

Answers Chapter 8

Victory or Death

1. Major General/ Commander-in-Chief (either or both)
2. Two of these four: weak general/ volunteers leaving / adventurers / alcohol
3. they hoped that the Mexican people would rise up and depose Santa Anna
4. because he believed in the rule of law / it would make them just like Santa Anna
5. to regain his property
6. to destroy and abandon the mission
7. normally armies move with the “rise of grass” because of the horses
8. to declare independence and form a new government
9. he got sick
10. with a cannon
11. an ox cart broke down
12. because it would cause needless loss of their own men
13. he could not hear the morning cannon shot

Discussion/Essay

1. Sam Houston had no authority over the only army Texas had, the volunteers, and the General Council was not very helpful in establishing a “regular” army. This was his main obstacle, which was complicated by the illegal appointment of “military agents” by the General Council which did not answer to Houston. The problems with the provisional government literally drove Houston to despair at one point, but overall his reaction was to be patient and to simply do what he could.
2. Dr. James Grant was a Scots-born opportunist who lobbied for an expedition to Matamoros so that he could recover his property. James Walker Fannin was a smuggler and slave runner who based his overbearing ambition on two years at West Point. But

when the conflict started, Fannin perceived his inability to command. [You might want to remind the students at some point that there are two Matamoroses; I believe that the one they were going to invade was the one near Torreon.]

3. The upper class Mexicans looked down on the “crude bumpkins” of Texas. They were also aware of the volunteers’ lack of army discipline, which made it humiliating to be defeated by a force only half as large as themselves.

4. The Texans were supposedly fighting in self-defense, to preserve legal rights guaranteed them by the Mexican Constitution of 1824. To motivate men by the promise of “spoils” reduced the moral level of their actions to piracy. [You may want to remind them of the concept of “civilized” warfare, a concept which Noah Smithwick mentioned in an earlier chapter. We all have a gut level understanding of this concept; we think it barbaric to kill women, children, and other helpless noncombatants as part of warfare, for example.]

5. Sam Houston understood that rebellion against government was wrong. However, the belief in the rule of law provided a basis for resistance to unlawful authority. But this resistance is based on the *obedience* to a higher principle, such as would motivate a Christian who might disobey a law when it would be sin to obey. Houston was saying that the Texans had to make it clear that they were under the rule of law and were not simply in rebellion. By constituting a formal government and maintaining obedience to the same, they would show themselves righteous in the court of world opinion and before their own consciences.