

**Lesson Title:** Digging Deeper: Mission San Sabá  
**By:** Sarah Steger & Rand Scheutzeberg  
**Subject:** Texas History

**Grade Level:** 7

**Rationale:** This lesson should be used when students already have an understanding of the Spanish mission-presidio system in Texas. The purpose of this lesson is to have students understand Spanish motives for establishing Mission San Sabá and the reasons for the mission's failure.

**Materials:**

- Computer lab w/ online capability
- Mission San Sabá Study Questions and corresponding Answer Key
- Overhead projector
- Visual activator - Transparency of Mission San Sabá painting
- PERSIA categories (Political, Economic, Religious, Social, Intellectual, Area) and examples - student handout
- PERSIA chart - student handout and overhead transparency
- Massacre or Victory reading - student handout

**Lesson Duration:** 2 days, 90 minutes each or 4 days, 45 minutes each

**Objectives:**

- Social Studies 113.23 (2B), identify important individuals, events, and issues related to European exploration and colonization of Texas, including the establishment of Catholic missions
- Social Studies 113.23 (21A), use primary sources such as computer software, databases, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas
- Social Studies 113.23 (21B), analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

- Social Studies 113.23 (21D), identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event
- Social Studies 113.23 (21E), support a point of view on a social studies issue or event
- Social Studies 113.23 (22C), transfer information from one medium to another
- Social Studies 113.23 (23B), use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision
- Art 117.35 (2A), create artworks based on direct observations, personal experience, and imagination;
- Art 117.35 (3A), analyze ways that international, historical, and political issues influence artworks;
- Art 117.35 (3B) analyze selected artworks to determine cultural contexts

**Activity:**

Part I

1. Show students a transparency of the painting “The Destruction of Mission San Sabá in the Province of Texas and the Martyrdom of the Fathers Alonso de Terreros, Joseph Santiesteban” on the overhead projector. Ask students what they can infer about the following details in the painting:

- Time frame
- Location
- People involved
- Conflict
- Point of view of the artist

Advise students that they will use a website to discover the facts of the story told in the painting.

2. Distribute the Mission San Sabá Study Questions. Have students answer the questions using information from the Texas Beyond History Mission San Sabá exhibit at <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/index.html>

## Part II

1. KWL (**K**now, **W**ant to know, **L**earned) activity: On butcher paper or overhead transparency write the letters **K**, **W**, and **L** across the top. Under the letter **K**, have students list facts they already know about the Spanish mission system in Texas. Under the **W** have them list what they want to learn about this subject. The last part of the activity (what they **L**earned) will be completed at the end of part 2 of the lesson.

2. PERSIA Activity – Contrast Political, Economic, Religious, Social, Intellectual and Artistic ways of Spanish and Native Americans. Distribute the PERSIA model and PERSIA chart to students. Depending on the level of the class, the teacher may fill in a transparency of the chart with student participation or students can use their Mission San Sabá Study Questions, textbooks, and the Mission San Sabá website to fill in the PERSIA chart with a partner or in small groups.

**Modification:** Provide an answer bank for the San Sabá Student Handout questions. Help students highlight or underline strategic points in the “Victory or Massacre” reading.

**Student Product:** Answers to Mission San Sabá Study Questions and Massacre or Victory essay

**Closure:** Fill in the L (what students learned) on the KWL chart from Day 1.

### **Assessment:**

Distribute the “Massacre or Victory” reading student handout and have students read it aloud. Ask students to consider everything they have learned and then decide whether they believe the event at San Sabá was a massacre or a victory. They may use their Massacre or Victory Study Questions to help with this. Once students have formed an opinion, they will write a brief (one page) essay explaining and defending their position.

**Extension Activity:** Have students share their essays with the class.

**Links:** <http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net>

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PORTLAND COLLEGE, VICTORIA, THE BAY OF BASSA, 1841

The following is a list of the names of the students who were admitted to the college in the year 1841. The names are arranged in alphabetical order.

Name	Age	Place of Birth
John Smith	18	London
James Brown	19	Edinburgh
Robert White	20	Birmingham
Thomas Green	21	Manchester
William Black	22	Leeds
Richard Grey	23	Sheffield
Henry Gold	24	Nottingham
George Silver	25	Cardiff
Edward Wood	26	Cardiff
Charles Stone	27	Cardiff
Frederick Hall	28	Cardiff
Samuel King	29	Cardiff
Benjamin Lee	30	Cardiff
Samuel Evans	31	Cardiff
John Roberts	32	Cardiff
Thomas Jones	33	Cardiff
William Williams	34	Cardiff
Richard Price	35	Cardiff
Henry Thomas	36	Cardiff
George Baker	37	Cardiff
Edward King	38	Cardiff
Charles Lee	39	Cardiff
Frederick White	40	Cardiff
Samuel Black	41	Cardiff
Benjamin Green	42	Cardiff
Samuel Brown	43	Cardiff
John Smith	44	Cardiff
Thomas Jones	45	Cardiff
William Williams	46	Cardiff
Richard Price	47	Cardiff
Henry Thomas	48	Cardiff
George Baker	49	Cardiff
Edward King	50	Cardiff
Charles Lee	51	Cardiff
Frederick White	52	Cardiff
Samuel Black	53	Cardiff
Benjamin Green	54	Cardiff
Samuel Brown	55	Cardiff
John Smith	56	Cardiff
Thomas Jones	57	Cardiff
William Williams	58	Cardiff
Richard Price	59	Cardiff
Henry Thomas	60	Cardiff
George Baker	61	Cardiff
Edward King	62	Cardiff
Charles Lee	63	Cardiff
Frederick White	64	Cardiff
Samuel Black	65	Cardiff
Benjamin Green	66	Cardiff
Samuel Brown	67	Cardiff
John Smith	68	Cardiff
Thomas Jones	69	Cardiff
William Williams	70	Cardiff
Richard Price	71	Cardiff
Henry Thomas	72	Cardiff
George Baker	73	Cardiff
Edward King	74	Cardiff
Charles Lee	75	Cardiff
Frederick White	76	Cardiff
Samuel Black	77	Cardiff
Benjamin Green	78	Cardiff
Samuel Brown	79	Cardiff
John Smith	80	Cardiff

## Mission San Sabá Study Questions

### Directions:

1. Log onto the Internet
2. Go to [www.texasbeyondhistory.net](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net)
3. Click on the "Map Tool"
4. On the map, click on *Mission San Saba*
5. There are several separate sections to the site. The Study Question sections correspond to the following sections:
  - San Sabá Main
  - Spanish Motives
  - Lost and Found
  - Texas Tech Investigations

Scroll through each section of the site to find the correct information. Correct answers may not be in order in the readings.

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### San Sabá Main

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/index.html>

List six things you see in the painting at the top of this webpage:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
7. What is the title of the mural (painting)?
8. Why do you think the mural is titled as it is?
9. How do you think the artist knew what to paint if the mural was painted 6 years after the destruction of the mission?

10. What is a musket?
11. On what day did was the mission surrounded by Indians?
12. How many Indians surrounded the mission?
13. How did some of the people in the mission survive the Indian attack?
14. Where did the Indians get their guns?
15. Where did the mission survivors go during the night?
16. How many years did the Presidio continue to serve the community before it was abandoned?
17. Which priest pictured was head of the mission?
18. Where was the mural painted?

List three building materials used to build the San Sabá church and houses:

19.

20.

21.

22. Near what Texas town is the San Sabá Presidio located?

23. What was Presidio San Sabá originally called? (see aerial photograph)

24. Who led the archeological investigation of the San Sabá site?

25. Why do you think he was chosen as leader for this project?

### **Spanish Motives**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/motives.html>

List 4 reasons the Spanish priests and soldiers had for moving to Texas.

26.

27.

28.

29.

30. What river is near the mission?
31. What was used to fill in the spaces in the building's walls?
32. How far apart were the mission and the presidio?
33. Were the Spanish priests successful in Christianizing the Indians?
34. Where were traces of gold found?
35. What Alamo hero also tried mining?
36. Were the Spanish successful in mining?
37. What does Norteños mean?
38. Where is the Edwards Plateau located?

List two reasons why the Spanish wanted to tame and pacify the Indians.

39.

40.

List 3 places where the Spanish found a lot of gold and silver.

41.

42.

43.

### **Lost and Found**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/lost.html>

44. Who was a direct descendant of Jean Leal?
45. Why is Juan Leal remembered?
46. What method did Wolf use to help locate the San Sabá mission?

Which two persons owned the property on which the Mission San Sabá was found?

47.

48.

List 2 items found at the mission by archeologists.

49.

50.

51. Draw a picture of the fired daub found on this webpage.

52. Who was able to determine from Spanish records the distance between the mission and the presidio?

53. Draw a picture of the sherds of the Spanish olive jar found on this webpage.

54. What material was the bell that was found made of?

55. Where was the bell found?

56. Draw a picture of the bell found on this webpage.

57. Why was the bell not found in the burned-out mission?

58. What are the members of the archeological team standing in front of on this webpage?

**Texas Tech Investigations**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/investigations.html>

59. What method of investigation did Tommy Tomesal use?

List 3 things he found:

60.

61.

62.

63. Draw a musket ball and a nail.

64. Why do you think finding such artifacts is important to archeologists?

## **Mission San Sabá Study Questions Answer Key**

### **Note to Teachers:**

Correct answers to the Study Questions are sometimes found out of order in the readings.

### **San Sabá Main**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/index.html>

1-6. Answers will vary

7. "The Destruction of Mission San Sabá in the Province of Texas and the Martyrdom of the Fathers Alonso de Terreros, Joseph Santiesteban"

8. Answers will vary

9. He was advised by eyewitnesses as to the details of the Indian attack.

10. A gun

11. March 16, 1758

12. 2,000

13. They took refuge in the church

14. France

15. They went to the presidio.

16. 10 (a decade)

17. Father Alonso de Terreros

18. Mexico City

19-21. Possible answers: wooden poles, wooden posts, daub (mud), thatch

22. Menard

23. Presidio San Luis de las Amarillas

24. Dr. Grant D. Hall

25. Possible answers: he was well educated, an experienced archeologist, had knowledge of the San Saba River valley

### **Spanish Motives**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/motives.html>

26-29. Possible answers: to settle Texas, to make money from farming and ranching, to develop mineral resources (mining), to keep the French from developing a stronger hold in Texas, to bring Christianity to the Indians

30. San Saba River

31. Mud (daub)

32. About 4 miles

33. No

34. In the Llano Uplift area

35. Jim Bowie

36. No

37. Comanche, Wichita Indians and their allies

38. South and west of present day Austin (central Texas)

39-40. To keep the Indians from attacking miners and to exploit the Indians' labor in the mine

41-43. Mexico, Central America, South America

### **Lost and Found**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/lost.html>

44. Mark Wolf

45. He survived the San Sabá massacre

46. Aerial photography

47-48. Otis and Dionitia Lyckman

49-50. Possible answers: a piece of Spanish pottery, a brass bell, pieces of fired daub

51. Drawings will vary

52. Dr. Kathleen Gilmore

53. Drawings will vary.

54. Brass

55. In a field near the mission

56. Drawings will vary

57. It was probably taken from the mission by Indians after the attack.

58. Part of a rock wall

**Texas Tech Investigations**

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/investigations.html>

59. Metal detectors

60-62. musketballs, nails, brass artifacts

63. Drawings will vary.

64. Answers will vary.

**PERSIA Model**  
**Political, Economic, Religious, Social, Intellectual, Area**

**Political Influences:**

- Structure
- War
- Treaties
- Courts/Laws
- Leaders
- Popular participation
- Loyalty to leader

**Economic Influences:**

- State control of trade/industry
- Agriculture/Industry importance
- Labor systems
- Levels of technology
- Levels of international trade
- Gender and slaves
- Money system

**Religious Influences:**

- Importance on societal interaction
- Holy books
- Beliefs/teachings
- Conversion – role of missionaries
- Sin/salvation
- Deities

**Social Influences:**

- Family order –patriarchal, matriarchal
- Gender relations – role of women, children
- Social classes – slavery
- Entertainment
- Life styles

**Intellectual Influences – The Arts:**

- Art and music
- Writing and literature
- Philosophy
- Math/science
- Education
- Inventions

**Area – Geographic Influences:**

- Location
- Physical
- Movement

Aspect of Culture	Spanish	Native Americans
Political		
Economic		
Religious		
Social		
Intellectual		
Artistic		

**Directions:** Use your textbook information, class notes, and the San Saba website (<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/sansaba/index.html>) to fill in each section of the PERSIA chart above.

## Massacre or Victory?

Spain and Mexico viewed the 1758 attack on Mission San Sabá as an atrocity. This is certainly the view that has come down to us through history books, almost all of which refer to the attack as a "massacre." From the standpoint of the Native American groups involved on the winning side of the mission attack, it was one of the few major victories they could claim over the Spanish foreigners who invaded their land.

In addition to being angered by Spanish intrusion, the Comanches and their allies detested the Apache. This animosity was the result of earlier competition for land and resources, at which the aggressive Apache had been very successful. As the Comanche swept into Texas from the northwest, they found willing allies in the Wichita, Tonkawa, and other tribes who had been bullied by the Apache. When the Spaniards chose to establish a mission for the Apache at San Sabá, they automatically became the enemies of the Comanche and other "Norteño" groups who detested the Apache.

The destruction of the mission and subsequent harassment of Spaniards still occupying the Presidio San Sabá were major reasons for the eventual withdrawal of the Spaniards out of Texas, and guaranteed Indian domination of much of the region for another 50 to 100 years. Strategically, the attack on Mission San Sabá was as successful as the Spanish decision to establish the mission was a failure.

### "A Triumph For All Who Seek"

Mark Wolf, Kay Hines, and I realize we were very fortunate to have found Mission San Sabá. Many very capable people had previously searched long and hard but had failed to find the mission. We had two advantages going for us. First, Hines had an open mind about what John Warren Hunter had to say. It is a lesson to all of us that "no stone should be left unturned" in the search for elusive sites like San Sabá. Secondly, it was just a plain stroke of good luck that we happened along right after Judge Lyckman had plowed his alfalfa field. There was a window of just a few weeks when the ground was visible and we could see the artifacts that told of the mission's existence. Had we come along the month before, or the month after, we would have joined the long list of searchers who walked right over the mission without knowing it, simply because the ground was covered by alfalfa.

In reviewing what was found at the mission during our various excavations there, it is remarkable there was so little left. The Indians set the place on fire and burned it down in 1758. They carried away with them many desirable items. We can imagine that bead necklaces, religious medallions, knives, hatchets, metal cooking pots, and the like would have been valued by the Indians and probably were hauled off by them after the attack. Then, Spanish soldiers came in shortly after the attack and salvaged what they could from the ruins.

We can only guess how many people visited the site between 1758 and the early 1900's when the site's whereabouts were still generally known. We know from a letter written in 1901 by J. J. Callan, a resident of Menard, that a substantial collection of artifacts from the mission was sent to the State Fair in Dallas. This collection has never been relocated. In view of all these looting, salvage, and collecting activities over the years, it is a wonder that we recovered ANY artifacts from the mission. Yet, with careful recovery, we were able to find, for example, a scatter of musket balls around the church that supported the story of Juan Leal and the other survivors who had sought refuge there during the attack.

The wonderful mural of the attack on Mission San Sabá Mission gave us a good idea of what the little mission looked like. Archeological investigations revealed a pattern of post stains that confirmed the mural depiction. The stories about the attack and its depiction in the mural are very dramatic, and we know that the events that unfolded at the mission were important in Texas history. But the reality is that the mission was a squalid little place where the priests and other residents were living in cramped, primitive quarters. Standing where the church once stood, and thinking about the musketballs scattered all around, one gets a feel for how desperate the situation was for Juan Leal and the others who were trying to survive inside on that March day back in 1758. The archeology makes it real and brings those days back to life.

We also feel lucky to have found the site when we did. An elderly man from the Menard area who came out to visit the 1997 excavations remembered that his grandfather used to farm the field containing the mission. The man said his grandfather, who used a mule-drawn plow, did not like to work in this particular field because he was always hitting "big burned stumps," which he had to stop and remove. We believe that the "stumps" were actually the bases of wooden posts from the mission stockade and other structures.

By 1993, mechanized farming activities had eliminated all but the lowest remnants of the posts that had burned down into the ground—at the most only 2 to 4 inches of the post stains remained. Plows were cutting down into pit features, such as the pit where the sundial was found, and dragging up bones, charcoal, and artifacts. I believe that another 10 or 20 years of farming would have completely destroyed the post stains and the features. Had we found the site in the year 2020, the artifacts would still be there, but we would not be able to trace the footprint of the mission, its size and layout, because the post stains would be gone.

The San Sabá Mission site can be viewed by traveling three miles east on FM 2092 out of Menard. The 1936 Texas Centennial Marker is along the highway immediately beside the alfalfa field. As Robert Weddle wrote in 1996: "The rediscovery of Mission Santa Cruz de San Sabá represents a triumph for all who seek."

Strategically, the attack on Mission San Sabá was as successful as the Spanish decision to establish the mission and its presidio was a failure.