

Answers Chapter Thirteen One Last Battle

1. “raw”/primitive/uncivilized
2. Adventure, spoils (of war), influence
3. Santa Anna
4. Prisoners in Mexico; annexation
5. lawlessness
6. Texas would come in as a slave state, and it had a reputation for outlaws
7. Great Britain
8. peace with Mexico
9. Anson Jones
10. Great Britain
11. the annexation of Texas
12. Van Buren came out against the annexation of Texas
13. Anson Jones

Discussion/Essay

1. Sam Houston’s policies regarding Mexico were controlled by principle, that is , the rule of law. He did not believe in going to war with the expressed purpose of taking spoils from the enemy to sustain the troops. (The concept of “civilized” warfare, to which we all subscribe in some degree, causes us to be shocked when women and children are slaughtered in war, and this concept undoubtedly tied in with Houston’s view. Taking spoils amounts to a punishment of noncombatants.) Houston believed that it was right for Texas to defend herself, and that she was capable of doing so, but taking the part of an aggressor was questionable both as a matter of principle and of expediency. Fisher, on the other hand, and the men with him, were inflamed by Mexican strikes in Texas, and resolved to punish the aggressor. But Fisher’s motives of adventure, spoils,

and influence probably affected the result: he would not have surrendered so easily if he had been defending homestead and family.

2. Houston needed the protection and help of a major power. If the United States refused to annex Texas, the most logical step would be to seek help from the nations of Britain and France. But he much preferred Texas to become part of the Union, and so he played a “game”: he tried to make it look as though he really were courting Britain, for example, emphasizing that nation’s role in obtaining an armistice with Mexico, while remaining silent about his own contributions. By pretending to like the other “feller” best, Houston was courting the United States, and it did finally work, helping to turn the tide of opinion in the U.S. Some students may wish to maintain that this course of action was deceitful, and in some sense it was. But other students may wish to vindicate him, on the grounds that Houston was really cultivating relations with Great Britain and France, out of political necessity, and that not advertising his true intentions was merely a matter of wisdom. The issue of integrity in the political arena, and what is honorable and what is not, is a large topic that may be touched on if time allows.

3. The United States had recently fought two wars with Great Britain: the Revolution, in the time of their fathers, and the War of 1812, in which both Jackson and Houston had fought. (Remember that Jackson, as a teenager, was wounded and captured by the British during the Revolutionary War, and lost his brother and then his mother as a result of sickness spread by wartime conditions.) Great Britain, in the 19th century, was the great empire of the time, comparable to Rome in her zenith, or Spain a few centuries earlier. She might be comparable to the United States of our day. But in the early 19th century, the United States had little military power or influence. Her strength lay in the vitality and industry of her people, combined with a moral force derived from Christianity. Today we think it natural that the U.S. won the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. It was not “natural,” but rather Providential. Jackson was not being paranoid to be concerned.

4. Sam Houston had an understanding of sin and the inadequacy of good works for salvation. He knew that his only hope was in the substitutionary atonement of Christ. He also seemed to have a serious view of eternal matters, more so than many today who call themselves Christians. But he knew himself to be unregenerate, outside the kingdom of God, even as he labored to conform his behavior to that which was right. The Bible says that to be saved we must “repent” and “believe,” two actions which are inseparably joined. If Houston was not saved then he had not truly repented and believed according to the Scriptures. The students might be required in their essay to write suggestions that would be in accordance with these basic biblical principles. Examples might be given in class, as of a certain person who sought the Lord unsuccessfully for a long time for salvation, who was saved when she finally believed that the Lord loved her -- in spite of everything, without any “good” works done on her part to earn it. In this case, there was a repentance from dead works, and faith in Christ and his work, faith that His atonement was truly all that was necessary for her salvation.

5. This is truly a question which has no right answer. Some allowance may be made for the sentimentality which marked 19th century writing, but the facts are clear that there was great enthusiasm and emotion when Texas was annexed to the United States. Many were rejoicing to be united with the land of their birth. There was obviously a great attachment to the Republic of Texas, and a sorrow that she was to be "no more." But there were differences between the America of then and the America of now. The students may be able to bring up these various differences, and one difference which might be important is the different way in which early 19th century Americans viewed their government. Regarding the Constitution, they were "strict constructionists," that is, they regarded the federal government as limited. The Constitution does say that all powers not expressly granted to the federal government are reserved to the states. The government did not rule every aspect of their lives, although there were irritating necessities, such as taxes. Americans treasured their freedoms. It might be argued that Americans are less free today and therefore have less emotion regarding their government. But this is mainly a question to make the students think.