Mary Adams Maverick: A Texas Pioneer
A curriculum unit that explores the life of a woman on the Texas frontier as it teaches students to use primary source documents

Lesson 1
Who Was Mary Maverick?

Enduring understandings for this unit:

• People who write history use evidence from the past to describe and explain the events, people, and motivations that were part of a particular time period.

• Women’s contributions are often different but just as important to history as men’s contributions.

• Mary Adams Maverick played an important role in Texas history.

Essential questions for this unit:

• How does a historian use a primary source document to understand the past?

• Who was Mary Maverick and why is she important in Texas history?

TEKS:

Grade 4:

3(B) The student will describe the successes and problems of the Republic of Texas
22 (A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources . . .

Grade 7:

4(A) identify individuals, events and issues during the Republic of Texas . . . including annexation

21(A) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources . . .

Materials:

A. Copies of the short biography of Mary Maverick.
B. Comprehension questions about biography (rubric included).

Objectives:
The students will:

A. Read about Mary Maverick and her contributions to Texas history
B. Answer comprehension questions based on the reading
C. Summarize why they think Mary Maverick is important to Texas history.

Anticipatory set (Attention getter):

The teacher will:

1. Display the image of Mary Maverick
2. Introduce the lesson by asking:
   1. What do you think we can learn about life in the Republic of Texas by reading about the life of this woman?
3. Say:

   Our lesson today will introduce you to a woman who played an important role in the settlement of Texas during the time of the Texas Republic (1736–1845).

Procedure(s):

1. The teacher will:
   A. Allow the students to read orally the biography of Mary Maverick.

2. The students will:
   A. Answer the comprehension questions. (*This can be done orally, in small groups, or individually.*)

Closure:

The teacher will ask the students to give a short statement (one to three sentences) that summarizes the life and/or contributions of Mary Maverick.

Evaluation:

The students will write a letter to a family member telling them about what they learned in school today. (*These letters will serve as primary source documents in the next lesson.*)
Mary Maverick: A Texas Pioneer

(March 16, 1818 – February 24, 1898)

When students think about the Republic of Texas, they may assume that life was as organized and settled as it was in the United States during the same time period. However, for the people who came to settle Texas, the years from 1836 to 1845 were filled with many dangers to face and obstacles to overcome. In the following lessons you will learn about a woman named Mary Maverick. She was one of the first Anglo women settlers in San Antonio de Bexar. As you will see, she experienced many adventures as a woman, wife, and mother on the Texas frontier.

It is unlikely that Mary Ann Adams realized that she would become famous for her role in settling Texas. She was born a few miles north of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on March 16, 1818. Her parents, William and Agatha Adams, had established a plantation on the Alabama frontier before Tuscaloosa was designated as the state capital and the University of Alabama was built
there. When Mary was nine years old, her father died, leaving the responsibility of running the plantation and raising six children to her mother, a job she often found overwhelming. Mary was sent to boarding school in Tuscaloosa, where she made many friends, including a couple of male admirers. At six feet tall, she was easily recognized in a crowd of her peers. When she was eighteen years old she met the man she would marry.

![Samuel A. Maverick](image)

Samuel A. Maverick was a lawyer from South Carolina who played an important part in the early settlement of Texas. He was at the siege of the Alamo days before the massacre but escaped death because he was chosen to be a delegate at the “Convention of 1836” held at Washington-on-the-Brazos, where he participated in the signing of the Texas Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836. Shortly thereafter Maverick traveled to Alabama to tend to his business affairs.

When Sam and Mary met, he was thirty-three years old and she was eighteen. After a three-month courtship they were married in August 1836 at the Christ Episcopal Church in Tuscaloosa. They spent the next year visiting family and friends in Alabama and Mississippi. In October 1837 they took their five-month-old son, Sam, and started their journey to Texas.
Maverick’s plan was to settle his family in San Antonio de Bexar. On their trip they encountered many challenges and delays including illness, a broken wagon wheel, and encounters with Indians. Finally, on June 15, 1838, they arrived in San Antonio de Bexar and set up house in a three-room dwelling known as “the Barerra place.” It was located on the northeast corner of the Main Plaza on the banks of the San Antonio River. In 1839, Sam was elected mayor of San Antonio de Bexar and Lewis Antonio, the Maverick’s second son, was born. Lewis is identified as the first Anglo-American child to be born and raised in San Antonio. While Sam Sr. was deeply involved in the political and business work of establishing the Republic of Texas, Mary was devoted to making a home for her family. Her husband was often gone from home for months at a time surveying, buying, and selling land as well as making frequent business trips back to the United States. It was Mary’s responsibility to tend to the children, maintain the house, and create community ties between herself and the other settlers.

Maverick homestead in San Antonio

During the early years she was often faced with danger and hardships. In 1840 she witnessed Council House fight—a shoot-out between Comanche Indians and Texas soldiers in San Antonio’s Main Plaza. In 1842 Gen. Adrian Woll, with a large Mexican army, recaptured San Antonio. Samuel Maverick and the other men were taken prisoners and marched to Perote
prison outside of Mexico City. While her husband was in prison, Mary and her children and her servants lived in a small cabin on the banks of the Colorado River. Her third child was born on the same day that Sam was released from prison. The Mavericks lived for awhile at Decrows Point, near the Matagorda Bay. They returned permanently to San Antonio in 1847.

Over the course of twenty-one years, Mary gave birth to ten children, six of whom survived to adulthood. She and Sam built a house on the corner of Houston and Alamo Street overlooking Alamo Plaza. Mary was deeply committed to establishing an Episcopal Church in San Antonio. She and Sam donated the land on which St. Mark’s Episcopal Church was built. For more than twenty years, Mary served as president of the Ladies’ Parish Aid society. The church continues today to be an important part of the city of San Antonio. The Mavericks also donated the land to create Travis Park.

During the Civil War, while four of Mary’s sons served in the Confederate Army, she was active in relief efforts. After the war, the Mavericks worked to rebuild Texas as part of the United States of America.
Samuel Maverick died on September 2, 1870, and was buried in San Antonio’s City Cemetery. After his death, Mary continued to work to preserve the history of early Texas. She was a member of the San Antonio Historical Society and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. She worked tirelessly to restore the Alamo as a historic site. She was instrumental in creating and promoting the Battle of Flowers celebration. Her diary and memoirs continue to be important accounts of those early days in Texas history. She died on February 24, 1898, shortly before her eighty-first birthday, and was buried next to her beloved husband.

References


1. Where was Mary born and raised? Using a U.S. map try to find the distance between her hometown and San Antonio de Bexar.

2. In what historical events did Samuel Maverick participate before he met Mary?

3. What are some of the dangers Mary faced in her journey to San Antonio de Bexar?

4. What is the name of the child identified as the first Anglo child to be born and raised in San Antonio, Texas?

5. What contributions do you think Mary Maverick made to the settlement of Texas?
Mary Adams Maverick
Lesson 1 - Biography
Comprehension Questions
(Teacher Copy)

1. Where was Mary born and raised? Using a U.S. map try to find the distance between her hometown and San Antonio de Bexar.

   (Tuscaloosa, Alabama; approximately 800 miles)

2. In what historical events did Samuel Maverick participate before he met Mary?

   (the siege of the Alamo, signing the Texas Declaration of Independence)

3. What are some of the dangers Mary faced in her journey to San Antonio de Bexar?

   (Accept reasonable answers. Possible suggestions: Indians, broken wagon wheels–lack of transportation, illness, caring for an infant child.)

4. What is the name of the child identified as the first Anglo child to be born and raised in San Antonio, Texas?

   (Lewis Antonio Maverick)

5. What contributions do you think Mary Maverick made to the settlement of Texas?

   (Accept reasonable answers: Possible suggestions: helped establish community life of San Antonio, supported her husband’s efforts to bring government and a good economy to Texas, was one of the founders of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, worked to preserve early Texas history.)