making him the only American to serve as governor of two states and president of an independent nation.

Sources: Appleby, Joyce et al. *The American Journey*. New York: Glencoe-McGraw Hill, 2002. Print.

Finger, John. *Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Print.

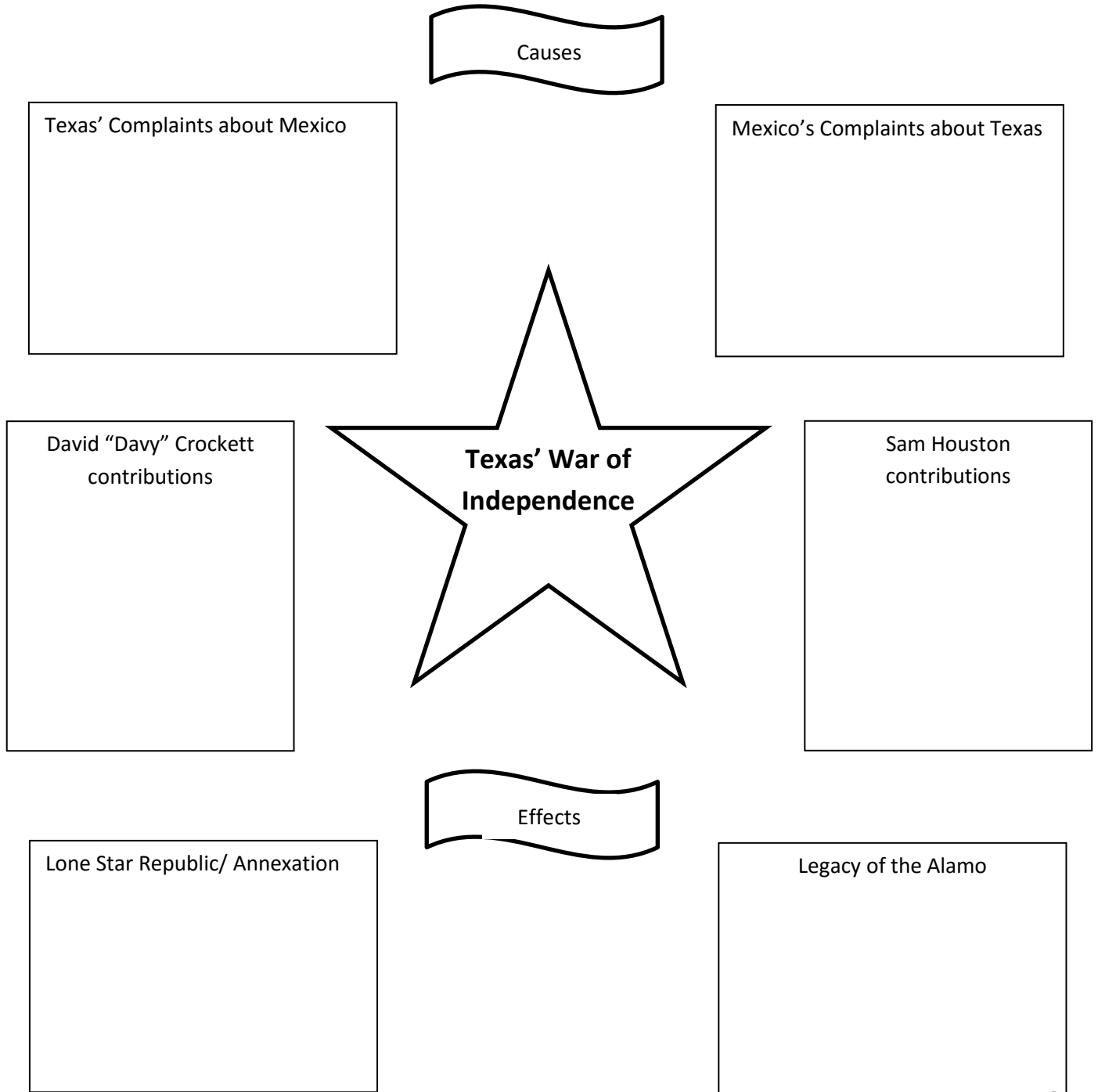
Morgan, Robert. *Lions of the West*. Chapel Hill NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2011. Print.

“Sam Houston.” *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. 1st edition. 1998. Print.

“Sam Houston.” *New Perspectives on THE WEST*. PBS, 2001. Web. 28 June, 2014.
<http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/d_h/houston.htm>

Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence

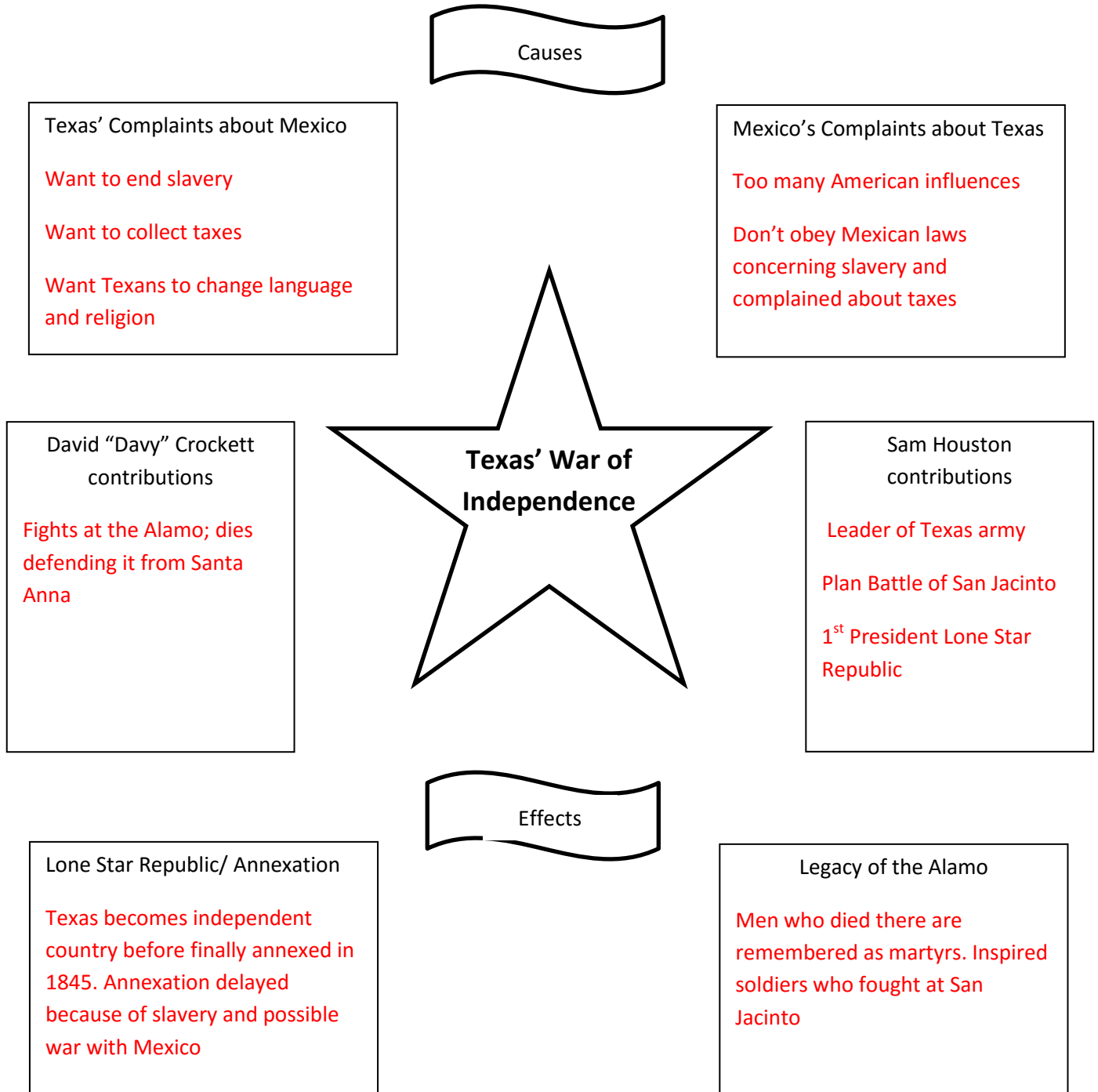
Using information from the text, complete the graphic organizer below, then complete the writing assignment at the bottom of the page.



Who do you think played a more important role in Texas' independence, Sam Houston or David "Davy" Crockett? Why? _____

Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence Key

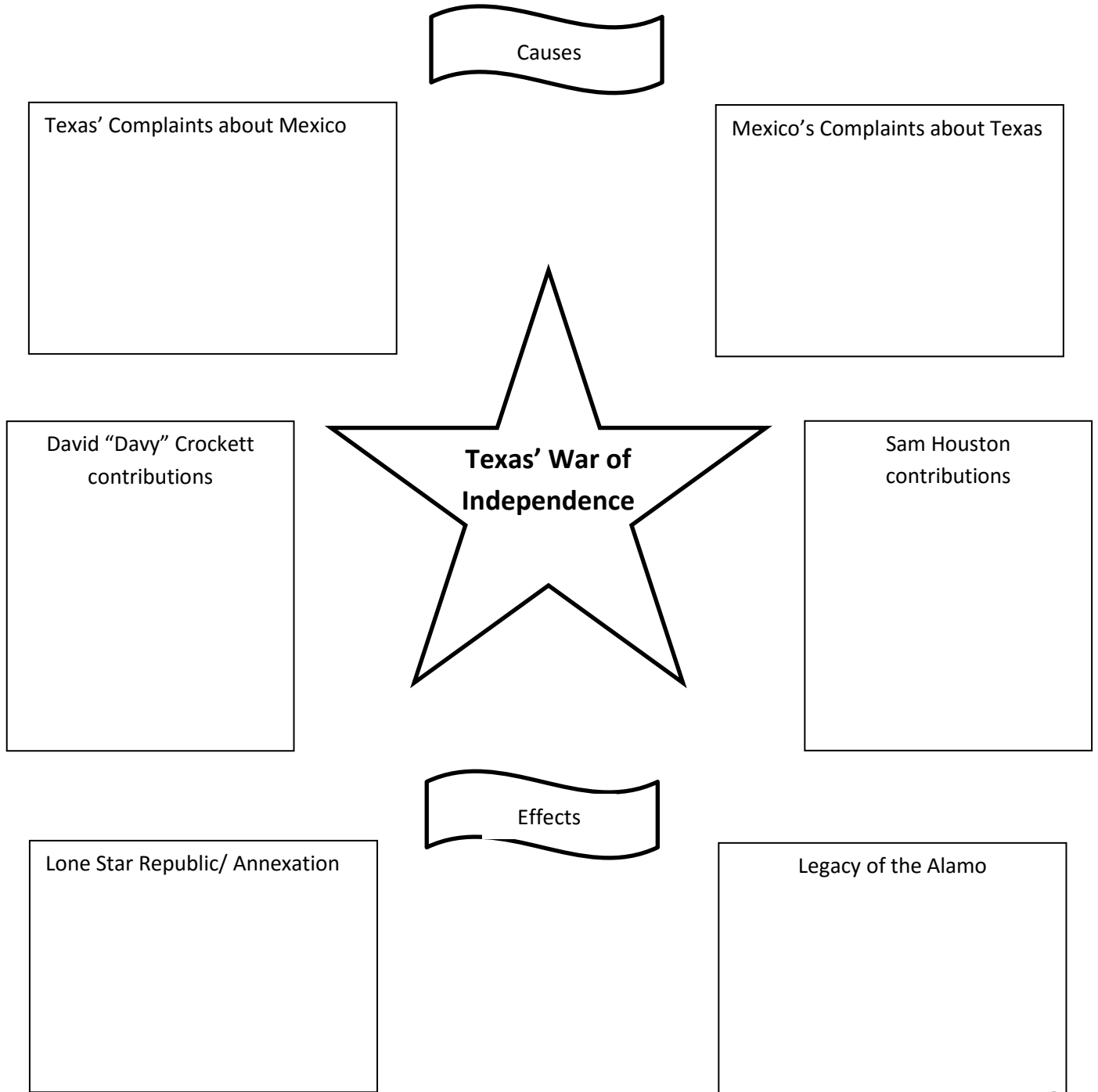
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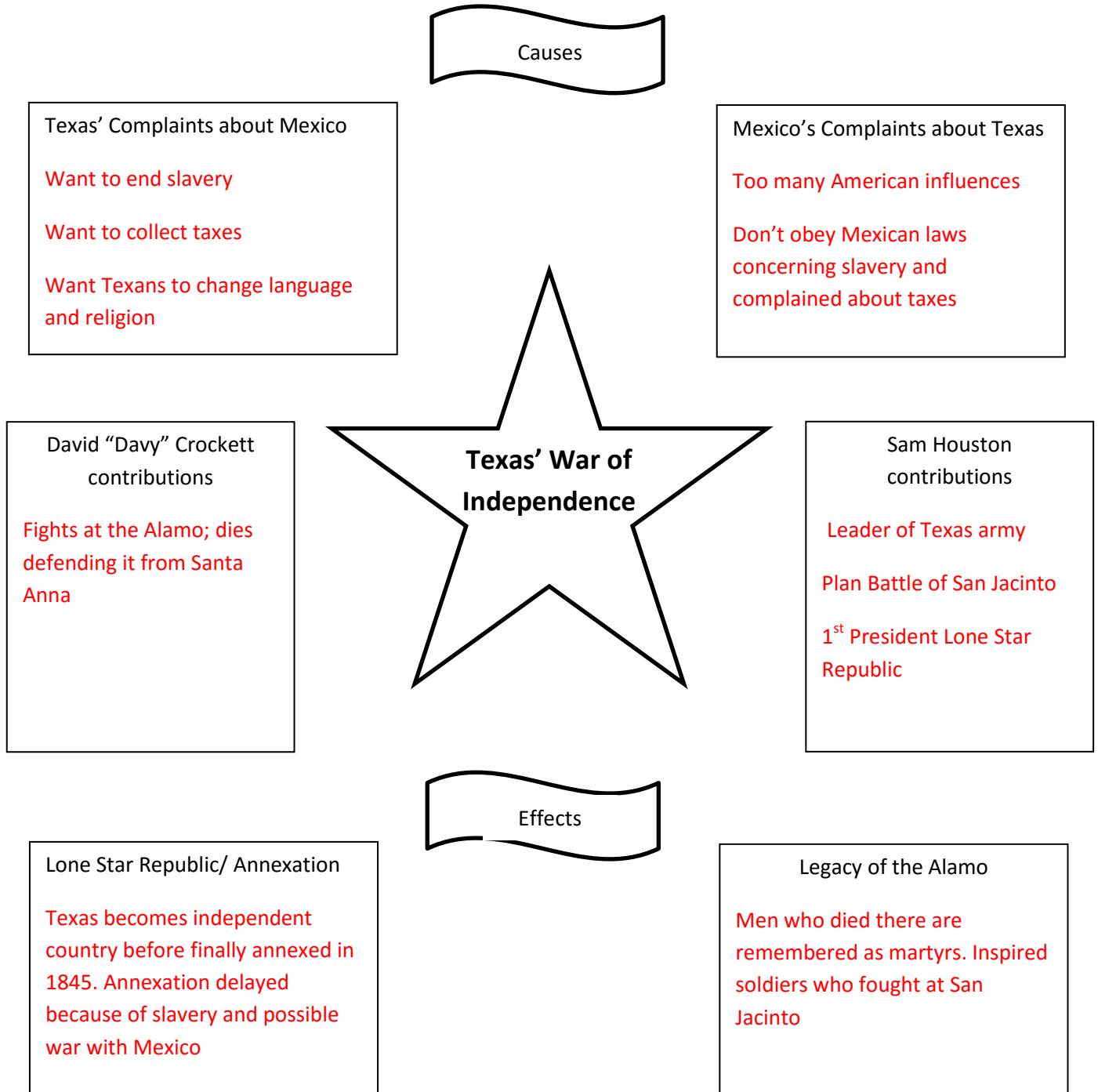


Who do you think played a more important role in Texas' independence, Sam Houston or David "Davy" Crockett? Why?

Write one paragraph uses evidence from the text to support your answer.

Houston, Crockett and the War for Texas Independence Key

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Who do you think played a more important role in Texas' independence, Sam Houston or David "Davy" Crockett? Why? **Answers will vary.**

Write one paragraph uses evidence from the text to support your answer.

Davy Crockett Letter from Texas

Standards: 4.62, 8.59

David Crockett left Tennessee following his defeat in the 1835 Congressional race, Crockett traveled to Texas. The following letter was written shortly after Crockett's arrival in Texas and roughly two months before his death at the Alamo.

Saint Augustine, Texas

My Dear Sone & daughter,

9th January, 1836

This is the first I have had an oportunity to write to you with convenience. I am now blessed with excellent health and am in high spirits although I have had many difficulties to encounter. I have got through safe and have been received by everybody with the open ceremony of friendship. I am hailed with a harty welcome toward this country. A dinner and a party of lady's have honored me with and invitation to participate both at Nagcodoches and at this place. The cannon was fired here on my arrival and I must say as to what I have seen of Texas it the garden spot of the world. the best land and the best prospects for health I have ever saw and believe it is a fortune to any man to come here there is a world of country here to settle.

It is not required here to pay down for your league of land. Every man is entitled to his headright of 400-425 acres. They may make the money to pay for it on the land. I expect in all probability to settle on the Border on Choctaw Rio(?) of Red River. that I have no doubt is the richest country in the good range, clear water and every appearance of good health and game plenty. It is in the pass where the Buffalo passes from North to South and back twice a year and bees and honey plenty. I have a great hope of getting the Agency to settle that country and I would be glad to see every friend I have settled there. It would be opportune to them all. I have taken the oath of government and have enrolled my name as a volunteer for _____ and will set out for the Rio grand in a few days with the volunteers from the United States. But all volunteers is entitled to vote for a member to the convention or to be voted for and I have but little doubt of being elected a member to form a constitution for this provence. I am rejoiced at my fate. I had rather be in my present situation than to be elected to a seat in Congress for life. I am in hopes of making a fortune yet for myself and family bad as my prospects has been.

I have not wrote to William but have requested John to direct him what to do. I hope you will show him the letter and also Brother John as it is not convenient at this time for me to write to them. I hope you will all dot the best you can and I will do the same. Do not be uneasy about me, I am among my friends- I must close with great respects, your affectionate Father. Farewell

(s) David Crockett

To Wiley and Margaret Flowers

Mr. Wiley Flowers

Note; Top of page 2—Crockett's P.O.

Gibson County, Tenn.

Davy Crockett on Indian Removal and Texas

Standards: 4.62, 8.59

Crockett and Jackson's differences of opinion dated back to their service in the Tennessee militia during the War of 1812 (Creek War). Crockett publically opposed the Indian Removal Act and in this letter speaks candidly of his feelings towards Jackson and his vice-president Martin Van Buren.

**David Crockett to Charles
Schultz**

Washington City, 25 December
1834.

Autograph letter signed, 2 pages.

Washington City

25 Dec 1834

Dear Sir,

I wrote you a Short time ago, and as I have a leasure moment I will write again although I can ad but little. Times is still no report yet from the Committee of either house upon the French war recommendation. I expect when that report comes in to see the home strings brake the western & Southern men dare not to Sustain Jackson in his mad Carear, and when they refuse all the Blood hounds in the nation will be let loos on them.

The time has Come that man is expected to be transfarable and as negotiable as a promisary note of hand, in those days of Glory and – Jackson & reform & co.– little Vann Sets in his chair and [*inserted: looks*] as Sly as a red fox, and I have no doubt but that he thinks Andrew Jackson has full power to transfer the people of these united States at his will, and I am truly afread that a majority of the free citizens of these united States will Submit to it and Say amen Jackson done it. It is right If we Judge by the past we can make no other Calculations.

I have almost given up the Ship as lost. I have gone So far as to declare that if he martin vanburen is elected that I will leave [2] the united States for I never will live under his kingdom. before I will Submit to his Government I will go to the wildes of Texas. I will consider that government a Paridice to what this will be. In fact at this time our Republican Government has dwindled almost into insignificancy our [*boasted*] land of liberty have almost

Bowed to the yoke of of Bondage. Our happy days of Republican principles are near at an end when a few is to transfer the many. This is Vanburen principles, there is more Slaves in New York and Pennsylvania then there is in Virginia and South Carolina, and they are the meanest kind of Slaves they are – Volunteer Slaves. Our Southern Slaves is of Some use to the owner. They will make Support for their masters, and those others is of no other use than to make mischief. I must Close in a hope of Seeing better times

I am with great respects your friend

& obt Servt.

David Crockett

Charles Shultz

P.S. will you get a paper from your editor that Contains the proceedings of the day I Spent in your City last Summer on my way home pleas to get it and enclose it to me as soon as convenient and oblidge your friend D.C.

Source: Crockett, David. "Davy Crockett on the Removal of the Cherokees, 1834." *The Age of Jackson*, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History 2014. Web. 28 June 2014. <
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/jackson-lincoln/resources/davy-crockett-removal-choerokees-1834>>

Sam Houston's Report on Battle of San Jacinto

Standards: 4.51, 4.62, 8.59

Head Quarters of the army

San Jacinto 25th April 1836

To his

Excellency

D.G. Burnett

President of the Republic of Texas

Sir,

I regret extremely that my situation since the Battle of the 21st has been such as to prevent my rendering you my official report of the same previous to this time. I have the honor to inform you that on the evening of the 18th Inst after a forced march of fifty five miles, which was effected in two days and a half, the army arrived opposite Harrisburg; that Evening a courier of the Enemy was taken from whom I learned that Gen Santa Anna with one Division of his choice troops had marched in the direction of Lynch's Ferry on the San Jacinto, burning Harrisburg as he passed down-

The Army was ordered to be in readiness to march early on the next morning-The main body effected a crossing over Buffalo Bayou, below Harrisburg on the morning of the 19th, having left the Baggage, the sick, and a sufficient camp Guard in the rear-We continued the march throughout the night, making but one halt in the prairie for a short time, and without refreshment-At daylight we resumed the line of march, and in a short distance our Scouts encountered those of the Enemy, and we received information that Gen Santa Anna was at New Washington and would that day take up his line of march for Anahuac, crossing at Lynch's. The Texian Army halted within half a mile of the Ferry in some timber, and were engaged in slaughtering beeves, when the army of Gen Santa Anna was discovered to be approaching in battle array, having been encamped at Clopper's point eight miles below- Disposition was immediately made of our forces, and preparation for his reception - He took a position with his Infantry & Artillery in the center occupying an island of timber- his cavalry covering the left flank. Their artillery then opened upon our Encampment, consisting of one double fortified medium brass twelve pounders - The Infantry in columns advanced with the design of charging [our lines] but were repulsed by a discharge of grape and cannister from our artillery, consisting of one double fortified two six pounders. The Enemy had occupied a piece of timber within rifle shot of the left wing of our Army, from which an occasional interchange of small arms took place between the

troops, until the Enemy withdrew to a position on the bank of the San Jacinto, about three quarters of a mile from our Encampment and commenced a fortification - A short time before sunset our mounted men, about Eighty-five in number, under the special command of Col. Sherman, march'd out for the purpose of reconnoitering the Enemy. Whilst advancing they received a volley from the left of the Enemy's Infantry, and after a sharp rencountre with their cavalry, in which ours acted extremely well and performed some feats of daring chivalry, they retired in good order having had two men severely wounded, and several horses killed, in the meantime the Infantry under the command of Lieut Col. Millard and Col. Burleson's regiment, with the Artillery had marched out for the purpose of covering the retreat of the Cavalry, if necessary; all then fell back in good order to our Encampment about sunset, and remained without any ostensible action until the 21st at ½ past 3 o'clock, taking the first refreshment which they had enjoyed for two days. The Enemy in the meantime, having extended the right flank of their Infantry so as to occupy the extreme points of a skirt of timber on the bank of the San Jacinto and secured their left by a fortification about 5 feet high, constructed of packs and Baggage, leaving an opening in the centre of the Breastwork in which their Artillery was placed. Their Cavalry upon their left wing About 9 o'clock on the morning of the 21st the Enemy were reinforced by 500 choice troops under the command of Gen Cos, increasing their effective force to upwards of 1500 men, while our aggregate force for the field numbered 783 - At ½ past 3 O'clock in the Evening, I ordered the officers of the Texian Army to parade their respective commands, having in the meantime, ordered the Bridge on the only road communicating with the Brazos, distant 8 miles from our Encampment, to be destroyed, thus cutting off all possibility of escape [Our] troops paraded with alacrity and spirit, and were anxious for the contest - Their conscious disparity in numbers only seemed to increase their confidence, and heightened their anxiety for the conflict. Our situation afforded us an opportunity of making the arrangements preparatory to the attack without exposing our designs to the Enemy-The first Regiment commanded by Col. Burleson, was assigned the center. The second Regiment under the command of Col. Sherman, formed the left wing of the army. The artillery under the special command of Col. Geo. W. Hockley Inspector Gen'l. was placed on the right of the first Regiment; and four companies of Infantry under the command of Lieut Col. Henry Millard, sustained the artillery upon the right. Our Cavalry sixty one in number, commanded by Col. Mirabeau B. Lamar (whose gallant and daring conduct on the previous day had attracted the admiration of his comrades, and called [him to] that station) placed on our extreme right completed our line. Our Cavalry was first dispatched to the front of the Enemy's left, for the purpose of attracting their notice, whilst our extensive island of timber afforded us an opportunity of concentrating our forces and displaying from that point, agreeable to the previous design of the troops. Every Evolution was performed with alacrity, the whole advancing rapidly in line, and through an open prairie, without any protection whatever for our men. The Artillery advanced and took station within two hundred yards of the Enemy's Breastwork and commenced an effective fire with grape and cannister. Col. Sherman with his regiment having commenced the action upon our left wing the whole line at the center and on the right, advancing

in doublequick time, sung the war cry "Remember the Alamo" received the Enemy's fire and advanced within point blank shot before a piece was discharged from our lines-- Our line advanced without a halt, until they were in possession of the woodland and the Enemy's breastwork. The right wing of Burleson's and the left of Millard's taking possession of the breastwork our artillery having gallantly charged up within 70 yards of the Enemy's cannon, where it was taken by our troops. The conflict lasted about 18minutes from the time of close action, until we were in possession of the Enemy's [encampment] taking [one] piece of cannon (loaded), 4 Stand of colors, all their camp equipage, stores, and Baggage. Our cavalry had charged and routed that of the Enemy upon the right and given pursuit to the fugitives, which did not cease until they arrived at the bridge which I have mentioned before. Capt Karnes, always among the foremost in danger commanding the pursuers. The conflict in the breastwork, lasted but a few moments; many of the troops encountered hand to hand, and not having the advantage of bayonets on our side, our riflemen used their pieces as war clubs, breaking many of them off at the breech. The route commenced at ½ past 4, and the pursuit by the main army continued until twilight. A guard was then left in charge of the Enemys Encampment, and our army returned with our killed and wounded.

In the Battle our loss was two killed and twenty three wounded, six of whom mortally. The Enemy's loss was 630 killed, among which was one General Officer, 4 Cols. 2 Liet Cols. 5 Captains-12 Lieuts. Wounded: 208 of which were 5 Cols, 3 Lieut cols, 2 Second Lieut Cols, 7 Captains-1 Cadet. Prisoners: 730. President General Santa Anna, Gen. Cos, 4Cols aids to Gen Santa Anna, 6 Lieut cols. the private Secretary of Gen Santa Anna, and the Col of the Guerrero batallion are included in the number. Gen Santa Anna, was not taken until the 22nd, and Gen Coson yesterday; very few escaped. About 600 muskets-300 Sabres, and 200pistols have been collected since the action. Several hundred mules and Horses were taken, and near twelve thousand dollars in specie-

For several days previous to the action our troops were engaged in forced marching exposed to excessive rains, and the additional inconvenience of extremely bad roads, illy supplied with rations and clothing, yet amid every difficulty they bore up with cheerfulness and fortitude, and performed their marches with spirit and alacrity - there was no murmuring - Previous to and during the action my Staff evinced every disposition to be useful, and were actively engaged in their duties. In the action I am assured that they demeaned themselves in such manner as proved them worthy members of the army of San Jacinto. Col. T. J. Rusk Secretary of war was on the field. For weeks, his services had been highly beneficial to the army in battle he was in the left wing where Col. Sherman's command first encountered and drove the Enemy; he bore himself gallantly, and continued his efforts and activity, remaining with the pursuers, until resistance ceased.

I have the honor of transmitting herewith a list of all the officers and men who were engaged in the action, which I respectfully request may be published as an act of justice to the individuals. For the Commanding Generals to attempt discrimination as to the conduct of those who

commanded in the action, or those who were commanded would be impossible. Our success in the action is conclusive proof of their daring intrepidity and valor; every officer and man proved himself worthy of the cause in which he battled, while the triumph received a luster from the humanity which characterized their conduct, after victory, and richly entitles them to the admiration and gratitude of their General. Nor should we withhold the tribute of our grateful thanks, from that Being who rules the destinies of nations and has in the time of [greatest] need enabled us to arrest a powerful invader whilst devastating our Country.

Source: "Sam Houston's Copy of His Official Report of the Battle of San Jacinto." *Texas Treasures*. Texas State Library and Archives. 2011. Web. 1 Aug. 2014.<
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/treasures/republic/san-jacinto/report-01.html>>