

Substitute Guide: Texas Turning Point — The Railroads Arrive

Grade: 7 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas History) **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension Social Studies

Learning goal (plain language)

Students learn that the spread of **railroads across Texas in the 1870s–1880s** was a **turning point** — an event after which things were clearly different. They read two short summaries and study a timeline, then practice **cause and effect** (what led to the railroads, and what changed because of them) and **source analysis** (who made a source, when, and what kind it is). They finish by writing a short evidence-based explanation. **You do not need a history background to run this.** Everything students need is printed in their packet.

Standards alignment

Framework: 19 TAC §113.19 (Grade 7 Social Studies, Texas History).

- **Primary — 7.6 (era/history):** major events and developments in Texas from 1865 to the early 1900s, including railroad expansion and its effects on population, towns, and ranching.
- **Skills — 7.21 (social studies skills):** analyzing sources and applying cause-and-effect and sequencing to interpret historical change.

Provisional — pending educator verification against the current official TAC source.

(Standards are paraphrased here, not quoted. Please confirm the codes and wording against your official source. Prompts are kept non-partisan and in historical context.)

Setup Before class (5 min)

- Count and hand out one **student packet** per student.
- Confirm each student has a **pencil**. No calculators, computers, or textbooks are needed.
- Write the date on the board and remind students to fill in the name line.
- Keep the **answer key** with you — it is a separate file and is **not** in the student packet.

Materials What's needed

- Printed student packet (4–6 pages) per student.
- Pencil per student.
- This guide and the separate answer key (teacher only).
- No technology, no calculator, no textbooks, no safety hazards.

Timing Suggested pacing (~45–60 min)

Segment	Time	What students do
Start — Notice & Predict	5 min	Q1–Q2 warm-up
Build — Read the sources	5–10 min	Read Source A, Source B, word bank, timeline; Q3
Apply — Analyze the sources	20–25 min	Q4–Q8 (source obs., cause/effect chain, fact/interpretation/opinion, compare, evaluate)
Explain — CER	5–10 min	Q9 claim/evidence/reasoning
Close — ACE	5 min	Articulate / Connect / Extend
Continue — early finishers	optional ~15 min	"Remove a cause and predict"

Script Read aloud to start

"Today's assignment is a paper history investigation called *Texas Turning Point: The Railroads Arrive*. You will work by yourself with just a pencil — no computers or textbooks. First read the two short summaries and study the timeline. Then answer the questions in order; if one is tricky, skip it and come back. Write in complete sentences where it asks you to explain. Everything you need is printed in the packet — you do not need to know any outside facts. You may quietly read the passages aloud to yourself. Put your name, class period, and date at the top now. You have about 45 minutes; raise your hand if you need help understanding a word."

Support When students ask for help

- **You may read any part aloud** to a student or the class.
- If they are stuck on a cause or effect, point them to **Source A** and the **timeline** — the ideas they need are visible there.
- For "fact / interpretation / opinion" (Q6), point to the **Word Bank** definitions; an "opinion" usually states a preference, an "interpretation" says "probably" or "because."
- Encourage the printed **sentence stems** for the CER (Q9) and ACE sections.
- Do **not** give answers; prompt with "What do the sources say?" or "Did that come *before* or *after* the railroads?"
- It is fine if a student cannot finish the optional early-finisher task.

Access Accommodations & language support

- **Read-aloud** of any passage or question is allowed for all students.
- Point students to the **sentence stems** and the **Word Bank** (definitions of turning point, cause, effect, fact, interpretation, opinion are provided).
- Extended time is fine; the core can stop after Q9 if time runs short.
- Students may answer in phrases if writing full sentences is a barrier, as long as the idea is clear.
- The packet is grayscale-safe — it prints and reads clearly in black and white.

Tools Allowed & not allowed

Allowed: pencil, the printed packet, quiet self-read-aloud. **Not needed / not allowed:** calculator (no math required), phones, computers, textbooks or outside sources (everything needed is in the packet).

Collect at the end: Collect every packet, whether finished or not, with names on them. Stack them for the teacher. Note on a sticky how far most students got and any questions that caused confusion.

Answer key: The **answer key is a separate file** (answerkey.html) and is for the teacher only. Please do not hand it to students.

Teacher follow-up (for the returning teacher)

Watch for the common mix-up between a **cause** (before) and an **effect** (after) in the Q5 chain, and for students marking a reasoned "probably..." statement as a plain fact in Q6. A quick next-day discussion sorting a few statements into fact / interpretation / opinion, plus reviewing why railroad towns grew while skipped towns shrank (Q8), would reinforce this well. The CER (Q9) responses show who can cite a source or timeline date as evidence.

G07_SOC_TexasTurningPoint_01 — Texas Turning Point: The Railroads Arrive Substitute Guide

Texas Turning Point: The Railroads Arrive

Grade: 7 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas History) **Time:** ~45 min core + ~15 min extension **Work mode:** Independent · pencil only Social Studies

Start Here

This is a **paper history investigation**. You will read two short summaries written for this packet, study a timeline, and answer questions using a pencil. You do **not** need a computer, a textbook, or the internet — **everything you need is printed in this packet**. Work by yourself and do your best thinking. Write in complete sentences where you are asked to explain. If a question is hard, skip it, keep going, and come back. Reading the passages aloud quietly to yourself is allowed and encouraged.

Start Notice & Predict 5 min

A "turning point" is an event after which things are clearly different from before. Warm up before you read.

1 Read this short summary, then answer below.

Summary (written for this packet): "In 1870 the small Texas town of Abilene did not yet exist. Cattle were driven north for weeks on foot to reach a railroad in another state. By 1885 several rail lines crossed Texas, and towns had grown up right beside the tracks."

Type: original summary · Setting: Texas, 1870–1885

Notice: Write **one thing you notice** in this summary.

Predict: Based only on this, **predict one way** trains might have changed life in Texas.

2 Before railroads, why do you think moving goods and people across Texas was slow and expensive? Give **one reason** in your own words.

Build Read the Sources 5–10 min

Source A — Background summary (written for this packet)

Before the 1870s, most of Texas moved at the speed of a horse, a wagon, or a riverboat. Roads were dirt, rivers were shallow and undependable, and hauling cotton or cattle to a market could take weeks. Ranchers drove longhorn cattle hundreds of miles north along cattle trails to reach railroads in Kansas, where the animals were loaded onto trains and shipped east to buyers.

After the Civil War, railroad companies laid track across Texas quickly. By the mid 1880s several major lines crossed the state, connecting Texas to national markets for the first time. Wherever the tracks went, **new towns appeared beside the rail stations**, and older towns that the railroad skipped often shrank. Trains carried cotton, cattle, lumber, and manufactured goods in days instead of weeks, and they carried thousands of **new settlers** into Texas. The population of Texas grew rapidly during these decades.

Type: original background summary · Focus: Texas, about 1865–1890

Source B — Paraphrased "voice" summary (written for this packet)

This is an **original paraphrase**, not a real quotation. It sums up a common point of view a Texas town booster might have expressed in the 1880s:

"When the railroad chose our town, everything changed. Farmers who once lost days hauling cotton by wagon can now ship it in a morning. New stores, a hotel, and new neighbors have arrived. The town two counties over, the one the tracks passed by, is already losing people to us."

Type: original paraphrase (summary of a viewpoint) · Creator: not a real person · Date represented: about 1885 · Not a genuine primary quotation.

Word Bank

turning point

an event after which things are clearly different than before.

cause

a reason something happens; it comes before the event.

effect

a result of an event; it comes after.

cattle trail

a long route ranchers used to drive cattle on foot to a railroad.

settler

a person who moves to a new area to live.

fact

a statement that can be checked and shown true or false.

interpretation

an explanation of what evidence means; reasoned from facts.

opinion

a personal belief or preference; not proven by evidence.

Railroads Come to Texas, 1866–1888

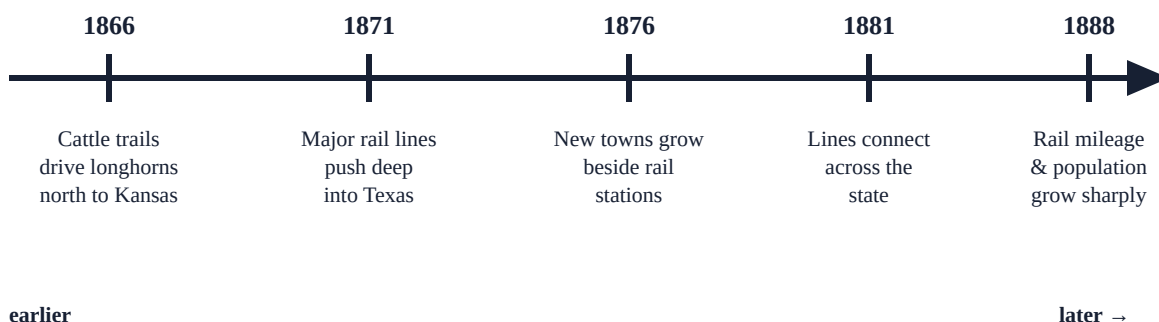


Figure 1. Timeline of the arrival of railroads in Texas, 1866–1888. The dates are approximate decade markers used to show the sequence, not exact single-day events. The line and labels are black on white so the figure reads clearly in grayscale.

3Using the timeline, put these in the order they happened by writing **1, 2, 3**. ____ New towns grow beside rail stations · ____ Cattle trails drive longhorns north to Kansas · ____ Lines connect across the state.

Apply Analyze the Sources 20–25 min

4**Source observation.** Look back at **Source B** and fill in what you can tell about it.

Creator: _____

Date represented: _____

Type of source (real quotation, or original paraphrase/summary?): _____

One detail in Source B that tells you the writer is *proud* of the railroad:

5**Cause → Event → Effects chain.** Use Source A and the timeline. The turning-point EVENT is already filled in. Write **two causes** that came before it and **two effects** that came after it.

Causes (before)	Turning-point EVENT	Effects (after)
a) _____ _____	Railroads spread across Texas (1870s–1880s)	c) _____ _____
b) _____ _____		d) _____ _____

6**Fact, interpretation, or opinion?** Write **F** (fact you can check in the sources), **I** (interpretation reasoned from facts), or **O** (opinion / personal belief).

- ____ a) By the mid 1880s several major rail lines crossed Texas.
____ b) The railroad probably caused nearby skipped towns to lose people.
____ c) Trains are the most exciting invention in Texas history.
____ d) Before railroads, cattle were driven north on foot to reach a railroad.

7**Compare and explain significance.** In 2–3 sentences, compare how a rancher shipped cattle to market **before** the railroads with how it was done **after**, and explain why that change was significant (important).

8**Evaluate a claim using the sources.** A student claims: "*The railroad helped every Texas town equally.*" Do the sources support this claim?

- Yes — the sources say every town grew the same amount.
- No — the sources show towns **on** the tracks grew while skipped towns often shrank.
- The sources say nothing at all about towns.

Explain your choice using one detail from Source A or Source B:

Explain Claim–Evidence–Reasoning 5–10 min

Question 9. Was the arrival of the railroads a turning point in Texas history? Write a **claim** (was it a turning point, and name one main cause or effect), support it with **two pieces of evidence** from the sources or the timeline, then explain your reasoning.

Sentence stems you may use: "The railroads were a turning point because..." · "One piece of evidence is... (from Source A / Source B / the timeline)." · "A second piece of evidence is..." · "This matters because it changed..."

Claim

Evidence (two pieces)

Reasoning

Close ACE Wrap-Up 5 min

Articulate

In your own words, explain what a **turning point** is, as if teaching a friend.

Connect

Point to one date on the timeline or one line in a source that shows the railroad changing Texas. Name it.

Extend

Name a **modern** invention (outside this packet) that you think has been a turning point, and give one reason.

Continue Early Finisher optional • ~15 min

If you finish early (no new materials needed):

Remove a cause and predict. On the back of this page, imagine the railroads had **never** reached a certain Texas town. Using only the sources and timeline, **predict two ways** that town's future would have been different (think about population, ranching, and trade). For each prediction, name the **cause you removed** and the **effect you expect**.

Turn in: Hand in this whole packet with your name, class period, and date filled in. Make sure questions 1–9 and the ACE box are answered. The early-finisher prediction is optional but turn it in too if you did it.

G07_SOC_TexasTurningPoint_01 — Texas Turning Point: The Railroads Arrive Student Packet



TEACHER ANSWER KEY FOLLOWS

Do not copy the pages after this divider for students.

Answer Key: Texas Turning Point — The Railroads Arrive

Grade: 7 **Subject:** Social Studies (Texas History) **For teacher use only** Social Studies

How to use this key

Answers are grouped by section and question number. Many items are open-ended; accept any response that shows correct reasoning even if the wording differs. Notes flag where more than one answer is defensible and list common misconceptions to watch for. Everything students need is in the packet, so answers should draw on the sources and timeline only. Estimated grading time: ~5–7 min per packet.

Start Notice & Predict grade for effort · ~2 min

1 Notice + predict from the short summary.

Full credit for any reasonable notice + prediction. **Notice** examples: "Abilene did not exist in 1870 but grew after the railroad," "cattle used to walk for weeks." **Predict** examples: "trains made travel and shipping faster," "towns grew near the tracks," "more people moved to Texas." Accept any on-topic prediction — this is a warm-up graded for effort.

2 Why movement was slow/expensive before railroads.

Accept any reasonable idea in the student's own words: dirt roads, no fast machines, wagons/horses are slow, rivers unreliable, long distances, weather. More than one answer is defensible.

Build Read the Sources ~1 min

3 Sequence three timeline items.

Correct order (earliest to latest): **1 = Cattle trails drive longhorns north to Kansas (1866), 2 = New towns grow beside rail stations (1876), 3 = Lines connect across the state (1881).** *Note:* "Lines connect across the state" (1881) comes after "new towns grow" (1876) on the timeline.

Apply Analyze the Sources ~2–3 min

4 Source observation of Source B.

Creator: not a real person — an *imagined/representative* Texas town booster (the packet states it is not a real quotation).

Date represented: about 1885 (the 1880s).

Type of source: an **original paraphrase / summary of a viewpoint** — not a genuine primary quotation. Full credit if the student recognizes it is not a real quote.

Proud detail: any of — "everything changed," farmers can now ship cotton "in a morning," "new stores, a hotel, and new neighbors," or that the skipped town is "losing people to us." Accept any one.

5 Cause → Event → Effects chain.

Event (given): **Railroads spread across Texas (1870s–1880s).**

Causes (before) — accept any two supported by Source A / timeline, e.g.:

- Old travel by wagon, horse, and riverboat was slow and unreliable (a need for faster transport).
- Ranchers had to drive cattle for weeks to reach out-of-state railroads (demand to reach markets).
- After the Civil War, railroad companies laid track quickly / national markets were expanding.

Effects (after) — accept any two supported by the sources, e.g.:

- New towns grew up beside rail stations; skipped towns often shrank.
- Goods (cotton, cattle, lumber) shipped in days instead of weeks.
- Thousands of new settlers arrived; the Texas population grew rapidly.

Watch: a common error is placing an effect (e.g., "new towns grew") in the cause column. Causes must come **before** the event.

6 Fact (F) / Interpretation (I) / Opinion (O).

a) **F** — checkable in Source A ("several major rail lines crossed Texas").

b) **I** — reasoned conclusion using "probably" ("caused nearby skipped towns to lose people").

c) **O** — a personal belief/preference ("most exciting invention"); cannot be proven.

d) **F** — checkable in Source A (cattle "driven north on foot to reach a railroad").

Fact = checkable; interpretation = reasoned from facts (often "because/probably"); opinion = personal belief.

7 Compare before/after shipping cattle + significance (short written).

Model: "Before the railroads, ranchers drove cattle hundreds of miles on foot for weeks to reach a railroad in Kansas. After the railroads spread across Texas, cattle could be loaded onto trains in Texas and shipped in days. This mattered because it saved time, reached markets faster, and helped Texas ranching and towns grow." Award credit for a clear before/after contrast **and** a reason it was significant. See rubric below.

8 Evaluate the claim "the railroad helped every town equally."

Correct: B (No). The sources show towns *on* the tracks grew while skipped towns often shrank (Source A: "older towns that the railroad skipped often shrank"; Source B: the town "the tracks passed by is already losing people to us"). Reject A (nothing says growth was equal) and C (the sources clearly discuss towns). Explanation must cite one such detail.

Explain CER (Q9) ~1–2 min

9 Was the arrival of the railroads a turning point?

Model answer. Claim: Yes — the railroads were a turning point because they changed how Texas moved goods and people and caused rapid growth. Evidence: (1) Source A / timeline: before the 1870s cattle were driven for weeks on foot, but by the mid 1880s several rail lines crossed the state and goods shipped in days. (2) Source A: new towns grew beside the tracks and thousands of new settlers arrived, so the population grew rapidly. Reasoning: Life in Texas was clearly different after the railroads than before — faster trade, new towns, and more people — which is exactly what makes an event a turning point.

Defensible alternates: a student may frame the claim around a single main effect (population growth, town growth, or faster ranching/trade) and still earn full marks if two accurate pieces of evidence support it. A cautious student who argues the change was gradual can earn credit if they still cite evidence of clear before/after difference.

CER scoring rubric (3 points)

Score	Claim	Evidence	Reasoning
3	Clear claim that it was a turning point, naming a main cause or effect.	Two accurate, relevant pieces from the sources and/or timeline.	Correctly links evidence to before/after change and explains why it is a turning point.
2	Claim stated, mostly clear.	One solid piece, or two with a minor error.	Some correct linkage but incomplete or a small misconception.
1	Vague or partly correct claim.	Evidence weak, off-topic, or not from the sources.	Little or flawed reasoning; no clear before/after link.
0	No/incorrect claim.	No evidence.	No reasoning.

Close ACE ~1 min

ACE Articulate / Connect / Extend.

Articulate: accept any accurate plain-language definition (e.g., "a turning point is an event that makes life clearly different than before").

Connect: the cited date/line must actually show change — e.g., 1876 "new towns grow beside rail stations," 1888 "population grows sharply," or Source A "goods shipped in days instead of weeks."

Extend: any reasonable modern turning-point invention with a reason (e.g., the internet — changed how people communicate; the smartphone; electric power). More than one answer is defensible; grade the reason, not the choice.

Watch Common misconceptions

- **Cause vs. effect (Q5).** Students often list an *effect* ("new towns grew") as a *cause*. Causes come **before** the event; effects come **after**.
- **Fact vs. interpretation (Q6).** A "probably/because..." statement is usually an interpretation, not a plain fact. A preference ("most exciting") is an opinion.
- **Treating Source B as a real quote.** Source B is an **original paraphrase** of a viewpoint, not a genuine primary quotation — the packet says so directly.
- **"The railroad helped everyone equally" (Q8).** The sources show winners *and* losers — towns on the line grew, skipped towns shrank.
- **Exact dates.** The timeline dates are approximate markers of a sequence, not exact single-day events; grade the *order* and reasoning, not memorized dates.

Teacher follow-up based on likely errors

If many students misplace items in the Q5 cause/effect chain, do a 5-minute "before or after?" sort. If Q6 reveals fact/interpretation/opinion confusion, re-anchor with the Word Bank definitions and a few quick examples. If CER (Q9) evidence is thin, model citing a specific source line or timeline date aloud. Reinforcing that a turning point creates a clear before/after difference is the highest-value idea to revisit.

G07_SOC_TexasTurningPoint_01 — Texas Turning Point: The Railroads Arrive Teacher Answer Key