Literature based social studies versus textbook based social studies

Kathrine Jean Kellogg

University of Northern Iowa

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Literature based social studies versus textbook based social studies

Abstract
The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of literature based social studies versus textbook based social studies in mastery of information. Using a pre-test and a post-test, control group, experimental design, and a t-test for non-independent variables, it was found that the experimental group achieved higher test scores than the control group. Results of the t-test yield a t-value of 3.00 with 18 degrees of freedom with a .05 level of significance. This shows that the results are 95% certain that the differences between the two groups’ performances on the post test are due to the variation in teaching methods and not just a mere chance occurrence.
Literature Based Social Studies Versus Textbook Based Social Studies

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of Elementary Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by
Kathrine Jean Kellog
Summer 1997
This Research Paper by: Kathrine J. Kellogg
Titled: Literature Based Social Studies Versus Textbook Based Social Studies

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

July 10, 1997
Date Approved

Peggy Ishler
Graduate Faculty Reader

July 10, 1997
Date Approved

Rick Traw
Graduate Faculty Reader

July 15, 1997
Date Approved

Greg P. Stefanich
Head, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of literature based social studies versus textbook based social studies in mastery of information. Using a pre-test and a post-test, control group, experimental design, and a t-test for non-independent variables, it was found that the experimental group achieved higher test scores than the control group. Results of the t-test yield a t-value of 3.00 with 18 degrees of freedom with a .05 level of significance. This shows that the results are 95% certain that the differences between the two groups' performances on the post test are due to the variation in teaching methods and not just a mere chance occurrences.
**Introduction**

Literature based social studies is an alternative way to teach history that is being used among many elementary and secondary social studies teachers. Abandoning the basal, teachers have substituted trade books to enhance children's enjoyment and understanding of the printed word (McGowen, Guzzetti, and Kowalinski 1992).

Children's trade books offer an appropriate vehicle for engaging the emotions of children and aiding in development of global awareness (Lickteig and Danielson 1993), enhancing their interest in social studies. Literature promotes interest and involvement, and provides students with positive experiences (McMillian and Gentile, 1988).

Historical fiction is the genre commonly used in literature based social studies teaching. Through narrative, (1) children begin to learn about social phenomena; (2) historical fiction encourages students to invest emotion; and (3) historical fiction can counter special interest groups' influence upon textbooks (Corbin, 1991). Historical fiction can also be used by social studies teachers to provide students with the necessary background information and thereby serve as a springboard to research projects (Nadeau, 1994).
Along with historical fiction, multicultural literature can provide direction for rich and meaningful social studies activities in the elementary school (Tomasino, 1993). Good cultural literature and appropriate social studies activities reveal people's similarities as well as differences, and also develop cultural literacy in young students (Tomasino, 1993).

Works of fiction are often overlooked as resources for geographic instruction (Flaim and Chiodo, 1994). Novels not only transport readers to settings in the past and present (Flaim and Chiodo, 1994), they also increase interest in geography by drawing upon and satisfying students' natural curiosity about the world (Flaim and Chido, 1994). Thus works of fiction relate to and build understanding of the five themes of geography: location, place, human/environment interaction, movement, and regions.

The Greek poet Homer (circa 800 B.C.) knew that history is best learned and remembered when taught through stories (Smith and Dobson, 1993). This approach is used in today's classroom through the use of children's literature, nonfiction as well as fiction.
**Problem**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of literature based social studies in the mastery of basic facts in a fourth grade classroom. Trade books and picture books were used as primary sources of information. A text was also used as a supplemental guide.

**Review of Related Literature**

Children will remember a story longer than they will remember the time and place that a historical event took place in a text book. Novels weave together information about persons, places, times, and events in interesting storylines that make history exciting, pertinent, and memorable (Levistik, 1989). Novels and other children's literature emphasize teaching students to love, understand, and connect historical concepts through stimulating reading, discussions and activities (Smith and Dobson, 1993). Flaim and Chiodo (1994) note that good stories illustrate human behavior in various times and places in ways that help students to form connections to those times and places. "History and social studies can be explained more clearly, in more depth, and more detail through literature. The students gain more knowledge as a result. Besides the facts, they learn about the struggles, the excitement, and the challenges
of life as it was in the past" (Van Middendorp, 1990).

According to Common (1986), there are four reasons why stories need to be a part of the social studies curriculum. They include the following: (1) stories give us clues as to how we should react emotionally about historical events and the people who were involved in them; (2) reality is more easily faced through stories; (3) stories have an end and therefore are innately satisfying; and (4) teachers and students will have a shared experience, a place to start when they begin with a story. When literature is used with a social studies textbook it serves as a valuable supplement to the factual information found within the text (Smith and Johnson, 1995). The use of literature as part of the primary reading material, with the text, motivates students to become more actively involved in their learning (Smith and Johnson, 1995).

Many documented problems associated with textbooks have encouraged the use of literature in social studies (Van Middendorp and Lee, 1994). Although textbooks are improving, Alleman and Brophy (1996) still believe that it is best to use the text as just one of the main resources rather than as the basis for an entire social studies program.
Hypothesis

Research findings suggest that literature based social studies is an effective and meaningful way to teach the concepts of social studies. Therefore, it was hypothesized that students taught social studies concepts using literature based texts as primary source of information and the text book as a supplement will master more actual information than students taught using traditional textbooks as primary source of information.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for this study were selected from the population of fourth graders at a lower middle class to low socio economic elementary school in Rosenberg, Texas. The student population is multicultural, composed of approximately 57.5% Hispanic students of Mexican background; 25.4% Caucasian, non-Hispanic students; and 16.2% African-American students; and 1% Asian. Only 9.2% of the population is classified as Limited English Proficient. Free lunch is provided to approximately 60% of the student population. The population is anticipated to contain
approximately 80 fourth grade students. Two existing classes, of nineteen students each, were chosen through convenience sampling for this study. Both classes were equally tracked in ability at the beginning of the year according to standardized test scores.

**Instrument**

The effectiveness of literature based social studies [Here after referred to as L.B.S.S.] was measured by a multiple choice/true-false tests created by the researcher (See Appendix A and B). This type of test was chosen because of its age appropriateness for this grade level. No commercial standardized test was found covering the subject matter of the Fight for Texas Independence; hence the researcher created her own test. The test questions were designed to cover information from the text used in the study. The researcher felt that these questions provided an accurate measurement of information retained by students in both groups.

**Experimental Design**

The design used in this experimental study involved both a pre-test (Appendix A) and a post-test (Appendix B). Students in both groups were pre-tested on March 5, 1997,
to ascertain the students' prior knowledge. Both classes were given the post-test six weeks later on April 15, 1997, after completion of the social studies unit.

**Procedure**

At the beginning of the fifth six week period, in the 1996-97 school year, 38 fourth grade students were selected through convenience sampling from a population of approximately 80 students. Selected students comprised two classes of nineteen each. One group was designated to be the experimental group. The same teacher taught both classes for the six-week time period allotted by the principal of the elementary school. As the classes are self-contained, students remained in their own rooms and the teachers switched classes. While one class studied social studies, the other studied science.

The study was designed to last one six-week grading period. The control group students were taught social studies using traditional textbook methods. This included students reading the text aloud in class and responding to discussion questions, text-supplied worksheets, and lesson review questions from the text.

The experimental group used the text as a background
base only. Worksheets were not used, although class discussions and questioning occurred after all readings. Topics were introduced through children’s literature. On a daily basis the students were read historical fiction novels about events that transpired in Texas’ fight for independence (Appendix C). Also on a daily basis students worked in four separate groups of four or five reading an assigned biography about a specific person involved in the Fight for Texas’ Independence. Each person in the group was assigned a job. The jobs, which switched daily, consisted of reader, reporter, and recorder. The recorder took notes pertaining to the individual they were assigned, then the reporter presented this information to the entire class at the end of each session. Discussions usually followed connecting this person to the Fight.

Historical literature was chosen to meet the following six criteria: 1) present a well-told story that does not conflict with historical records; 2) portray characters realistically; 3) presents authentic settings; 4) artfully fold in historical facts; 5) Provide accurate information through illustrations; and 6) avoid stereotypes and myths (Lindquist, 1995) (Appendix C).

Throughout the course of the study, each class covered the same information and used the same social studies text. Each class met four days a week, in the afternoon for 45
minutes. The post test was administered to both classes at the end of the study on the same day. The tests were used to compare information retained throughout the study.

Results

Figure 1 shows the results of the pre-test given to the 19 students on the experimental group. All 19 students scored below 60%, which would be considered a failing grade.

Figure 1. Results of pre-test for experimental group.
Figure 2 shows the results of the pre-test given to the 19 students in the control group. All 19 students also scored below 60%, which would be considered failing scores.

Figure 2. Results of pre-test for control group.

According to the graphed pre-test scores, both of the groups appeared to be very similar in knowledge about Texas' fight for independence. Following the pre-test two different teaching methods were implemented. The experimental group was taught using L.B.S.S. The control group was instructed using the textbook method. At the end of the six weeks a post-test was given.
The post-test results for the experimental group (Figure 3) showed a significant change in test scores. Only one student out of the 19 received a score below 60. Of the remaining students four scored between 60 and 69, seven scored between 70 and 79, 4 scored between 80 and 89, and 3 students scored between 90 and 100.

Figure 3. Results of post-test for experimental group.

The post-test results for the control group (Figure 4) had six students scoring failing grades below 60. Of the remaining students seven scored between 60 and 69, four scored between 70 and 79, one scored between 80 and 89, and one between 90 and 100.
A $t$ test for non-independent samples ($a = .05$) was used to compare the post-test results of the experimental and the control groups. This statistical technique was utilized because it was believed that the criteria was met for the use of this method, e.g., the subjects were matched groups. It was found that there was a significant statistical difference in the results of the two groups' post-tests. The difference is that the literature based teaching technique used with the experimental group resulted in the enhanced performance relative to the control group, as measured by the post test. The statistical significance ($a=.05$) means
that there is a less than 5 chances out of 100 that the observed scores' difference arise merely out of chance. From the statistical analysis it is concluded that the differences between the two groups performances on the post test are due to the variation in the teaching methods and not just a chance occurrence.

Figure 5 shows t-value of 3.00 with 18 degrees of freedom (df). At the a=.05 level of significance for 18 degrees of freedom, the t-value is 2.10. Since the test has a value of 3.00 which is greater than 2.10, the post test results differences are more than mere chance occurrences.

Figure 5. t-Test results

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STATISTIC</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
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<tr>
<td>NO. OF PAIRS OF SCORES</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUM OF &quot;D&quot;</td>
<td>222.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEAN OF D'S</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\sum D^2$</td>
<td>8806.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t-VALUE</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEGREES OF FREEDOM (d)</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tbody>
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Discussion

The results of this study support the original hypothesis: students taught social studies concepts using literature based texts as primary source of information and the textbook as a supplement will master more actual information than students taught using traditional textbooks as primary source of information.

The results are consistent with the opinions and findings of Alleman and Brophy (1996), Flaim and Chiodo (1994), Levistik (1989), Smith and Johnson (1995), Van Middendorp (1990), and Van Middendorp and Lee (1994). The results cannot be generalized to all class rooms since the study took place in a multicultural, low socio-economic environment. The study does suggest that L.B.S.S. could be equally or more effective in more homogenous groups as well.

The control group's lessons and discussions were conducted verbatim by the textbooks teachers guide. These lessons consisted primarily of knowledge, comprehension, application, and analysis questions. Examples of these would be the following: “What were the three events leading to the Texas revolution?”, and “What was Ben Milams' famous question at the Battle of San Antonio?”. Worksheets
were also a major part of the lessons. The worksheets followed the reading materials and could be answered directly from the text. Reading of the text was done by individuals in class, who then after completing a section of the text, selected another classmate to continue reading.

In the experimental group, lessons usually began with a picture book or a chapter out of a historical fiction book. This was followed by a review of a time line, tying in what was just read. When learning of a new event the text was consulted for time and facts then plotted on the time line. Groups were allowed to meet for at least fifteen minutes a day to read from their books. The recorder took notes on that day's reading then the reporter gave a report to the class on what he/she had learned about his/her person that day. These discussions were usually tied into our time line. The jobs rotated on a daily bases. This routine varied day to day depending upon where class discussion took us.

In agreement with Smith and Johnson (1995), there was a noticeable difference in each groups' enthusiasm and interest in social studies. The experimental group looked forward to and was involved with their learning. On days when we had to cancel social studies, due to school functions, there were many verbal complaints. Also, when they were asked to get into their groups they got ready more quickly than they ever did for any other subject. The class
also got more involved in their learning. I had a lot more class participation from all the students, not just the same ones.

The control group maintained little interest in the subject matter. Class participation was the biggest factor. It was always the same students involved in discussions. Many of the students rushed through their assignments, giving their answers little thought. Often answers didn't match the question and were copied directly from the book.

**Recommendations**

Mastery of subject matter is only one reason that literature should be incorporated into a social studies curriculum. Good literature can help students fully understand historical characters, whereas stories of real people do not come across in textbooks (Schall & Bozzon, 1994).

I feel historical literature can be and should be used in all genres of social studies. Literature does more than increase mastery of knowledge. National Elementary Teacher of the Year in 1995, Tarry Lindquist (1995), suggests seven other reasons why a social studies teacher should use historical literature to teach: 1) It piques kids’
curiosity. Picture books are good to start a unit because they are engaging and full of information. They are also focused, short, and easy to share at the beginning of a class period (Schall & Bozzon, 1994). 2) It levels the playing field. Historical literature promotes academic equity because comparing books from one unit to the next provides kids with equal opportunities to develop historical analogies. 3) It hammers home everyday details. Picture books provide visual and contextual clues to how people lived, what their speech was like, how they dressed, and offer a glimpse into regional geography. 4) It puts people back into history. Social studies textbooks are often devoted to coverage rather than depth. Good literature, fiction or nonfiction, presents individuals as they are, neither all good nor all bad. 5) It presents the complexity of issues. Traditionally historical issues have been presented to children as flat, one dimensional or single sided, but most issues are multifaceted. Historical literature restores the landscape of history, warts and all, so children can discover that dilemmas are age old. 6) It promotes multiple perspectives. Historical literature introduces children to characters who have different points of view and offers examples of how people deal differently with problems. 7) It connects social studies learning to the rest of the school day. Historical literature can help integrate social studies across the curriculum.
I do not feel that literature should be the sole resource used in the social studies curriculum. It should be used to enhance the subject matter. Literature cannot address skills and process unique to social studies that children must learn (Lindquist, 1995). However, incorporating literature with the textbook allows students to balance fiction with fact, and validate historical hypothesis with research (Lindquist, 1995). This in turn creates interest and understanding, thus increasing mastery of the subject.

It would be beneficial to follow the effects of this teaching method over a longer time period. It would be beneficial to see how this method affects standardized test scores. Future studies would require students to be taught using a literature based method into their secondary education.
References


Appendix A. Pre Test

Fight for Texas' Independence

1. Which battle was considered the start of the
   fight for independence in Texas?

   a) Goliad
   b) Gonzales
   c) Battle of San Antonio
   d) Alamo

2. What important event happened at Washington-
   on-the-Brazos?

   a) Signing of the Texas Declaration of
      Independence.
   b) Santa Anna signed the Treaty of Velasco.
   c) Texas surrendered to Mexico.
   d) The Mexican Government gave Texas to the
      United States.

3. Who was the dictator of Mexico during the fight
   for Texas Independence?

   a) Juan Mata
   b) Juan Seguin
c) Santa Anna
d) Bill Clinton

4. What Texan forced Mexican soldiers to surrender at Anahuac and also fought at the Alamo?
a) Sam Houston
b) Jim Bowie
c) Davy Crockett
d) William B. Travis

5. What was important about the capture of Goliad?

a) There were only a few Mexican guards at Goliad.
b) The Mexican Government felt that it had to fight.
c) After their victory, Texans were well supplied with weapons.
d) It was a nice town.

6. Who asked the famous question at the Battle of San Antonio?

a) Stephen Austin
b) Edward Burleson
c) General George Collinsworth
7. Who fought at the Alamo?

a) Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, William B. Travis, Almeron Dickinson.
b) Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Jim Bowie, Santa Anna
c) Davy Crockett, Susanna Dickinson, Sam Houston, Stephen Austin.
d) None of the above.

8. “I was born in Mexico, but I helped to defend the Alamo. I was sent for help, so I escaped death. Who am I?”

a) Davy Crockett
b) Jim Bowie
c) William B. Travis
d) Juan Seguin

9. “I survived the Alamo and was sent by Santa Anna to deliver a message to surrender to Sam Houston. Who am I?”

a) Jane Long
b) Johanna Troutman
c) Susanna Dickinson
d) None of the above.

10. About how long did the Battle of San Jacinto last?

a) 20 minutes
b) 20 hours
c) 20 days
d) 20 seconds

11. After which battle were 350 prisoners massacred by Santa Anna?

a) Goliad
b) Battle of San Antonio
c) Gonzales
d) Alamo

12. What did the Texans yell as they started their attack at San Jacinto?

a) We will Win!
b) Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!
c) Remember Houston! Remember San Antonio!
d) None of the above.
13. Who got sick at the Alamo?

a) William B. Travis  
b) Davy Crockett  
c) Jim Bowie  
d) Santa Anna

14. Texas won all of its battles during the fight for independence.

a) True  
b) False

15. What were the Mexicans doing when the Texans attacked at the Battle of San Jacinto?

a) Having a party.  
b) Sleeping  
c) Eating  
d) Aerobics

16. Which is the correct order of the battles fought in the Texas fight for independence?

a) Gonzales, Anahuac, Alamo, Battle of San Antonio, Battle of San Jacinto.
b) Gonzales, Battle of San Antonio, Alamo, Goliad Massacre, Battle of San Jacinto.

c) Gonzales, Alamo, Battle of San Antonio, Goliad Massacre, Battle of San Jacinto.

d) Gonzales, Battle of San Jacinto, Alamo, Battle of San Antonio, Goliad Massacre.

17. Who led the Texans to victory at San Jacinto?

a) Santa Anna
b) William B. Travis
c) Stephen Austin
d) Sam Houston

18. After the Battle of San Jacinto, what treaty was Santa Anna forced to sign?

a) Treaty of Victory
b) Treaty of Texas
c) Treaty of Velasco
d) Treaty of Mexico

19. The Bowie Knife is not named after Jim Bowie.

a) True
b) False
20. What Texan made the flag for Goliad that read "Liberty or Death"?

a) Betsy Ross  
b) Jane Long  
c) Susanna Dickinson  
d) Johanna Troutman

21. The Treaty of Velasco guaranteed that Texas was free from future Mexican Rule.

a) True  
b) False
Appendix B. Post Test

Fight for Texas' Independence

1. Which battle was considered the start of the fight for independence in Texas?
   a) Goliad
   b) Gonzales
   c) Battle of San Antonio
   d) Alamo

2. What important event happened at Washington-on-the-Brazos?
   a) George Washington crossed the Brazos River.
   b) Signing of the Declaration of Independence.
   c) Texas surrendered to Mexico.

3. Who was the dictator of Mexico during the fight for Texas Independence?
   a) Juan Mata
   b) Juan Seguin
   c) Santa Anna
d) Bill Clinton

4. What Texan forced Mexican soldiers to surrender at Anahuac and also fought at the Alamo?

a) Sam Houston
b) Jim Bowie
c) Davy Crockett
d) William B. Travis

5. What was important about the capture of Goliad?

a) There were only a few Mexican guards at Goliad.
b) The Mexican Government felt that it had to fight.
c) It was a nice town.
d) None of the above.

6. Who asked the famous question at the Battle of San Antonio?

a) Stephen Austin
b) Edward Burleson
c) General George Collinsworth
d) Ben Milam
7. Who fought at the Alamo?

a) Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, William B. Travis, James Bonham.
b) Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Jim Bowie, Santa Anna
c) Davy Crockett, Susanna Dickinson, Sam Houston, Stephen Austin.
d) None of the above.

8. "I was born in Mexico, but I helped to defend the Alamo. I was sent for help, so I escaped death. Who am I?"

a) Davy Crockett
b) Jim Bowie
c) William B. Travis
d) Juan Seguin

9. "I survived the Alamo and was sent by Santa Anna to deliver a message to surrender to Sam Houston. Who am I?"

a) Jane Long
b) Johanna Troutman
c) Susanna Dickinson
10. About how long did the Battle of San Jacinto last?

a) 20 minutes
b) 20 hours
c) 20 days
d) 20 seconds

11. Where were 350 Texans massacred by order of General Santa Anna?

a) Goliad
b) Battle of San Antonio
c) Gonzales
d) Alamo

12. What did the Texans yell as they started their attack at San Jacinto?

a) "We will Win!"
b) "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!"
c) "Remember Houston! Remember San Antonio!"
d) None of the above.
13. Who got sick at the Alamo?

a) William B. Travis  
b) Davy Crockett  
c) Jim Bowie  
d) Santa Anna

14. Texas won all of its battles during the fight for independence.

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b) False

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a) Having a party.  
b) Sleeping  
c) Eating  
d) Aerobics

16. Which is the correct order of the battles fought in the Texas fight for independence?

a) Gonzales, Anahuac, Alamo, Battle of San Antonio, Battle of San Jacinto. 
b) Gonzales, Goliad, Battle of San Antonio,
17. Who led the Texans to victory at San Jacinto?

a) Santa Anna
b) William B. Travis
c) Stephen Austin
d) Sam Houston

18. After the Battle of San Jacinto, what treaty was Santa Anna forced to sign?

a) Treaty of Victory
b) Treaty of Texas
c) Treaty of Velasco
d) Treaty of Mexico

19. Jim Bowie had a weapon named after him. What kind of weapon was this?

a) A gun.
b) A knife.
20. What Texan made the flag that flew over Goliad that read “Liberty or Death”?

a) Betsy Ross
b) Jane Long
c) Susanna Dickinson
d) Johanna Troutman

21. What were the conditions in the Treaties of Velasco?

a) Santa Anna was to be killed.
b) Santa Anna would never fight Texas again, all Mexican troops had to leave Texas, Mexico had to pay for the property that was damaged in the war, all Texan prisoners had to be set free, and Santa Anna had to convince the Mexican Government that Texas was free.
c) Santa Anna would never fight Texas again, all Mexican troops had to leave Texas, Mexico did not have to pay for the property that was damaged in the war, all Texan prisoners had to be set free, and Santa Anna had to convince the Mexican Government that Texas was free.
d) None of the above.

22. The Battle of Gonzales was over _______.

a) custom duties.
b) taxes.
c) a cannon.
d) None of the above.

23. How many Texans died in the Battle of San Antonio?

a) 2
b) 5
c) 20
d) 100

24. What did Sam Houston order Jim Bowie to do with the Alamo?

a) Maintain it as a fort.
b) Remove its arms and destroy it.
c) Forget about it.
d) Jim Bowie was never at the Alamo.

25. About how many Texans were at the Alamo?

a) 100
b) 180
c) 5,000
d) 10,000
26. About how many Mexican soldiers were at the Alamo?

a) 200  
b) 500  
c) 5,000  
d) 10,000  

27. The capture of Santa Anna at San Jacinto meant ______.

a) the war was over.  
b) it was time for a party.  
c) Texas had to invade Mexico.  
d) None of the above.  

28. What did Houston do with his men while he retreated?

a) played cards  
b) nothing  
c) drilled  
d) aerobics  

29. March 2, is still known as ______.

a) the 4th of July.  
b) an ordinary day.
c) San Jacinto Day.
d) Texas Independence Day.

30. How many days did the Battle of the Alamo last?

   a) 11  
   b) 12  
   c) 13  
   d) 14
Appendix C.
Books Read By Groups


Books Read To The Class

