

Sam Houston Reading Comprehension

Name _____

Sam Houston was an American military general and politician who was born in Virginia in 1793. At a young age, Houston ran away from home and spent time with a Cherokee Indian tribe nearby, familiarizing himself with their ways and culture. These experiences in his youth informed his later decisions as a politician.

Houston served in the military during the war of 1812, and caught the attention of then-general Andrew Jackson. Jackson took Houston under his wing, causing Houston to adopt many Jacksonian policies. Houston represented Tennessee in Congress for two terms before being elected its governor. He resigned in 1829 after a divorce and spent a few years in the Cherokee Indians' territory once more.

In 1832, Houston moved to Texas during a time period when tensions were high between Texans and the Mexican government. When conflict arose between the Texans seeking independence and the Mexicans tightening their control, Houston became commander of the local Texan army. When war broke out, and the Texans suffered a massive defeat at the Battle of the Alamo, Houston ordered that his forces retreat—a controversial decision, but one that allowed him to train the army for a battle that would later result in a Texan victory. In 1836, Houston and 800 men camped out on the banks of the San Jacinto river and defeated the much larger forces of Mexican general Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna in a mere 18 minutes. Santa Anna's defeat was what resulted in an armistice and won the Texans their independence, and Houston's quick thinking was a factor in that victory.

After Texas became independent, Houston was voted its president for two terms in 1836 and 1841. As president, Houston tried to avoid future wars with Mexico and tried to halt wars on the native Indians—a decision potentially motivated by his close relationships with the Cherokee in his youth. He then served as a senator when the United States annexed Texas, and fought for preservation of the Union when tensions over slavery threatened to split the country in half. Eventually, Houston's ideals lost out amongst his fellow politicians and he was deposed from a secession convention in Texas. He retired from politics and died in Huntsville, Texas in 1863. Houston was the only American elected governor of two states—Tennessee and Texas—and today, the city of Houston is named after him, honoring his legacy as a driving force in the fight for Texan independence.

1. In which of the following positions did Sam Houston not serve?

- a. Governor of Tennessee
- b. Commander of the Texan Army
- c. Governor of Houston
- d. President of Texas

2. What was the effect of Houston being well-versed in native American culture and customs?

- a. His peace treaty brokered with the Indians during the Mexican-American War
- b. His sympathy towards native Americans when elected president
- c. His choice to slaughter them mercilessly once elected president of Texas
- d. His decision to abandon politics and live with the Cherokee in his old age

- 3. Which motto do you think Sam Houston would agree with, given his decision to retreat after the Battle of the Alamo?**
- Lose the battle, but win the war.
 - Life is like a box of chocolates: you never know what you're gonna get.
 - Happy nations have no history.
 - United we stand, divided we fall.
- 4. Which of the following events did not result in success for Houston?**
- Andrew Jackson takes Houston under his wing.
 - Houston surprises Santa Anna's troops at San Jacinto.
 - Houston runs for president of Texas.
 - Houston fights for preservation of the Union.
- 5. Put the following events from Sam Houston's life in order.**
- Houston serves as senator of Texas.
 - Houston is deposed at a secession convention.
 - Houston gets a divorce.
 - Houston defeats Santa Anna.
- I, II, III, IV
 - IV, II, III, I
 - III, IV, I, II
 - IV, III, I, II
- 6. With which statement would Houston disagree with?**
- Native tribes should be listened to and protected whenever possible.
 - It's important for armed forces to be well-trained before a big battle.
 - If states don't agree with the country's views, they should form their own country.
 - One war with Mexico is more than enough.
- 7. Which best describes Houston's contributions to Texas?**
- An independence fighter turned politician
 - A reckless commander turned resigned governor
 - A strategic senator turned belligerent freedom fighter
 - A Cherokee native turned dedicated protestor