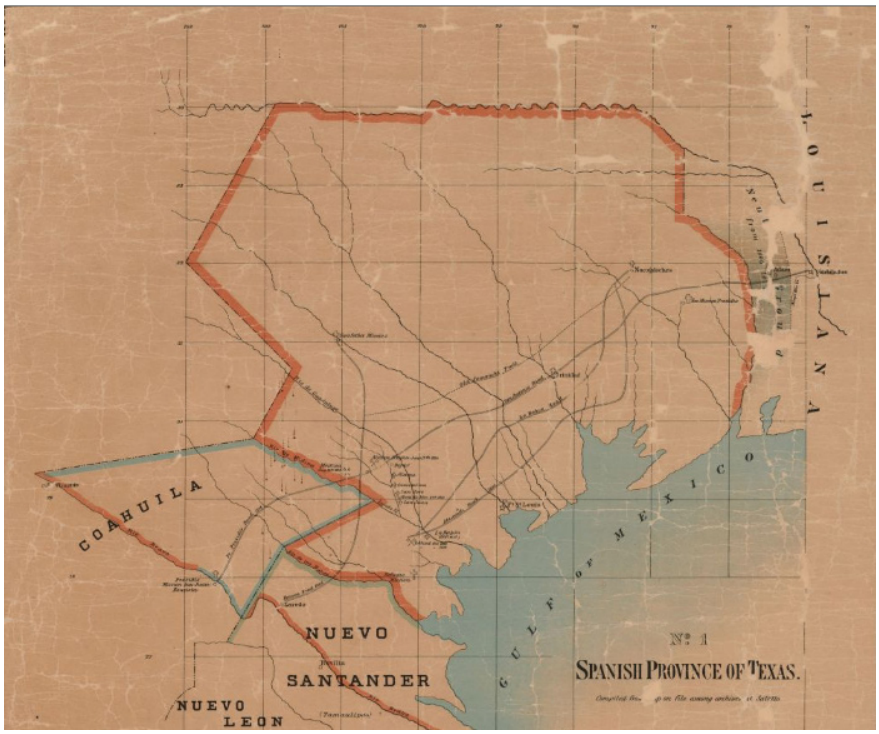
Lesson Plan

This lesson was made possible through a generous grant from Humanities Texas

A Vow of Silence: Spanish Missions and Motives

Upon learning the French had established a settlement in Texas, the Spanish government of New Spain began paying more attention to its northern province. Although the French settlement, Fort St. Louis, was a failure, the Spanish understood that if they did not act to establish a permanent presence in Texas, other European powers might seize the opportunity and claim the province for themselves. To meet this threat the Spanish government came up with a plan to introduce Spanish culture and religion to the native population. This plan included providing generous land grants to Spanish subjects, building presidios (military forts) to protect settlements and establishing Catholic missions (religious settlements) where local native people would live, work and learn Spanish ways.



Map #93412. Map Collection. Archives and Records Program, Texas General Land Office, Austin, TX.

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Introduction

Within the Texas General Land Office Archives are the ***founding documents of Mission San José***. Mission San José is one of five missions built by the Spanish government along the San Antonio River. This introduction was written in 1720 and is among the oldest documents in the GLO Archives. These documents highlight Spanish motives for establishing Mission San José. The introductory section is provided below along with an image of the title page.

MATERIALS:

- **Dry erase board (or any large writing surface)**
- **One blue dry erase marker**
- **One red dry erase marker**
- **Copies of an excerpt from the San José Title**

TEKS: **7.2C, 7.21B, 7.22B**

Procedure:

To help students understand the text we will utilize a learning strategy called **Chalk Talk**.

1. Divide the students into pairs and provide them with one copy of the document, "Excerpt to the Founding of Mission San José."

2. Tell students that their "mission" is to evaluate the motivations of the Spanish mission efforts in Texas.

NOTE: Because the reading is short, you may want the pairs of students to discuss what they've read at specific intervals taking time to highlight key words and important information as they move through the text.

4. Tell students that one of the requirements of mission life was to maintain silence during certain times of the day. Many religious orders believed that silence was the best way to focus on whatever you were doing, whether it was work, study, or worship, because it calmed the mind. This will be a silent activity – Let's see if it works!

5. In the center of the dry erase board, write this focus prompt (or one of your own choosing), ***"Were the Spanish justified in building missions in Texas?"***

6. Tell the students that this is the point in the activity where they must maintain a vow (or promise) of silence.

7. Show the students the two dry erase markers. Tell them the blue marker is for ***writing statements***, and the red one is for ***writing questions*** in response to the focus prompt.

8. **Model the process:** Teacher should read the focus question aloud, then write an example ***statement*** or ***question*** in response to the focus prompt on the board.

Examples: "The Mission provided the Indians security."
"Were the Spanish justified in establishing Missions?"

9. The teacher then hands the markers to a student, who will write their response to the focus question by writing either their own statement or question. The student then hands the markers to another student and the process continues until there are enough responses to warrant a verbal discussion (usually 10 or more).

10. **Frame the discussion:** After students finish responding, the teacher then circles key words and main ideas from the student responses and moderates a class discussion about the information.

11. **Assessment:** Allow the students to use the information on the board to write a response to the focus questions.

    If time is a consideration, the teachers may want to select a quote from the document and have the students respond as a warm up activity.

Source: https://www.facinghistory.org

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Chalk Talk Strategy Points to Ponder:

- Make sure there is reasonable time between responses.
- The teacher can also take a more active role by circling interesting ideas during the writing process, adding their own reflections, connecting ideas with a marker, etc.

Benefits of Chalk Talk:

- Quiet environment, promotes reflection
- No one student dominates the activity
- Opposing viewpoints are respected

Other applications of Chalk Talk:

- Formative assessment: "What I learned today about life in the Republic of Texas"
- Discuss difficult issues: "What did I learn today about slavery and its effects on democratic values?"
- Address class culture: "How can we be more effective in our group work?"

Source: https://www.facinghistory.org

Translated Document

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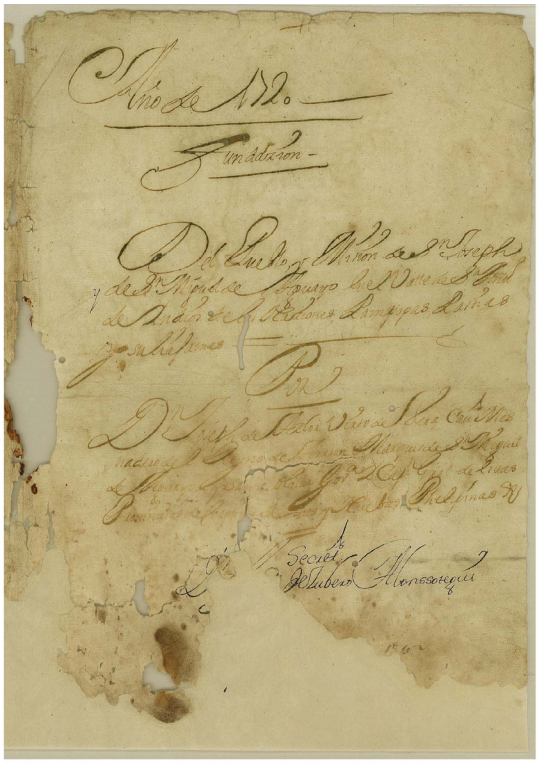
Excerpt From The San José Title

The founding of Mission San José Y San Miguel De Aguayo

Governor Aguayo authorizes Captain Valdez of the Presidio de San Antonio de Béxar to establish the Mission San José.

Original:

...aquellos parajes q en las cercanias de la dha. villa, y tierra adentro ay muchisimas naciones de Yndios pacificos, dociles, y amigos de los espanoles q viben en la infeliz noche del Gentilismo y que desean y piden (para que les amanezca el hermoso dia de la luz evanjelica) q les funden Misiones siendo los primeros y mas immediatos los de la Nacion numerosa de los Pampoa, que se compone de mas de ducientos Yndios los q se han ofrecido y desean congregarse a ms.on y siendo como es este el unico medio para atraher estas Almas a el redil de la Yglesia tan del servicio de Dios y del agrado del Rey, he tenido a bien el mandar como mando en su real nombre q se erija y funde una mision con el nombre y adbocacion de mi santo el S.r S.n Joseph de S.n Miguel de Aguaio en la comarca de la dha. Villa de S.n Antonio, elijiendo el paraje mas fertil, comodo, y conveniente...



Translation:

...in the vicinity of the said town and in the interior there are very many nations of peaceful Indians, docile and friendly to the Spanish, who live in the unhappy darkness of heathendom and who desire and ask (so that the beautiful light of the gospels will dawn upon them) that missions be founded for them, the first and most immediate being those of the numerous Pampoa nation, composed of more than two hundred Indians who have offered and desire to congregate in a mission. And this being as it is, the only means to bring these souls into the fold of the Church, and being for the service of God and the pleasure of the king, I have considered it wise to order, as I do in his royal name, that a mission be founded and built with the name of my saint the Lord San José de San Miguel de Aguayo, in the region of the said town of San Antonio; selecting the most fertile, comfortable, and convenient place...

Founding of mission San José in San Antonio de Béxar, 1720, Records of the Spanish Collection, Archives and Records Program, Texas General Land Office, Austin, TX