

Tejana Military Members in World War II

Seventh Grade Lesson Plan

Objectives: This lesson plan introduces students to Tejanas (women of Spanish/Mexican origin from Texas) who undertook service to the United States of America during World War II. Students will gain an understanding of these military members during wartime and learn about the unique contributions they made as service members.

TEKS:

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to: (B) 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. (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps. (E) support a point of view on a social studies issue or event.

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to: (B) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation. (D) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

Materials:

- Summary of Tejanas serving in World War II
- Teacher guidelines
- “Tejanas and Military Service: A Historical Summary” table
- Short biographies and photographs of three Tejanas who served in the nation’s military during World War II
- U.S. Latino & Latina WW II Oral History Project:
<http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/>
- Essay activity sheets
- Lesson extension

Summary of Tejanas Serving in World War II

When the United States entered World War II following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan, Americans from all walks of life voluntarily enlisted to serve in the armed forces. Tejanas were among the many women who entered military service during World War II, serving in various positions. They were stationed both overseas and in this country.

On the following pages, you will be introduced to three Tejanas who joined the military during World War II. Although Tejanas comprised a minority of women in the military during World War II, their history lent itself to military service. For instance, their female Mexican ancestors served during the Mexican War for independence from Spain and in the Mexican Revolution. In addition, Tejanas served in Texas's efforts to win independence from Mexico. For example, Andrea Castañon Villanueva was present at the Alamo during the siege there. Francisca Álvarez was known as the Angel of Goliad for her service in caring for Texian soldiers prisoners following the execution of James Fanin and most of his soldiers at Goliad. Indeed, Tejanas serving in World War II had a background that encouraged women to be soldiers.

The three women covered in this lesson plan faced two major challenges in serving in the military in World War II.

- They often were the only Mexican-origin women in their unit or at their base camp.
- They had to overcome their family's opposition to their wish to be in the military.

Yet, these women, and others like them, went on to achieve their dreams of military service. Today, many Tejanas are following in these pioneers' footsteps by joining the United States armed forces.

Teacher Guidelines

With your students, review:

1. Summary of Tejanas serving in World War II
2. "Tejanas and Military Service: A Historical Summary" Table
3. Break students into small groups to read the biographies of three Tejanas who served in the nation's military during World War II (pages four through six).
4. Ask students to report their findings to the class.
5. Review with students the directions for the compare-and-contrast essay they will write about two of the three Tejanas.
6. Lesson Extension: If you choose to include this activity, you may want to assign it as homework.

Tejanas and Military Service: A Historical Summary

Review the photographs and individual facts and oral histories of the three Tejana military members featured on pages four through six. You may refer to the table below to complete the essay assignment described on page seven. Use pages eight and nine to write your essay.

Military and military-related service in Tejanas' history	Major jobs Tejanas held in 1930s-1940s	Tejanas' reasons for joining U. S. military during World War II	Jobs Tejanas held in U. S. military during World War II	Challenges Tejanas faced during World War II service
1. Pre-Columbian Period in Mexico: translators for Indian leaders & Spanish explorers (Doña Marina, translator)	1. Agricultural 2. Food Processing 3. Textile/Garment Manufacturing 4. Clerical 5. Retail	1. Service to Country 2. Adventure 3. Learn New Skills 4. Education	1. Airplane Mechanic 2. Baker 3. Clerk 4. Medical Assistant/Nurse	1. Often the only Tejana in her unit 2. Discrimination 3. Physical hardships 4. Stress
2. War for Independence from Spain (1810-1821: María Josefa Ortiz Domínguez)				
3. Mexican Revolution of 1910: female soldiers & officers)				
4. Early 20 th Century Texas Mexican Civil Rights Struggles (couriers, translators, and intelligence service: Sara Estela Ramírez)				

(Sources: *Las Tejanas: 300 Years of History*; Women in Texas History Timeline (<http://www.womenintexashistory.org/>); and Latinas in the Military (<http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/template-read-a-story.html?topic=Latinas+in+the+Military>))

Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo

Courtesy of U. S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project: <http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/>

Born: October 8, 1923

Military Service: Joined Women's Army Corps in April 1944; served as clerk and baker

Read the oral history of Escobedo at: http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.356&work_title=Escobedo%2C+Concepcion+Alvarado



After reading Escobedo's oral history at the link noted above, write an essay that compares her experiences with either Walker's or Salazar's experiences in the military during World War II. Use the essay activity sheets on pages eight and nine to write your essay. Also, review the table on page three.

Josephine Kelly Ledesma Walker

Courtesy of U. S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project: <http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/>

Born: February 25, 1918

Military Service: Served as airplane mechanic between 1942-1944

Read the oral history of Walker at:

http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autl%3Awwlatin.058&work_title=Ledesma+Walker%2C+Josephine+Kelly

After reading Walker’s oral history at the link noted above, write an essay that compares her experiences with either Escobedo’s or Salazar’s experiences in the military during World War II. Use the essay activity sheets on pages eight and nine to write your essay. Also, review the table on page three.



Maria Sally Salazar

Courtesy of U. S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project: <http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/>

Born: September 23, 1923

Military Service: Served in the Women’s Army Corp between 1943 and 1945

Read the oral history of Salazar at:

http://lib.utexas.edu/ww2latinos/template-stories-indiv.html?work_urn=urn%3Autlol%3Awwlatin.411&work_title=Salazar+%2C+Maria+Sally



After reading Salazar’s oral history at the link noted above, write an essay that compares her experiences with either Escobedo’s or Walker’s experiences in the military during World War II. Use the essay activity sheets on pages eight and nine to write your essay. Also, review the table on page three.

Essay Assignment

“Called to Serve: Three Who Dared”

In keeping with the tradition of Mexican-origin women who undertook military service throughout history, Concepcion Escobedo, Josephine Walker, and Maria Salazar served the United States of America during World War II.

Write an essay on the following page(s), comparing two of the three women’s experiences. Make sure you:

1. include reasons why they joined the military.
2. the challenges they faced.
3. name at least one experience each woman had that was either similar to, or different from, the other’s experience.
4. include an ending paragraph in which you compare their choices to those that a woman could make about serving in today’s military forces.



Concepcion Alvarado Escobedo



Josephine Kelly Ledesma Walker



Maria Sally Salazar

“Called to Serve: Three Who Dared”



A series of horizontal lines for writing, starting from the top right and extending down to the bottom of the page.

Lesson Extension

Carry out research on the Internet or with local military recruiting offices to learn what roles women carry out in today's U. S. military. In doing your research, you should also find the numbers of women of Hispanic origin who are members of the U. S. armed forces.

Teresa Palomo Acosta created this lesson plan for the Ruthe Winegarten Foundation. The lesson plan is free to users for educational purposes.