

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.

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