

# Writing for Impact

Frameworks for Interpretive Writing

*This workshop is sponsored by the Texas Historical Commission's Texas Heritage Trails Program in partnership with the Texas Association of Museums. This project was supported in part by funding through TxDOT's Statewide Transportation Enhancement Program.*

# It's Time to Meet the Neighbors!

- ▶ Learn three things about the person sitting next to you:
  - ▶ Name
  - ▶ Where he/she works and what he/she does there
  - ▶ One other interesting fact about him/her
- ▶ In three minutes, you'll introduce each other to the rest of the group.

# Agenda for the Day

Goal for Today:

As a group, we'll learn how to make our writing more interpretive, impactful, and engaging to the public.

- ▶ What is Interpretation?
- ▶ Overview of Interpretive Writing Techniques
- ▶ Focus on Storytelling
- ▶ Focus on Thematic Structures

# What is Interpretation?



*Texas Cotton Gin Museum, Burton, TX*

# What the Experts Say...

- ▶ Freeman Tilden:

Interpretation is “an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.”

*(from Freeman Tilden's Interpreting Our Heritage)*

- ▶ Translation:

Interpretation goes beyond just the facts to reveal the meanings and relationships behind them.

# What the Experts Say...

- ▶ National Park Service:

Interpretation is “a catalyst in creating opportunities for the audience to form their own intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance inherent in the resource.”

- ▶ Translation:

Interpretation creates opportunities for visitors to connect with the stories that objects and historic sites can tell us.

# A Working Definition

Interpretation goes beyond facts to reveal meanings and relationships, which helps visitors better engage with objects and places.

# Why Be Interpretive?



*The British Museum, London, UK*

# Why Be Interpretive?



*from Ferris Bueller's Day Off*

# Why Be Interpretive?



*from National Archives and Records Administration Southeast Region, "Stories from the Great Depression" (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpfY8kh5lUw>)*

# Interpretive Techniques



*Harrison County Historical Museum, Marshall, TX*

# 1. Thematic Structures

**Building a Life on the Coast**

Mustang Island has always been a place where people learned to adapt to the environment, and to adapt the environment to their needs.

**Living on Nature's Bounty**

Long before European explorers arrived on the Texas coast, a tribe of native people known as the Karankawa thrived here. Early explorers described the Karankawa as very healthy and strong, due in part to the ways they adapted their diet to life on the coast. They took advantage of all the different foods available in the area, eating fish and shellfish, small game and local plants. This varied diet kept them healthy and well-fed year-round.

**What's in a Name?**

Mustang Island was named for the many wild horses that once roamed the island. The horses probably arrived from Spain by ship or came ashore after a wreck, quickly adapting to their new environment. While the herds of many years ago are long gone, today only the name remains.

**Becoming a Thriving Center**

Many early settlers recognized Corpus Christi Bay's potential to become a world-class port, but its full potential couldn't be realized until Aransas Pass, located at the northern end of Mustang Island, was stabilized and deepened to accommodate deepwater ships. Construction began in the 1880s, but constant erosion made construction extremely difficult. It took nearly 40 years to build the jetty and deepen the pass enough to allow Corpus Christi to become the shipping hub it is today.

**Sportsman's Paradise**

In the late 1800s, real estate developers realized that Mustang Island's miles of sandy beaches could attract vacationers and their money. A booming tourism industry developed in the 1900s. Today, Mustang Island remains a popular destination for families looking to build sandcastles to anglers hoping to catch "the big one." Even as new developments encroach on its boundaries, Mustang Island State Park preserves the coastal environment that has drawn so many people here for centuries.

*This artist's rendering of what a Karankawa village might have looked like shows that they were nomadic. Theirs' diet was too meager to carry a deer back to camp when fish hung out to dry. In the background, others members of the tribe are shown doing so in the bay digging for clams.*

*The Aransas Pass jetty was central to Mustang Island's development. The construction project attracted many construction workers, and some of them would have grown up in the same area. It also saved the island's profile and made it a tourist destination. The postcard shows jetty construction underway in the 1930s.*

*For over a century, Mustang Island and the surrounding area have attracted tourists looking for fun and relaxation. Today, Mustang Island State Park offers visitors an excellent opportunity to experience a unique barrier island environment by fishing, boating or relaxing.*

Overarching Theme: "Mustang Island has always been a place where people learned to adapt to the environment, and to adapt the environment to their needs."

Idea #1: The native people who lived here, the Karankawa, thrived in part because they adapted their diet to their coastal environment.

Idea #2: Anglo settlers made Corpus Christi a successful commercial hub by deepening Aransas Pass to accommodate deepwater ships.

Idea #3: Businessmen capitalized on Mustang Island's natural beauty and developed it into a tourist destination that still draws visitors today.

## 2. “In Their Own Words”



*Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, TX*

### 3. Establishing Relevancy

“ If a story is not about the hearer he will not listen. And here I make a rule — a great and interesting story is about everyone or it will not last. ”

(East of Eden)

- East of Eden, by John Steinbeck

## 4. Storytelling



*El Paso Museum of History, El Paso, TX*

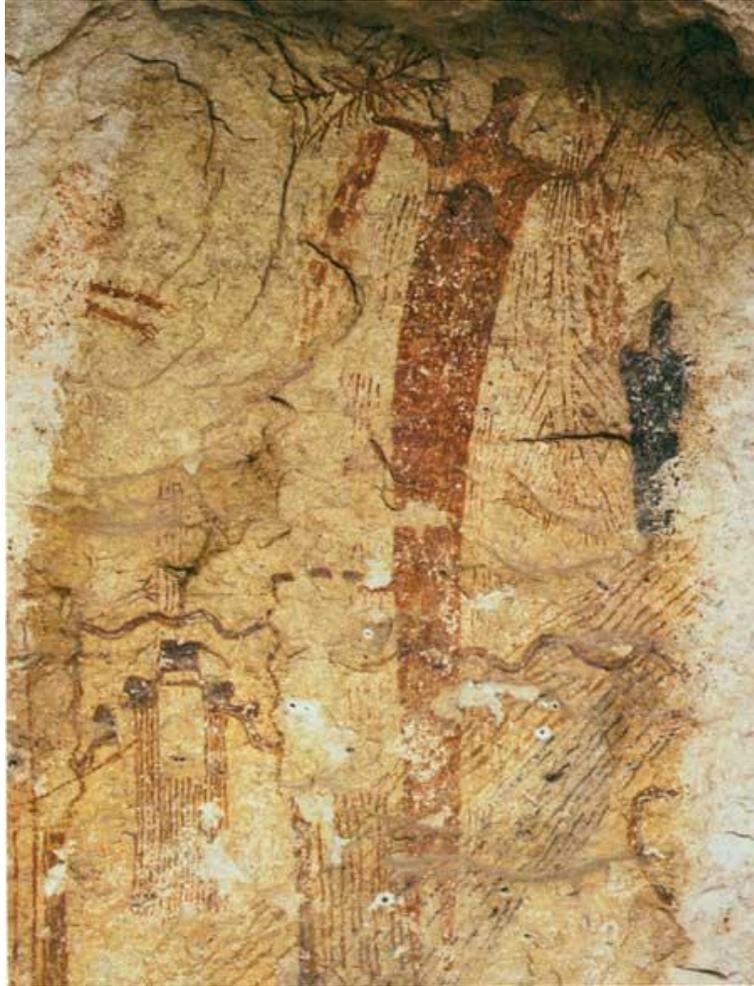
# Our Brains Experience Stories Differently



“The brain, it seems, does not make much of a distinction between reading about an experience and encountering it in real life; in each case, the same neurological regions are stimulated.”

- “Your Brain on Fiction” by Annie Murphy Hall, *The New York Times*, 3/17/2012

# Stories Are Universal



*Panther Cave, Amistad National Recreation Area, Del Rio, TX*

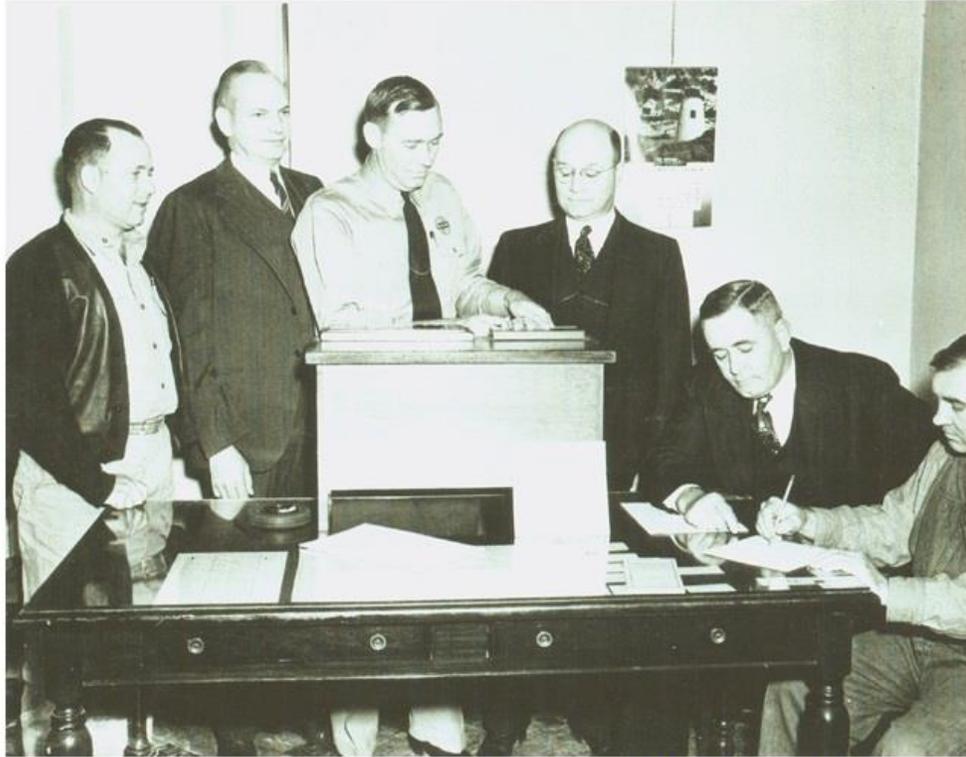
# Stories Are Personal

“Histories tend to generalize events... Stories, on the other hand, begin on an **intimate, personal** level. Stories tend to **heighten the unique traits** and foibles of each character and, more often than histories, they get expressed in the **first and second voice**. This intimate view proves very accessible to those who otherwise claim to have little interest in history. **Empathy** is naturally felt by one person for another...”

- from “A Practical Guide to Personal Connectivity” by Daniel Spock

# A Non-Narrative Label

The refineries acquired additional security equipment and trained guards, who patrolled around the clock. Workers had to wear badges at all times and visitors were never left alone. Texas City Terminal Railway Company installed alarm systems in buildings and fencing around its docks, and added a security gate and guard house.



*Taking fingerprints at Pan American in January 1941 (Photo from Moore Memorial Public Library)*

Blackouts were directed to make it difficult for Axis bombers to target the defense plants and other vital parts of the community.

*“Texas City During World War II,” Moore Memorial Public Library, Texas City, TX, <http://www.texascity-library.org/wwii/index.php>*

# A Narrative Label



## Audio clip: Clarence Wood

Clarence Wood recalls blackouts in Texas City:



**Luke Alvey-Henderson (interviewer):** So another thing that was common around the time, especially in Texas City, was blackouts. Do you remember those well?

**Clarence Wood:** Oh yes, I remember them very well. All the people had to have dark shades for their windows and have very few lights inside the windows. And on the cars, they wouldn't allow them to turn on the headlights.

Out in the Gulf of Mexico they might send bombs over from the Gulf. I do remember that during the war there were a lot of German submarines in the Gulf of Mexico, and every once in a while we'd find a body float up on the seashore from the Germans torpedoing the boats that went out from Houston and Galveston.

*Listen to Clarence Wood's [entire oral history interview](#).*

*“Texas City During World War II,” Moore Memorial Public Library, Texas City, TX, <http://www.texascity-library.org/wwii/index.php>*

# Example #1

Olaudah Equiano

1789

BIOGRAPHY

TRANSCRIPT

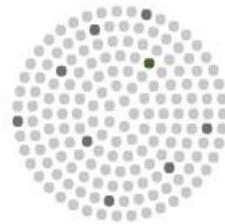
HIDE TEXT



**Excerpt:**

The first objects which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast were the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and awaiting its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. As well as the multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow. No, I no longer doubted my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted.

When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board. They were receiving their pay. They seemed to take pity on me, and talked to me in order to cheer me. I was not cheered. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by these white men with horrible red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not. One of these white men, to again cheer me up, brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor

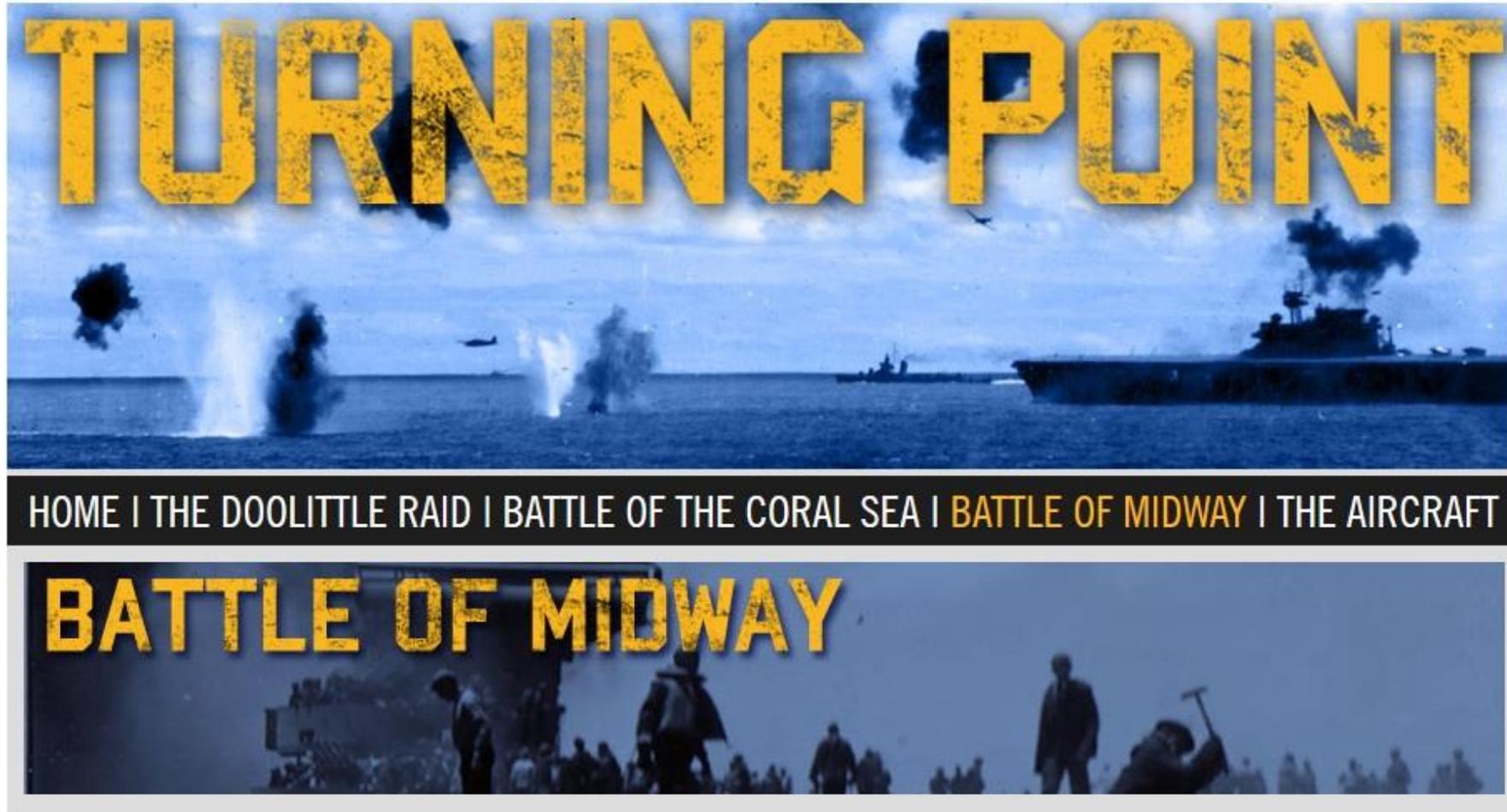


MOAD  
Slave Narratives

Extras ▾

*“Slave Narratives,” Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco, CA*

## Example #2



*“Turning Point,” The National WWII Museum, New Orleans, LA*

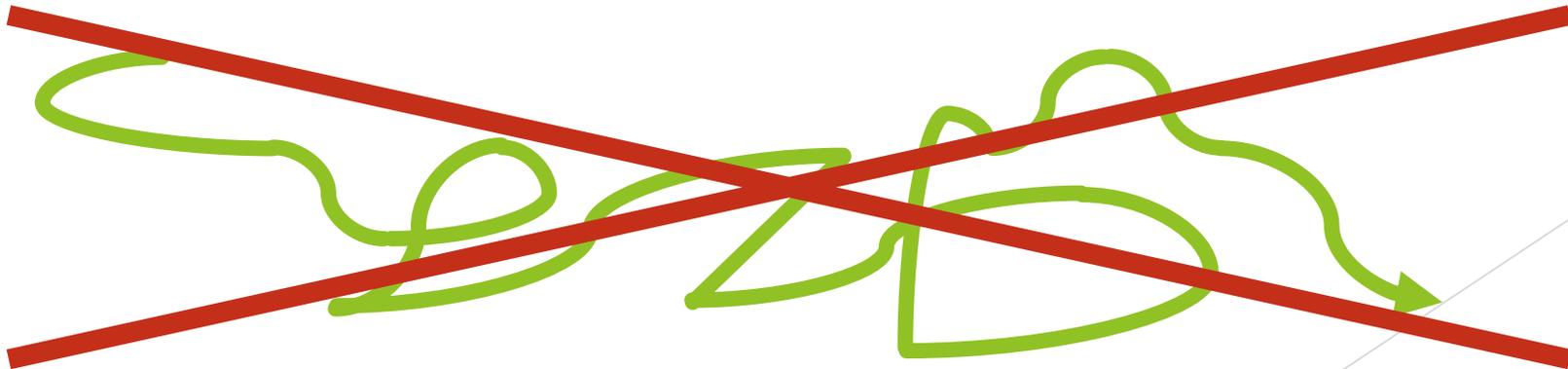
# Example #3

## A Summer of Change: The Civil Rights Story of Glen Echo Park



*Glen Echo Park, Glen Echo, MD (National Park Service)*

# Rules of Good Storytelling: Keep It Simple



# Rules of Good Storytelling: Know Your Audience (and Respond to Them)

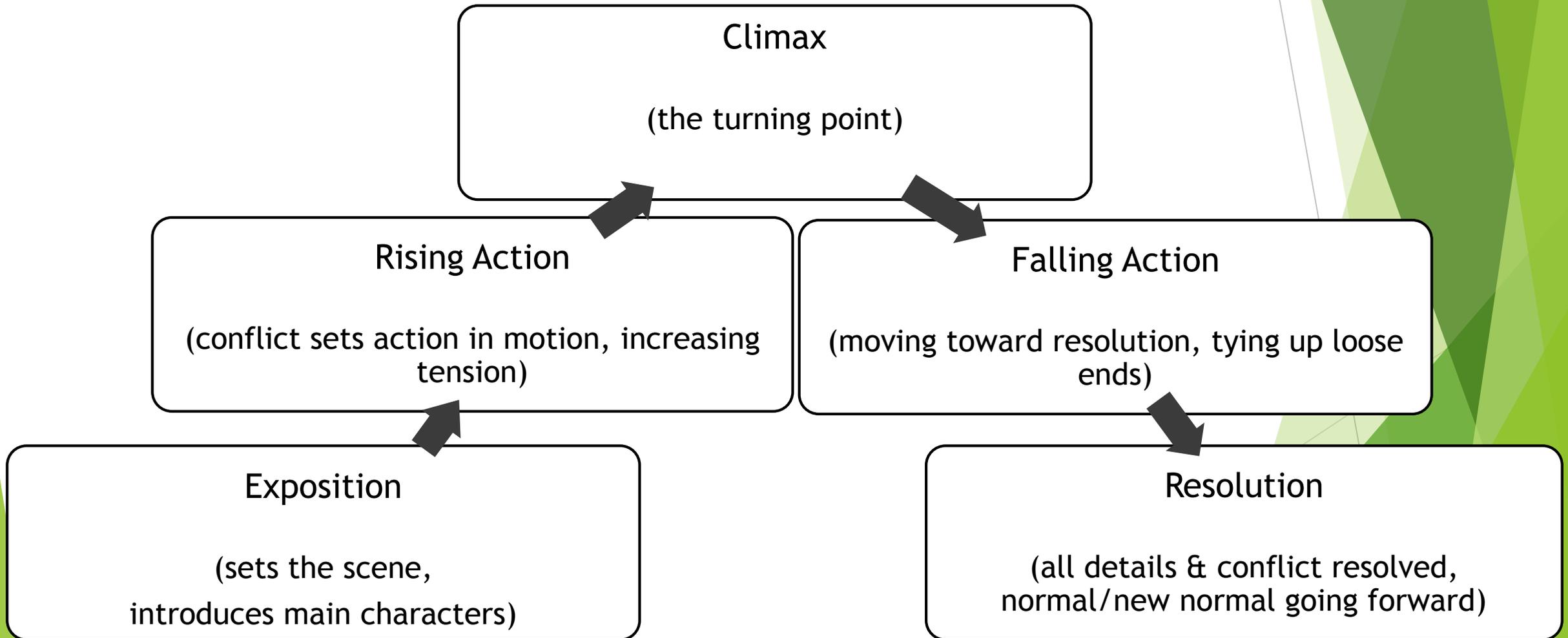


Who am I  
trying to  
reach?

# Rules of Good Storytelling: Show, Don't Tell



# Rules of Good Storytelling: Stories Have (a Specific) Structure



# Incorporating Stories into Exhibits

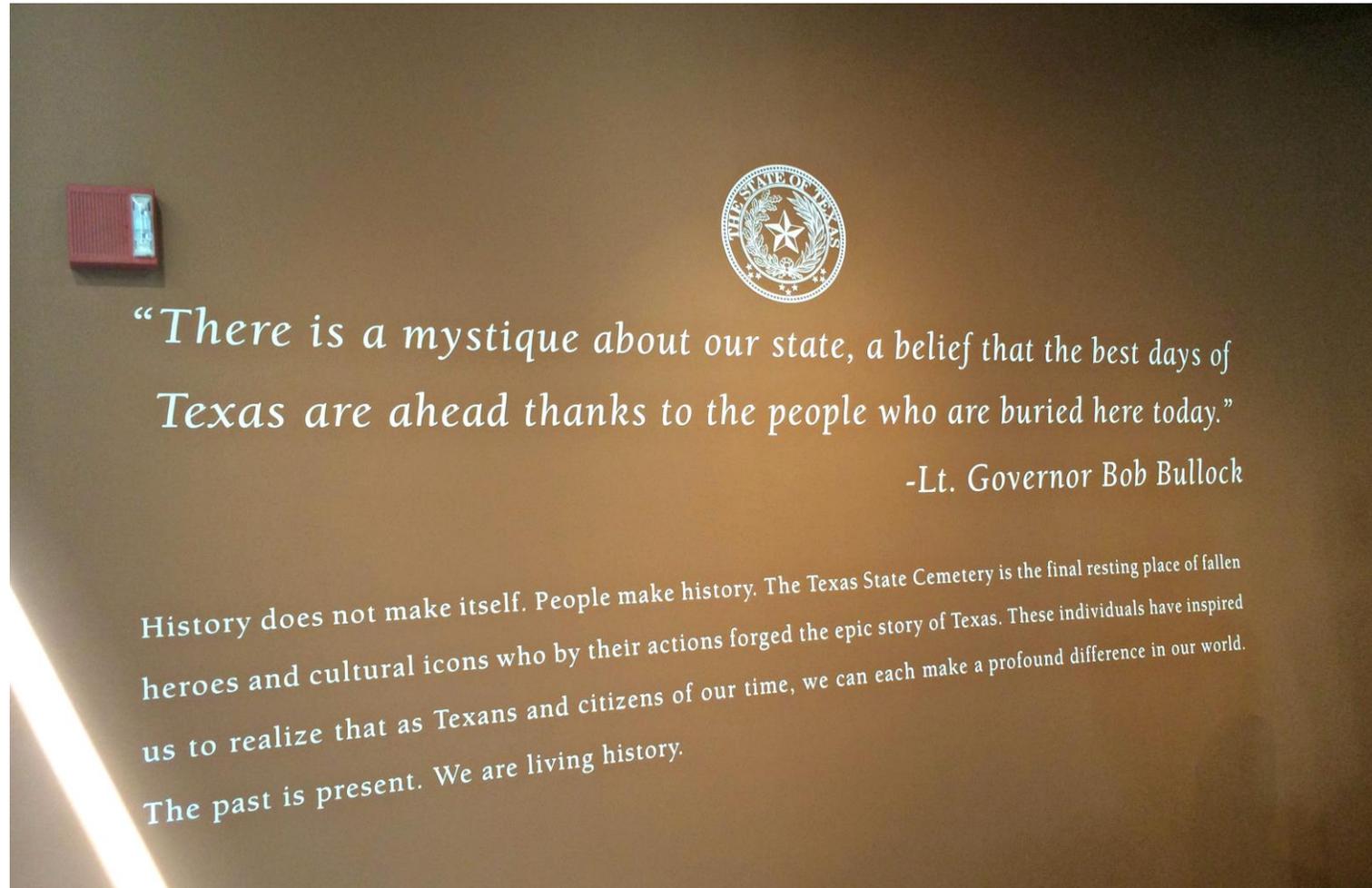


# Technique #1: It's One Big Story



*Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX*

# Texas State Cemetery



# Texas State Cemetery



Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

# Texas State Cemetery



Texas State Cemetery Visitor Center & Gallery, Austin, TX

# Casa Navarro online exhibit

## Online Exhibit: José Antonio Navarro

*Casa Navarro State Historic Site*  
*[www.visitcasanavarro.com](http://www.visitcasanavarro.com)*



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION



# Casa Navarro online exhibit

From the...  
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## Tragedy Shapes Navarro's Young Life

José Antonio Navarro suffered two tragedies in 1808, at the young age of 13. Both would mark him for the rest of his life. First, he fractured his leg in an accident. The wound never healed properly and left him with a limp and chronic pain for the rest of his life.

The second tragedy occurred later that year when Navarro's beloved father died. Ángel Navarro's visionary words surely helped José Antonio develop into the man that he became. He devoted himself to his own education and mental development, so that as an adult, he proved himself a leader of his own family and his fellow Tejanos.



## Serving the People of Texas

José Antonio Navarro served tirelessly in elected and appointed positions throughout his life. He served as land commissioner for the Mexican government alongside various empresarios, as San Antonio's city attorney, and as a city council member. He was the elected representative from San Antonio in the legislatures of Mexico, the Republic of Texas, and the State of Texas. He was one of two Tejanos to sign the Texas Declaration of Independence. He helped write both the Constitution of the Republic of Texas and the Constitution of the State of Texas.



## A Perilous Expedition

*President Lamar asked Navarro to serve Texas in an ambitious commission.*

The Santa Fe Expedition left Austin in June 1841, aiming to establish Texas's dominion over territories extending up the Rio Grande to the commercial hub of Santa Fe. Accompanied by a large military force, the group's mission was to entice the residents of New Mexico with trade opportunities, responsive government, and independence from Mexico, and then assume control.

Gen. Hugh McLeod commanded the operation. President Lamar asked Navarro to lead the diplomatic effort. Reluctantly, he agreed. Leadership conflicts, geographic confusion, and supply shortages began almost immediately. Harsh terrain, brutal heat, ignorant guides, and attacks by Kiowas and Comanches led to desertion and death. Worse, fresh Mexican troops based in the area were prepared for confrontation. An exhausted McLeod surrendered in October, 1841. The Mexican army marched the captives 1,600 miles to Mexico City and eventually released all but Navarro. President Santa Anna declared him a traitor to Mexico, originally sentencing him to death. Four years later, in January 1845, Navarro escaped.

## Challenging the "Know-Nothings"



An anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant movement known as The American Party—also called the "Know-Nothings" thanks to pledges of secrecy its members were sworn to uphold—rose to alarming power nationwide in the early 1850s. The Know-Nothings, particularly strong in Central Texas, swept the 1854 San Antonio municipal elections. With the 1855 governor's race a year away, their continued prominence caused many people grave concern. San Antonio Know-Nothings, despite apparent contradictions, targeted the Tejano vote by holding lavish fandangos with free coffee and liquor, backed with the hint of violence. Navarro recognized the manipulation and, though retired from public office, spoke out vehemently. His famous oratory style still rang out even in print. When an impassioned speech written by an ailing Navarro was read to members of the Democratic "Mexico Texans of Béxar," his voice was unmistakable:

"Fellow citizens, at last you have risen from the slumber of indifference! At last you have remembered that you are the sons of those Hispanic Mexican builders who founded our lovely city..."

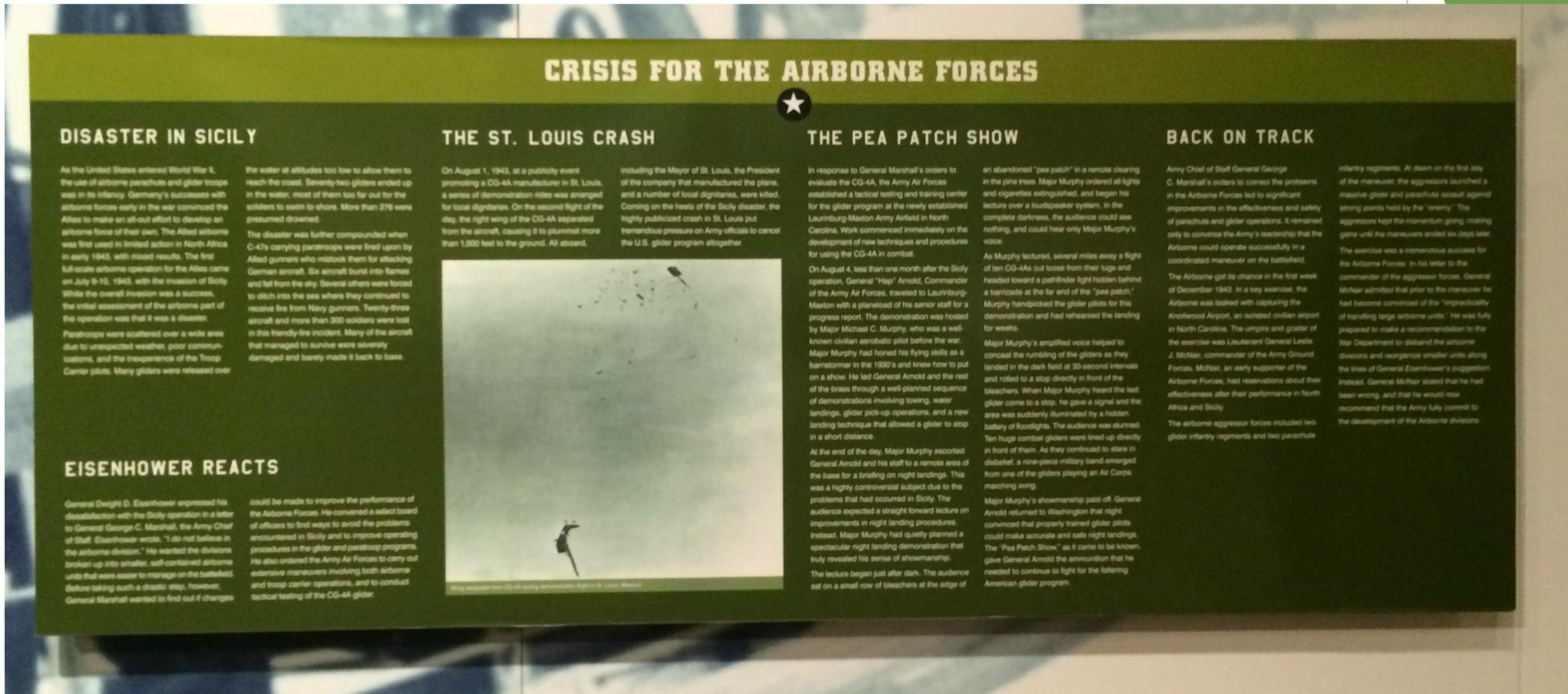
The speech united the crowd against the Know Nothings and helped unify the Democratic Party statewide. Incumbent Democrat Elisha Pease held the governor's seat in the August 1855 election. The Know-Nothings' impact withered almost as quickly as it arose.

## Technique #2: Stories as Examples



*Silent Wings Museum, Lubbock, TX*

# Example: "Crisis for the Airborne Forces"



Silent Wings Museum, Lubbock, TX

# Thematic Structures



A Christmas Story. Miss Shields did not know what a theme was.

# These are Topics



## THE STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

In the 1800s, Asian Texans essentially had no guaranteed human rights. Judge Roy Bean is pictured here on his horse before his saloon-courthouse in West Texas. He was the final word on cases involving the thousands of Chinese rail workers of the Southern Pacific, and upon the murder of one Chinese man, he declared after some examination of the law books that there was "no law against killing a Chinaman."

The racial caste period of Asian Texan history runs from the founding of the Texas Republic in 1845, when Asian immigrants were allowed to naturalize as citizens. Asian Texans were treated as a lower caste with fewer rights than whites and different rights from blacks. However, Chinese American sharecroppers and farm workers in Robertson County took advantage of their superior education and "personally appeared in open court" to declare their "bona fide intention" to become American citizens. The court granted at least fifty Chinese instant citizenship, making them perhaps the only naturalized Asian American citizens at the nation. They immediately voted in the 1854 elections.

Before 1964, Asian Texans were forced to segregate their restaurants, but when Chinese restaurant-owner and civil rights leader Albert Gee became president of the Houston Restaurant Association (pictured here), he pushed Houston restaurants to integrate their dining rooms. Gee also led efforts to allow Asians into law school and led boycotts forcing corporations to hire qualified Asian engineers and accountants.

In the early 2000s there were still three roads in Texas that were named "Jap," a term long considered offensive to Asians. Sandra Tanimachi, niece of Saburo, fought for ten years to have the name of her local "Jap Road" changed. In 2004, before hundreds of people (some from out of state) debating the issue, the Jefferson County Commissioners finally voted to change the name. Sandra and her son tearfully embraced.

In the days following the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, Mark Stroman went on a racist shooting spree, killing an Indian Hindu and a Pakistani Muslim. He shot Bangladeshi Muslim Rais Bhuiyan in the face, blinding him in one eye. Stroman was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. After surgeries on his face and years of meditation on the matter, Rais Bhuiyan began a public campaign to spare Stroman from lethal injection. Stroman eventually repented for his murders and Bhuiyan called Stroman on his execution day to forgive him.

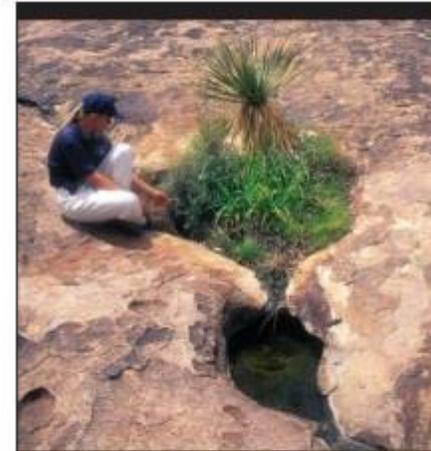
# These are Themes

At the most basic level, computers count by controlling the flow of electricity from one place to another. But, computers are more than simply input and output. They embody the story of man's passion for knowledge, inventing, tinkering and solving difficult problems.



# These are Themes

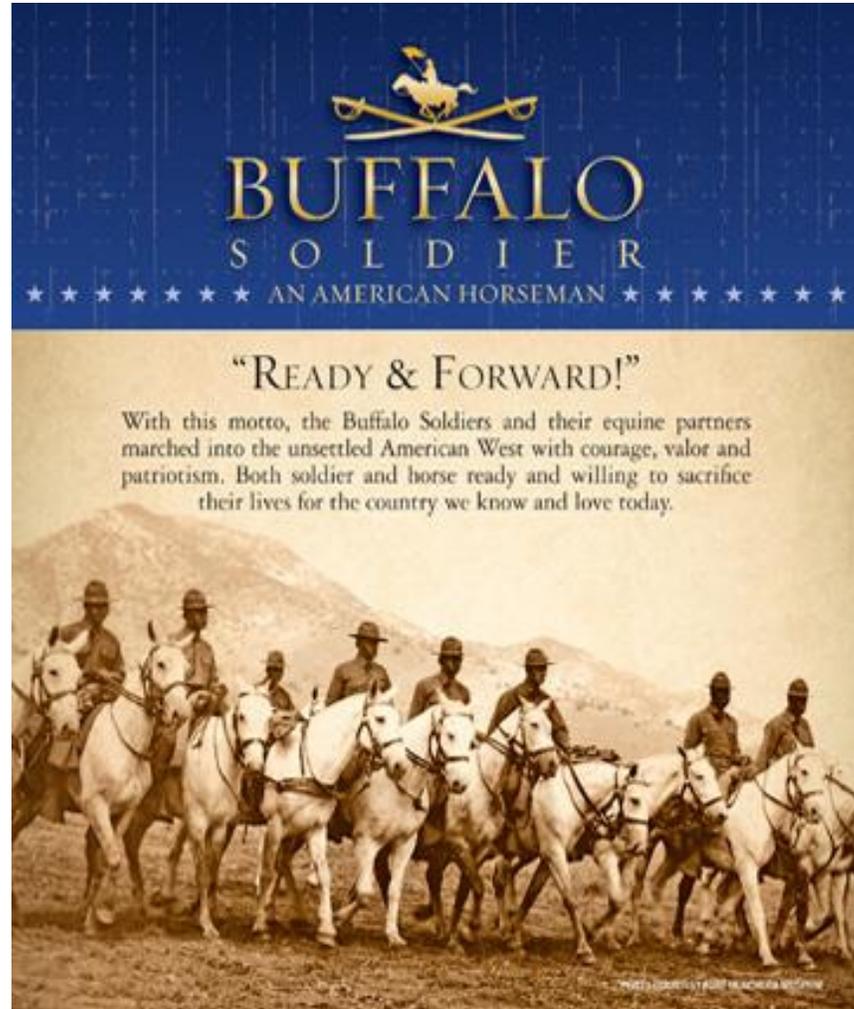
THE FORMATIONS OF HUECO TANKS STATE HISTORIC SITE RISE ABOVE THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT FLOOR TO MARK AN OASIS OF NATURE AND CULTURE. DUE TO ITS GEOLOGY, RELATIVELY ABUNDANT WATER, AND UNUSUAL STRUCTURE, HUECO TANKS HAS SERVED AS A REFUGE FOR PLANTS, ANIMALS AND PEOPLE FOR OVER 10,000 YEARS. THOUSANDS OF PICTOGRAPHS LEFT BY PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC NATIVE AMERICANS ARE TESTAMENT TO THE LIFE-SUSTAINING POWER OF HUECO TANKS.



THE FORMATIONS OF HUECO TANKS STATE HISTORIC SITE RISE ABOVE THE CHIHUAHUAN DESERT FLOOR TO MARK AN OASIS OF NATURE AND CULTURE. DUE TO ITS GEOLOGY, RELATIVELY ABUNDANT WATER, AND UNUSUAL STRUCTURE, HUECO TANKS HAS SERVED AS A REFUGE FOR PLANTS, ANIMALS AND PEOPLE FOR OVER 10,000 YEARS. THOUSANDS OF PICTOGRAPHS LEFT BY PREHISTORIC AND HISTORIC NATIVE AMERICANS ARE TESTAMENT TO THE LIFE-SUSTAINING POWER OF HUECO TANKS.



# These are Themes



*"Buffalo Soldier: An American Horseman," American Quarter Horse Museum & Hall of Fame, Amarillo, TX*

# Why are Themes Valuable?

- ▶ Themes provide an organizing principle or framework for your entire exhibit.
- ▶ Themes encapsulate and relay meaning for visitors quickly and concisely.
- ▶ Themes allow you the opportunity to frame concepts in a way that is accessible and relatable.

# Writing a Theme in Five Steps

1. Cast a Wide Net
2. Look for Common Ground
3. Draft and Test a Statement
4. Refine
5. Polish

# Layering Information

- ▶ Streakers: Read top-level information (titles, subtitles)
- ▶ Strollers: Read introductory text, skim text blocks & captions
- ▶ Studiers: Read every last word

*Adapted from Exhibit Makeovers: A Do-It-Yourself Workbook for Small Museums by Alice Parman and Jeffrey Jane*

# Layering Information

## Imagining the Southwest: Art of the Santa Fe

### "That Streak of Rust Across Kansas": The Santa Fe at the End of the Nineteenth Century

By the end of the 1880's, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Company had become one of the greatest railroad systems in the world. Despite such monumental success, the Railroad was left struggling with financial issues. Reincorporated with Edward P. Ripley elected as the new president, reforms began almost immediately in an effort to bring "that streak of rust across Kansas" back to its former standing.

Santa Fe executives had already been looking into advertising as an avenue to boost profits for the struggling company, even before the company's transition and Ripley's placement as President. Several other railroads had already been successful at branding themselves using advertising to promote their lines, including the Chicago & Alton, Rock Island, and the Missouri-Kansas-Texas.



The Chicago & Alton line popularized the phrase "The Only Way" after their line reached Kansas City in 1879.

### The Santa Fe's First Commission

Railroads went west and people followed. The exotic landscapes and cultures they saw were unlike anything they had seen before. Thomas Moran, one of the first artists to explore the western landscape, captured the public's imagination with his large canvases—*The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone*.

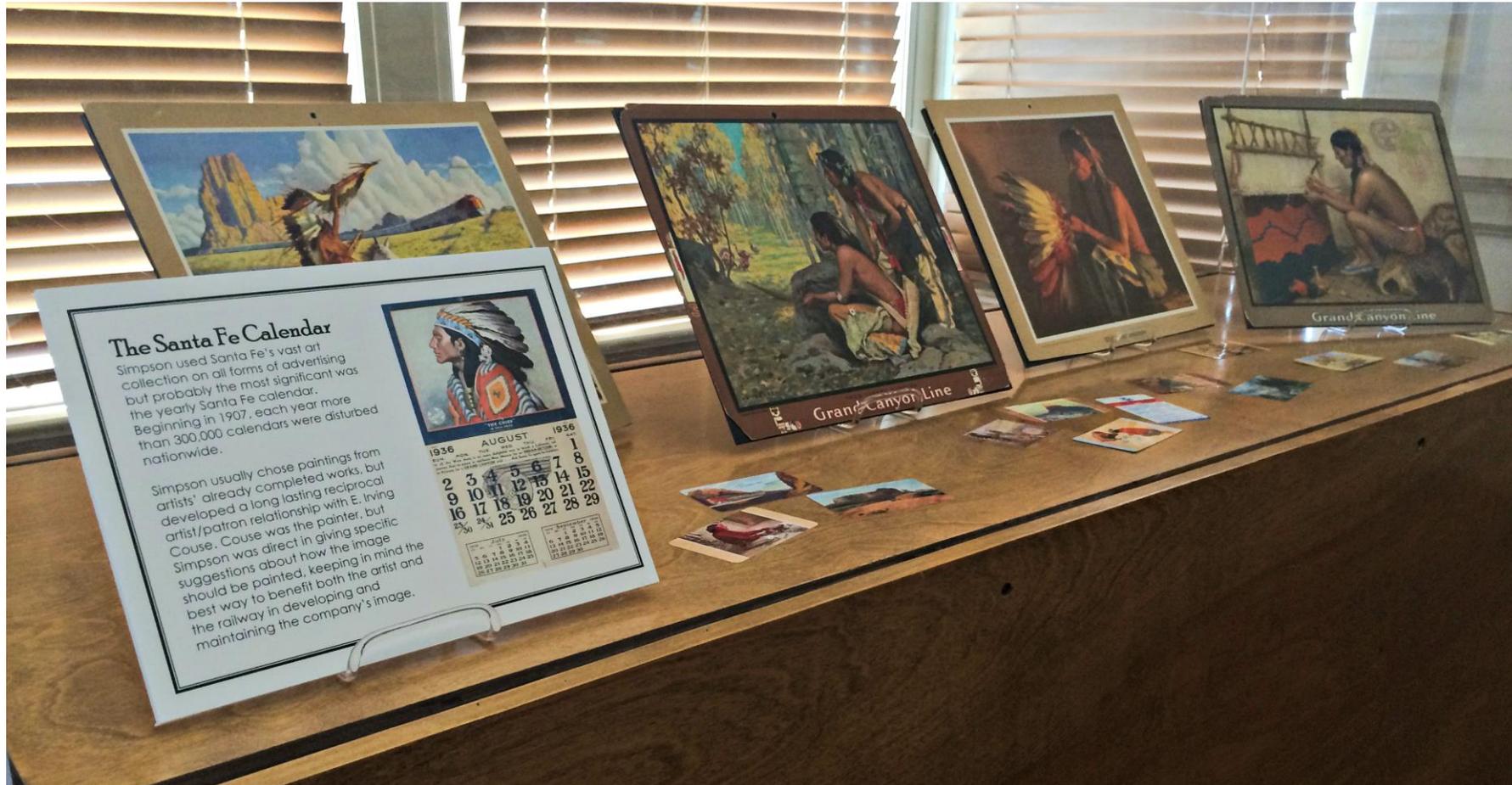


The Grand Cañon of the Yellowstone, by Thomas Moran

Recognizing the popularity of Moran's images, the Santa Fe jumped on the chance to commission Moran to produce a painting of Arizona's Grand Canyon to use in their own advertising. In 1892, the Santa Fe paid for Moran's travel to Arizona in return for the copyright to one of his paintings.

The result—*The Grand Canyon of the Colorado*—was reproduced as a lithograph, framed, and sent out around the country by the thousands to offices, hotels, schools, even homes—almost anywhere there was a fair chance the picture could be seen and bring new travelers to the Santa Fe.

# Layering Information



Temple Railroad & Heritage Museum, Temple, TX

# Layering Information



Temple Railroad & Heritage Museum, Temple, TX

# Layering Information

**Restoration & Recreation**

When the Civilian Conservation Corps built this park during the Great Depression, they restored a treeless landscape into a place where generations of Texans have come to enjoy the outdoors.

**Back to Nature**

To build Tyler State Park, the CCC first needed to restore the landscape to what it looked like before the land was cleared for agriculture. They built dams and terraces to control erosion and then planted over 600 acres with native trees and shrubs that they raised in a nursery on site.

The CCC used local natural materials as they developed the park, including local stone to build bridges and dams around the lake.

**A Working Education**

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) developed Tyler State Park in the 1930s. The CCC was a jobs program created during the Great Depression to put young men to work planting trees and developing parks across the United States. In addition to earning a steady paycheck, the men also learned valuable skills on the job and could take classes in reading, writing and other subjects.

Men in the Civilian Conservation Corps received a great deal of on-the-job training, ranging from general labor to specialized skills.

The CCC planned its work to enhance people's experiences of nature. For example, the bath house terrace was designed to frame a stunning view of the lake as you descend down the steps.

**A Legacy You Can See**

Many of the park's most popular features today were built by the men of the CCC. The most obvious of these is the lake, where generations of Texans have enjoyed swimming, boating and fishing. They also developed many of the park's trails and built the bath house and boat house. The CCC did all of this to help people better appreciate and enjoy the outdoors.

# Layering Information

## CONFEDERATE REUNION GROUNDS

*state historic site*

1738 FM 2705 • Mexia, TX 76867  
254.472.0959 • [www.visitcrg.com](http://www.visitcrg.com)

### Preserve the Future

Help the Texas Historical Commission preserve the past while touring this historic site. Please be mindful of fragile historic artifacts and respectful of the historic structures. We want to ensure their preservation for the enjoyment of future generations.

### Friends of Confederate Reunion Grounds

Join us in protecting this special place. Consider volunteering as a docent or becoming a member of the Friends of Confederate Reunion Grounds. For more information, please contact 254.472.0959.

### See the Sites

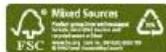
From western forts and adobe structures to Victorian mansions and pivotal battlegrounds, the Texas Historical Commission's state historic sites exemplify a breadth of Texas history. Come explore the real stories at the real places.

Plan your next trip at  
[www.texashistoricsites.com](http://www.texashistoricsites.com)



**TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
*real places telling real stories*

[www.thc.state.tx.us](http://www.thc.state.tx.us)



Welcome to Confederate Reunion Grounds State Historic Site. People have gathered at this place where Jack's Creek enters the Navasota River for thousands of years. Evidence within the site suggests the earliest campers were nomadic hunter-gatherers more than 5,000 years ago. However, this property is most notable for its use by the Confederate veterans

of Limestone County for their annual reunions from 1888 through 1946. As reunions grew larger, veterans from North Texas down to Houston and across East Texas joined them. Families camped under the giant bur oaks, enjoying speeches, dances, fellowship, and food while remembering their comrades who fought and died in the Civil War.



Front cover: Living historians during the annual Civil War Living History Days event. Background: Cannons are fired by living historians during the annual Civil War Living History and Reenactment event.

# Layering Information



Left: A living historian makes cobbler in Dutch ovens. Above: Living historians encamp during the annual Civil War Living History and Reenactment event

## SOUTHERN SYMPATHIES

Southern landowners settling in the Navasota River valley brought the culture of cotton and slavery to Limestone County. In 1861, they overwhelmingly voted for secession. Although no Civil War battles were ever fought in Central Texas, three out of every four free men in Limestone County served in the Confederate army. After the war ended in 1865, the emancipation of African American slaves, the collapse of the old plantation farming system, and the imposition of martial law kept the county in turmoil for years.

## The Reunion Movement

In the 1880s, Northern and Southern veterans alike wished to gather for fellowship and shared memories of their war experiences and sacrifices. Reunions captured the emotions and imaginations of many Southerners. Earlier small groups of Limestone County Confederate veterans met informally to socialize and reminisce. In 1888, they began meeting annually in this spot along Jack's Creek. The next year they organized the Joseph E. Johnston Camp of the United Confederate Veterans (UCV), named for the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Army of Tennessee. The chapter became the 94th affiliate of the rapidly expanding UCV.

As many as 7,000 people attended the annual reunions held in late July or early August under a full moon. They arrived by horse, buggy, and special trains from Dallas and Houston. The Camp financed the purchase of the reunion grounds by selling camping lots to the veterans and their families. Families built summer cottages or camped in tents or brush arbors, planting crepe myrtle and irises that still bloom each spring.

Each day at dawn and dusk the veterans proudly fired "Old Val Verde," one of several Federal cannons captured by Confederates in the battle at Mansfield, Louisiana. Two of these guns saw action for the Confederates in the Louisiana campaigns with the Val Verde Battery. At the end of the war, Captain T.D. Nettles buried the two cannons under a buggy house in nearby Fairfield rather than surrender them to Union troops. Today "Old Val Verde" is on display beneath the flagpoles at the center of the historic site near the intersection of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson avenues.

During the reunions, veterans eulogized those soldiers who, in the words of General Stonewall Jackson, had "cross(ed) over the river and [now] rest under the trees." The gatherings also included parades, brass band concerts, patriotic speakers, games, and traditional Southern foods. Attendees danced the nights away on the wooden floor of the pavilion, now recognized by the National Register of Historic Places for its unusual architecture. By the end of World War I, time had taken a noticeable toll on the aging veterans. The gatherings continued, but on a smaller scale.



## The Great Mexia Oil Boom

In November 1920, wildcatter Albert E. Humphreys struck oil in Limestone County. Everything changed: the county population exploded and Mexia became a boomtown at the center of one of the largest oil fields in the world. The entrepreneurial Humphreys contracted with the Joseph E. Johnston Camp 94 for water and built a pump house on Jack's Creek to supply his wells.

Affectionately known as "The Colonel," Humphreys was a devotee of Confederate history and offered to improve the Confederate Reunion Grounds. He built the Pure Oil Company clubhouse and a large bathhouse on the creek. Miss Mamie Kennedy, one of the last officers of Camp 94, hosted lavish parties for "The Colonel" during those oil boom days. She designed and landscaped gardens leading to the "Colonel's Spring," which became known as the "flirtation walk." Eventually the membership of Camp 94 named Humphreys an honorary member in recognition of his generosity in preserving and beautifying the grounds.

By the 1930s, as the number of Confederate veterans dwindled, the reunions became smaller and less elaborate. Finally, in 1946 the charter of Camp 94 expired and the grounds fell into disuse. In the 1960s, community members began restoring the grounds, which continues today. The historic site remains a gathering place for family reunions and group activities. The Friends of the Confederate Reunion Grounds host events each year to promote awareness of the state historic site.



Built in 1893, the dance pavilion became the social center of the reunion grounds.

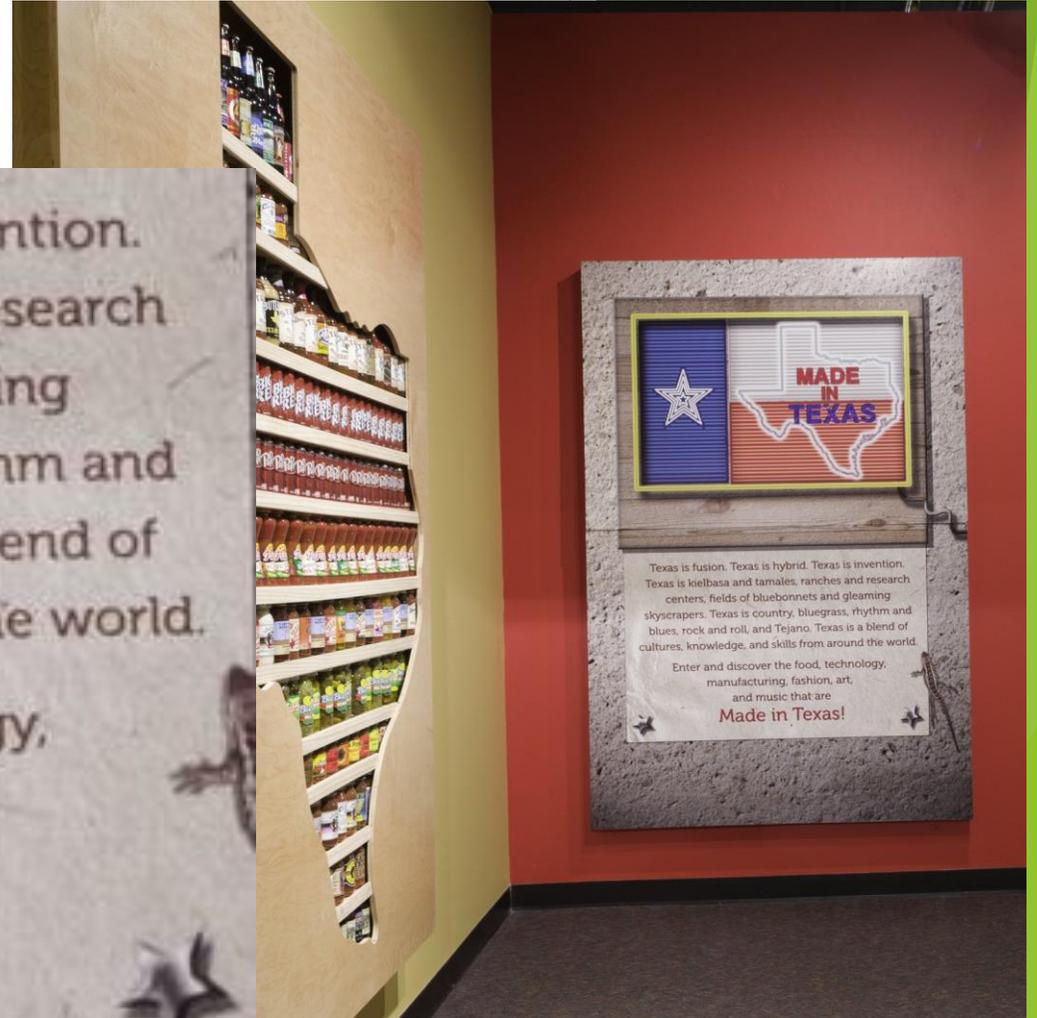
The Old Val Verde cannon summoned the veterans to daily activities during reunions.

# Implementing Your Theme

Texas is fusion. Texas is hybrid. Texas is invention. Texas is kielbasa and tamales, ranches and research centers, fields of bluebonnets and gleaming skyscrapers. Texas is country, bluegrass, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, and Tejano. Texas is a blend of cultures, knowledge, and skills from around the world.

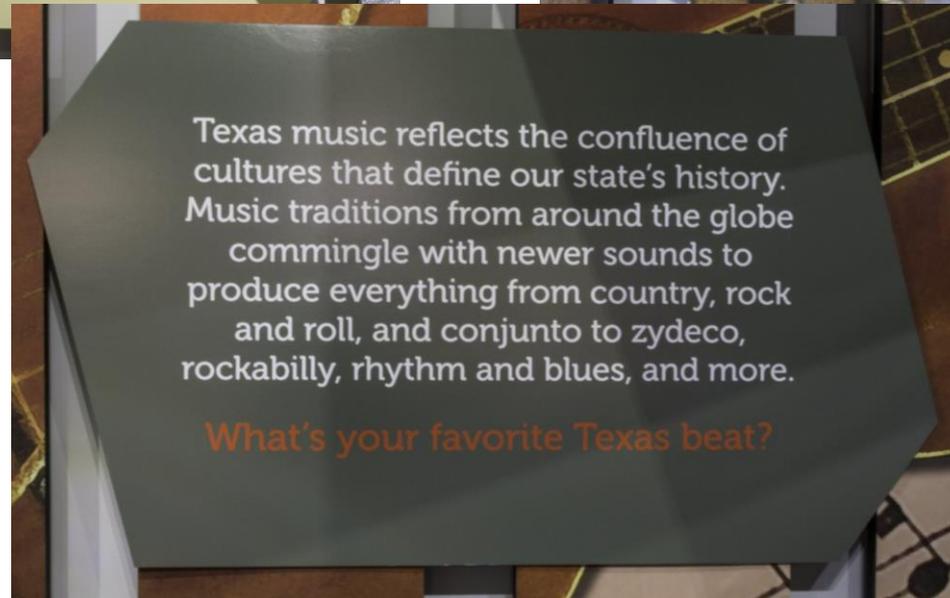
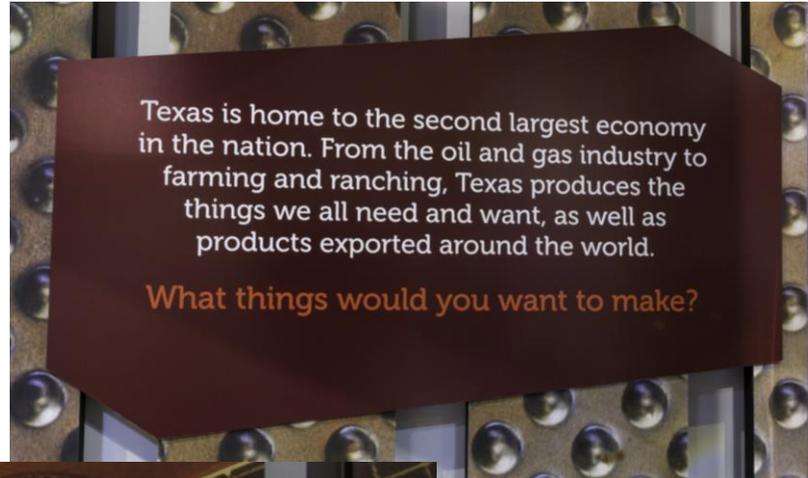
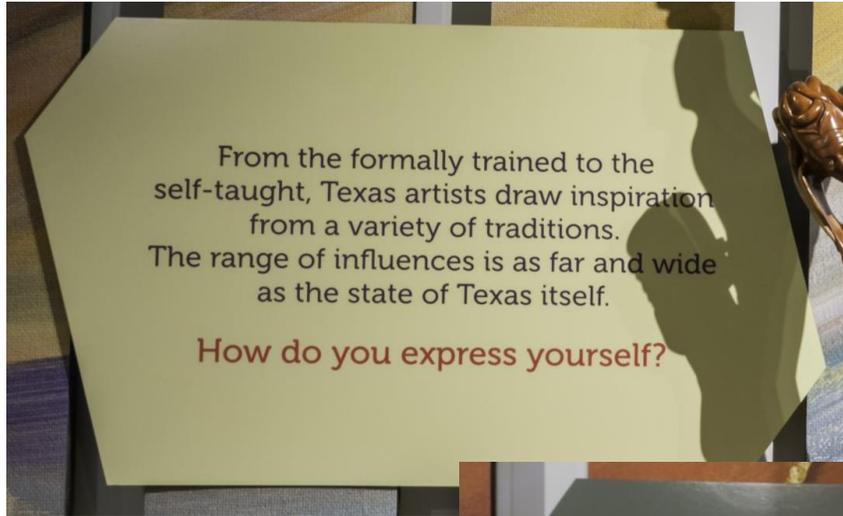
Enter and discover the food, technology, manufacturing, fashion, art, and music that are

**Made in Texas!**



*“Made in Texas,” Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio, TX*

# Implementing Your Theme



# Implementing Your Theme



*"Made in Texas," Institute of Texan Cultures, San Antonio, TX*

# Implementing Your Theme

**N**ineteenth-century German writer Karl May molded an image of the American West and Southwest built from his imagination and his study of scientific, historical and literary works. European audiences devoured his prolific works of more than 100 books, several of which are set in New Mexico. Widely translated in languages other than English and adapted for the screen, his works were action-packed stories of a “wild” West that imprinted itself on generations of readers. Incredibly, May never saw the American West, having visited the United States only once when touring New York state in 1908. This exhibit invites you into the world of an author whose creation of the West still inspires hobbyists and re-enactors to tell the stories of Winnetou, Old Shatterhand, and a mix of sometimes improbable supporting characters.



*“Tall Tales of the Wild West: The Stories of Karl May,” National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX*

# Implementing Your Theme

## Karl May's Winnetou

May's most famous character was fictitious Mescalero Apache Chief Winnetou, whose home was a conjured Pueblo along the Pecos south of Roswell on the Llano Estacado. Winnetou exhibited a humanistic European education and a basic knowledge of French and German, but not Spanish. He was never out for revenge or out to kill his enemies. He was brave, honest, and just. In short, May idealized Winnetou as the noble savage of romanticism, a man morally superior to his white counterparts—except for Old Shatterhand, his German *Blutsbruder* [blood brother], who taught him European standards, values, and morals.

Winnetou and Old Shatterhand (in other stories called Old Shurehand or Old Firehand) pursued adventures that took them deep into Mexico and as far north as Yellowstone and Wyoming. May convincingly told his readers that he was Old Shatterhand and that he had encountered all the adventures conveyed in his stories: "I have visited these countries and speak their languages."

May's Winnetou trilogy profoundly influenced Europeans' image of the American West. His use of real geographic locations, his application of selective anthropological and ethnographic findings of the time, and his public insistence that his fictional heroes were real led readers often to regard his works as authentic. His use of first-person narration not only strengthened May's illusion, but put the readers into the narrator's place and made them the hero.



*"Tall Tales of the Wild West: The Stories of Karl May," National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX*

# Implementing Your Theme

## Adventures Around the World

May's creative works went beyond the well-known series of Winnetou and the American West. Initially, he developed his characters in writings about the prairies. He matured the characters of Winnetou and Old Shatterhand, introduced rifles such as the Silberbüchse, and established the Apaches' homeland near the Pecos in the Llano Estacado. Many of his works were later re-worked to fit editorial and publishing needs.

In the Western hemisphere, his imagination took readers into Central and South America. In half a dozen treatises, May used historical situations, well-known geographical backdrops, and early American civilizations to anchor his fantasies. The title characters often had little to do with the story lines but were used to provide May with appropriate plots. The stories set in South America catered to Germany's increased interest in the geographic, ethnographic, and socio-political situation on that continent, yet they never reached the popularity of May's other novels.

The narratives set in the "Orient" were dear to May, and his main character, Kara Ben Nemsî, has almost as much name recognition in Germany as Old Shatterhand. May undertook one lengthy excursion into Africa and the Near East in 1899–1900. Although he named his home "Villa Shatterhand" and filled his garden with numerous sculptures and statues of the American West, his study held Asian ornaments and curios.



*"Tall Tales of the Wild West: The Stories of Karl May," National Ranching Heritage Center, Lubbock, TX*

# Additional Information

You can find additional resources on the THC's Museum Services webpage:

<http://www.thc.state.tx.us/preserve/projects-and-programs/museum-services/technical-assistance>

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