

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

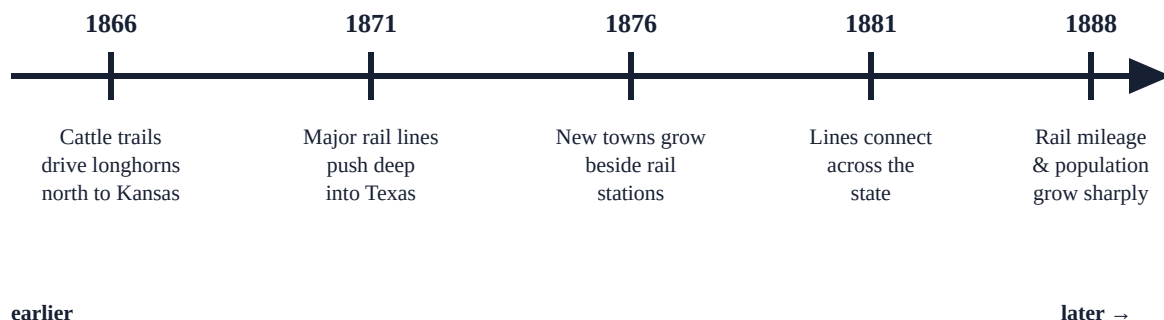


Figure 1. Timeline of the arrival of railroads in Texas, 1866–1888. The dates are approximate decade markers used to show the sequence, not exact single-day events. The line and labels are black on white so the figure reads clearly in grayscale.

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.

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