American settlers refused to follow Mexican laws, and in 1836 they fought Mexico to make Texas independent. Two years later, Texas asked the U. S. Congress to annex Texas and make it part of the United States.

We’ll Get Back To You On That

Americans weren’t so sure they wanted Texas. For one thing, Texas had a lot of debt that would need to be paid off. Did we really want to do that? Even more serious, Texas allowed slavery, and it would come into the U.S. as a slave state. The fight over slavery was slowly tearing America apart, and one thing holding the nation together was carefully balancing the number of free and slave states. As if that weren’t enough, Mexico was threatening war if the U.S. annexed Texas. Mexico did not recognize Texas as independent, and it hoped to make Texas part of Mexico again. It wasn’t too surprising that the U.S. Congress rejected Texas.

If At First You Don’t Succeed...

Texans weren’t giving up. The independent Texas was weak—no money, no credit, few defenses—and it needed an alliance with a strong nation. There was even talk of becoming part of the British empire! Mexico offered to reunite with Texas, but Texans didn’t see that as an option. The Mexican government was unstable, and Texas wasn’t about to return to the nation it had fought to separate from. Most Texans had come from America, and they considered themselves Americans. They wanted to be part of the United States, so Texas kept trying.

Frustration! Jealousy! Sneakiness!

Texas finally got its big break after Americans voted in a new president in 1844. That’s when the political craziness began. The outgoing president, John Tyler, had been trying for years to get Congress to annex Texas. All this time, he’d failed—but the new guy, James Polk, won the election by promising to finally annex Texas! Tyler wasn’t about to let Polk take the credit. In the months between the election and the day Polk would take office, Tyler figured out a way to get Congress to approve Texas.

Congress approved Texas annexation on March 1, 1845. Polk would take office on March 4. Congress had left it to the president to decide whether to make an offer to Texas right away or work out a new deal—assuming Polk would make the decision. But Tyler was still president, and on March 3, he sent the offer to Texas himself. Texas approved the offer in July, and Polk got to sign Texas into the United States that December.
A. Texas Boundary. In the Boundary Act of 1836, the Republic of Texas described its own boundaries. Read the description and use it to draw the Texas boundary on the map.

Beginning at the mouth of the Sabine river, and running west along the gulf of Mexico to the mouth of the Rio Grande, thence up the principal stream of said river to its source, thence due north to the forty-second degree of north latitude, thence along the boundary line, as defined in the treaty between the United States and Spain, to the beginning.

B. Not So Fast! Before Mexico won independence from Spain, Spain had already defined the western boundary of Texas. Do you think it was the same as Texas described?

Follow the directions to draw the Texas border defined by Spain in 1805:

- Beginning at the mouth of the Nueces River and running up to its junction with El Moro Creek
- From there, northeasterly to the Medina River [later called the San Antonio River]
- Up the Medina River to its source
- Then in a direct line to the San Saba River
- Then northwesterly to the point where the 32nd parallel north latitude intersects the 103rd meridian
- Then northeasterly to the point where the Red River intersects the 100th meridian.

How-To: Compass Directions

Find the compass on the map. It looks like this:

KEY
- N = North
- W = West
- S = South
- E = East

To go “northwesterly,” turn in the direction half-way between north and west.

To go “northeasterly,” turn in the direction half-way between north and east.

The word “due” before a direction means you go exactly in that direction.

C. Santa Fe Trail. The Santa Fe Trail led to the town of Santa Fe, which today is in New Mexico. In the early 1800s, this was an important route for traders doing business in Mexico. Follow the directions to draw the trail on the map. Label both the main route and the cutoff.

Mountain Route

1. Start at Independence, Missouri.
2. Travel across the prairie to Fort Zarah.
3. Follow the Arkansas River to Bent’s Fort.
4. At Bent’s Fort, turn southwest and head for Raton Pass.
5. Continue south to Las Vegas.
6. Keep going south past Las Vegas, then curve around and head northwest to Santa Fe.

Cimarron Cutoff (Shortcut!)

1. Follow the Mountain Route. A little past Fort Dodge, turn southwest.
2. Go to the north tip of the Cimarron River where the river makes a sharp bend.
3. Follow the Cimarron River southwest. But when the river turns due west, keep going southwest toward Las Vegas.
4. Follow the rest of the Mountain Route.
Across
1. Many of these people lived in Texas before it was annexed
5. To make territory part of an existing country
6. Word that describes the Mexican government during this time
8. U.S. president who wanted the credit for annexing Texas

Down
2. This ugly debate kept Texas from being a state for many years
3. Texas used to be part of this country
4. Something Texas had a lot of that many Americans didn’t want to pay
7. U.S. president who signed Texas into the United States

D. Puzzle Time! Complete the puzzle.
Annexation of Texas (1845)  

MAP KEY

Texas Border (green)

1805 Spanish Border (brown)

Mountain Route (purple)

Cimarron Cutoff (pink)

D. Puzzle Time! Complete the puzzle.

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