

Discussion Guide

U.S. History Engagement

CLAIM: The U.S. Stole Texas From Mexico

The following material is provided to help you, the parent or teacher, ensure that the student has gotten out of the Engagement what they should by opening up discussions of the deeper concepts and ideas. You may use the questions below to facilitate deeper discussions, or to check for understanding. Use one question, or use them all. Whatever works for you.

Parents, this is also designed to bring you and your child together in this process. Some of these questions are written specifically for parents.

You will notice that these questions are not about facts. They are about big ideas, and drawing conclusions. If the child can discuss the big ideas, then you can rest assured that they know the necessary underlying facts. We also provide detailed explanations of the kinds of responses you should expect to hear, additional historical context, and ways to use these conversations to advance the values and principles that will enable children to thrive in their society.

One final word. Our Engagements are very thorough. If the child struggles with these discussions, you may want to consider changing your approach in how you use these Engagements. Take a look at the Spirit of Resistance [“How To” Guide For Parents](#) for some options. Or contact us. We are always ready to help.

#1: Is it possible to prevent the expansion of people and ideas?

- a. The answer you want to hear is “No”. Although, it may take a short discussion to get there. If the child is a student of history, he may suggest that there have been times when acts of genocide have been used as a way to prevent particular groups from expanding and spreading their ideas. That, of course, is true, but “expansion” itself remains. It remains as a thing that is an intrinsic part of the human experience. This Engagement describes the ways in which expansion is natural and inevitable. The child should definitely understand that concept. There is more discussion about this in Question #2.
- b. From the humans who strode out of the Great Rift Valley in Africa, to all of the Native tribes in North America, to the Aztecs and Inca, Mohammed and Islam, the Romans and Greeks, etc., etc., etc. The story of any people, at least any people that have survived, is a story of growth, migration, and displacement.
- c. This question can open up some good conversations about whether it is ever good (moral) to try and prevent certain people or ideas from expanding. For example, is it proper and just to try to prevent the expansion and spread of evil people and ideas? Should we prevent the expansion of Marxism, racism, totalitarianism, Satanism, etc., including the expansion of any society which champions those ideas? If so, what means are justified to stop the spread of evil ideologies?

#2: Why don't we consider the Bantu to be evil, or wrong, for colonizing southern Africa?

- a. If you haven't done the Engagement yourself, here is a quick summary of the Bantu: the Bantu were a culture in ancient Africa who were more advanced than the other sub-Saharan cultures. Around 1500 BC, they began spreading out across Africa and colonized practically everything south of the Sahara Desert. In doing so, they wiped out hundreds of other indigenous groups, eradicated their languages, and transformed Africa forever. Today, over 400 different African cultures and 300 million people owe their heritage to the Bantu.
- b. This question is meant to facilitate a discussion about why the expansion of the Bantu is universally praised by historians and sociologists, but the expansion of American culture, ideas, and language across the North American continent is universally condemned. The very same people who will celebrate their own Bantu heritage will refer to our Thanksgiving as "A Day of Mourning". One of the most important things we can do for children is to give them the ability to spot these types of misleading or uninformed explanations of the past, and open up conversations with them about it.
- c. The simple answer for why we should not consider what the Bantu did to be wrong or evil is because...it wasn't. It is a deeply intrinsic part of existence. To migrate and expand is natural and essential to the preservation of any species. In the process of that migration and expansion, it is also natural that cultures will come into conflict with one another. When that occurs, the more advanced culture, the one with better ideas, will always win out. We see this happen in our own lives every day. Good ideas are advanced; inferior ones are left to wither and die. Groups with a stronger set of values and principles prosper and thrive over other groups, even within the same society. None of this is to excuse when individuals commit acts of evil in the course of this natural clash of cultures and ideas, but the clash itself is not evil or wrong. It's natural. We should always seek to mitigate the negative effects of it, but expansion itself has always occurred. It always will. And it will always lead to the clash of cultures.

#3: Which groups of people practiced colonization on the North American continent?

- a. ALL OF THEM.
- b. Even the very first humans to cross over into North America from Asia were colonizers. There does not need to be other people on a particular piece of land for it to be colonized.
- c. A legitimate argument could be made that large amounts of immigrants pouring into another country are colonizers. All immigration, in fact, could be considered a form of colonization.
- d. In Texas, the Spanish had settled there almost a century before the Comanche and Apache Indians ever showed up. This essentially made the Spanish Texans the indigenous people being colonized.
- e. The point is...to make white Europeans/Americans uniquely responsible to carry the weight of "the evil colonizer" makes no sense historically.

#4: Why was it a bad decision for the Mexican government to give the new Texan settlers the ability to self-govern?

- a. Mr. G compares this to the time in U.S. history before the French and Indian War, known as “salutary neglect”. During this time of neglect, England left the colonists alone and gave them autonomy over themselves and their lives. The colonists used this time to set up their own institutions, create new traditions, and to advance new ideas of governance. They became their own people, separate from Mother England. In fact, they were quickly developing into a very unique group of people, distinct from any that had ever trod the earth prior. By the time the British started paying attention again, it was too late.
- b. The Mexican government did not even try to create a culture in Texas that reflected Mexico’s own values and principles. Instead, they invited tens of thousands of people to settle Texas who shared nothing with the Mexican people in terms of values, principles, and traditions. It’s approach to Texas was a straight up colonization effort; a naked grab for land and power. In addition, the settlers that Mexico lured to Texas with free land were allowed a great deal of autonomy. For all intents and purposes, they were on their own. “Here’s thousands of acres of completely free land. Have a ball!”. The Mexican government should not have been surprised that, much like the British colonies, those settlers did not want to give up their freedom and institutions when Mexico woke up one day and decided it was time to take those things away.
- c. This is what makes the creation of the United States such a significant event. **It is the first great advancing of freedom in human history**; where freedom is seen not just as some quixotic idea, but as an expectation. Not having freedom became to be seen as unthinkable. The Mexican government, like all other governments in the world, never saw it coming.

#5: If you were living in Texas at that time, would you have wanted to be independent of Mexico?

- a. There is a right and a wrong answer to this question. To say that you would not have wanted to be independent of Mexico at that time, is to not comprehend the values and principles of the United States and of the West more broadly. Mr. G presents evidence showing how the Mexican government was an oppressive, murderous, and highly unstable regime. This is practically the antithesis of the values and principles that our nation was founded upon. Not trying to become independent of Mexico would have indicated, at best, a tacit approval of Mexico’s actions or, at worst, outright endorsement of them.
- b. The Western philosophy of freedom and government is based on the assumption that all people are made in the image of God and therefore have inherent value. Thus, by extension, any government that is oppressive is therefore acting against moral law and must be resisted.

#6: The evidence presented in the Engagement makes it clear there was no underlying “hand of expansion”, either within the U.S. government or the people of Texas, that was driving Texas to become a part of the U.S. However, could there have been some other “hand” guiding these events?

- a. This is an opportunity to have a discussion with your child that is aligned with your own religious beliefs. If you adhere to a particular religion, and are raising your children in that religion, this is a good place to have a discussion with them about the role that Divine providence plays in the world. Did God’s hand play a role in the creation of the United States? In the advancement of its values and principles? Are there other times when you can see God’s hand present in history?
- b. We will often suggest opportunities to use the lessons of history as vehicles to discuss your own religious beliefs with your child. If you are a religious person, it is important to take advantage of opportunities to show your child how your beliefs connect to the real world.

#7: Do you think it’s possible that some group or culture could replace the United States, like the United States replaced the indigenous people in North America, and like the Bantu replaced the civilizations in Africa?

- a. The obvious answer is “Yes”, this could definitely happen. The real discussion you want to have is how it could happen.
- b. Could it happen through physical force? Probably not. One way it could happen, however, is if we do not actively uphold and advance our nation’s shared values and principles, those values and principles that are the foundation of our society and of our strength as a people. It could happen if we do not teach those shared values to our future generations, if we do not energetically assert their truth, or if we stand by and do nothing while those values and principles are degraded. That would make it easy for a group with a strong sense of their own values and principles to come in and supplant our own.
- c. Scottish author and historian John Buchan once said, “*No great cause is ever lost or ever won. The battle must be renewed and the creed restated.*” Our nation’s shared values and principles (such as self-governance, freedom of speech and religion, natural rights, and equality under the law) need to be constantly refreshed if they are to continue. We cannot just assume they will be magically transferred to future generations.