

SAM RAYBURN HOUSE

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

Bonham, Texas

Pre-Visit Guide

Grade 4

Overview: Meet Mr. Sam

In preparation for a visit to Sam Rayburn House, students will meet “Mr. Sam” Rayburn, longest serving Speaker of the House in American history. They will learn about Rayburn’s rise to political success and study his leadership style.

Social Studies TEKS

(17) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of active individual participation in the democratic process. The student is expected to:

(D) identify the importance of historical figures and important individuals who modeled active participation in the democratic process such as Sam Houston, Barbara Jordan, Lorenzo de Zavala, Ann Richards, Sam Rayburn, Henry B. González, James A. Baker III, Wallace Jefferson, and other local individuals.

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. The student is expected to:

(A) identify leaders in state, local, and national governments, including the governor, local members of the Texas Legislature, the local mayor, U.S. senators, local U.S. representatives, and Texans who have been president of the United States; and

(B) identify leadership qualities of state and local leaders, past and present.

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:

(A) differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; documents; and artifacts to acquire information about the United States and Texas;

(B) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences

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Materials

- Historical images
- *Mr. Sam, Mr. Speaker* video link <https://youtu.be/3ks41sLE6qs>
- Activity worksheets

Vocabulary

- **representative:** someone elected to act for others.
- **Speaker of the House of Representatives:** The leader of the House of Representatives. He or she directs all activities on the House floor, including recognizing members who attempt to speak or make a motion and appointing members to committees that review all bills. The Speaker is third in line for the presidency after the vice president.
- **will to succeed:** desire or determination to reach a goal.
- **persuasion:** the power to convince someone or to cause someone to believe or do something in a certain way.

Activity: Mr. Sam

15-20 minutes

Ask students to spend five minutes at the beginning of class reflecting on their future career goals. Provide the prompt “When I grow up, I want to be...” Share and discuss their answers.

Introduce students to “Mr. Sam” and display **the image Mr. Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House.**

Share:

- Sam Rayburn was elected to the Texas House of Representatives when he was 24 years old.
- In 1911, at age 29, Mr. Sam was elected Speaker of the House—the youngest Speaker in Texas history.
- In 1913, Mr. Sam was elected to the United States House of Representatives by the Texas 4th District. He served in the U.S. House for 48 years—through eight different presidencies, two World Wars, and the Great Depression.
- Mr. Sam was elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives ten times, serving for a total of 17 years. At this point, he remains the longest serving Speaker in American history.
- Mr. Sam was a trusted advisor to Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy. He was also a mentor to Lyndon B. Johnson.

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Display and read the following newspaper quote about Sam Rayburn's childhood ambition:

“This was pretty good going for a poor country boy, born the eighth child of 11 in the Tennessee hills and raised on 40 acres in Texas. With nothing to do by chop cotton and read history books, young Rayburn had picked his career before he was 10. He built it on \$25, hard work, and the will to succeed.”

Citation: Eleazer, Frank. [Newspaper Clipping: Mr. Sam Mingled With--And Was One of Nation's Greats], clipping, Date unknown. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, crediting Sam Rayburn House Museum, (texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph787658/m1/1/) Accessed June 11, 2018.

Ask: *What problems or obstacles did Sam Rayburn overcome to meet his goal?*

[Answers may include: poverty, many siblings meant money and attention were likely stretched, he was raised in the country and not a city which usually meant that education and other resources were harder to find, he worked in the fields at a young age.]

Ask: *According to this newspaper article, Sam Rayburn built his success on what three things?*

[\$25, hard work, and the will to succeed]

Context: As a very young man, Sam Rayburn knew he wanted to represent his fellow citizens in the House of Representatives. “Mr. Sam,” as he was called by many, was known to welcome his constituents, or voters, into his own home in Bonham, Texas. In his sitting room, Rayburn and his fellow citizens discussed their interests, local needs, and the politics of the day.

Although his work in Washington, D.C. solidified his place in history, Rayburn always maintained his interest in the family farm and in the work of his 900-acre ranch. He remained rooted in family and the land, and this kept him relatable to the voters in his district.

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Sam Rayburn's home outside of Bonham, Texas, was completed in 1916.

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Activity: Vote for Me!

20 minutes

Review student understanding of representative democracy and the bicameral structure of U. S. Congress. One possible resource is Kids in the House, an **interactive website** maintained by the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. <https://kids-clerk.house.gov/middle-school/>

Discuss the similarities and differences between the House and the Senate. Have students choose to run for either a House or Senate seat. Tell students to build a campaign featuring a slogan, a poster, and an explanation of why they're running for the House/Senate seat. Allow class time for presentations.

Media Activity: Mr. Sam, Mr. Speaker

20 minutes

Tell students to use the **Media Organizer** to note of key facts about Sam Rayburn as they watch the video. <https://youtu.be/3ks41sLE6qs>

As a class, review the answers to the fill-in-the-blank questions:

- The Rayburn family moved to Texas in 1887.
- Mr. Sam was a teacher before he ran for office.
- Sam Rayburn was a member of the Democratic party.
- The REA electricity/power to farms and small towns.

Have students share facts from their **Three Facts lists**. Did students choose to note any of the following facts?

In 1940, Rayburn was unanimously elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.
Rayburn “ran Congress” with Texan Senator LBJ.

Sam Rayburn Library and Museum and the Sam Rayburn House Museum preserve Sam Rayburn’s legacy.

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Activity: Mr. Sam, A Lesson in Leadership

10 minutes

Display and read aloud the **selection of quotes** about Sam Rayburn. Discuss and encourage students to define words that they do not know.

As a class, identify the personality traits, ideas, and activities that made up Mr. Sam’s leadership style to answer the question:

What made Sam Rayburn a successful leader?

[Answers may include the skills and characteristics of persuasion, reason, friendships in both parties, integrity, fairness, unpretentiousness, relaxed sense of humor, courtesy, depth of vision, dedication to freedom, love for democracy, devotion to the well-being of all.]

Assessment

Evaluate student participation and media organizers for completeness and understanding.

Take-Home Extension

Tell students to create a **KWL Chart** to take home. Have them complete the “What I **K**now” and “What I **W**ant to Know” columns about Sam Rayburn. After completing all pre-visit preparations and the on-site field trip, have students complete the “What I **L**earned” column for learning assessment.

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Additional Resources & Extensions

The Portal to Texas History

<https://texashistory.unt.edu>

The Handbook of Texas Online

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook>

Library of Congress

<https://loc.gov>

Kids in the House

<https://kids-clerk.house.gov/young-learners>

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Media Organizer: Mr. Sam, Mr. Speaker

Fill in the blanks as you watch the video.

In the year _____, the Rayburn family moved to Texas. After graduating college, Mr. Sam worked as a _____ before running for office.

Sam Rayburn was a member of the _____ party.

The REA (Rural Electrification Act) brought _____ to farms and small towns.

List **three** additional facts you learned about Sam Rayburn.

Fact 1: _____

Fact 2: _____

Fact 3: _____



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Activity Quotes: Mr. Sam, A Lesson in Leadership

★ “You cannot lead people by trying to drive them. Persuasion and reason are the only ways to lead them. In that way the Speaker has influence and power in the House. In carrying out his philosophy of leadership, Mr. Rayburn drew on vast reserves of personal friendships and loyalties among colleagues in both parties. Other helpful assets included a reputation for unswerving veracity, massive integrity and consistent fairness, a personality devoid of pretension and a relaxed sometimes earthy, sense of humor.”

Citation: United Press International. “Rayburn Is Dead; Served 17 Years As House Speaker,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1961. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0106.html> (Accessed June 24, 2018).

★ Representative Joseph W. Martin, Jr., of Massachusetts, Speaker of the House in the 80th and 83rd Republican Congress, speaks of his Democratic opposite number invariably as “our beloved Speaker” and “my close personal friend.” He said, “Having occupied the office of Speaker for four years, I am aware of its great responsibilities, its pressures, and its anxieties. The fact that Sam Rayburn has executed the duties of his office with unfailing fairness and courtesy to the Members on both sides of the aisle is a living testimonial to the breadth of his vision and the integrity of his character.”

Citation: United States. Congress. (87th, 1st session: 1961). House. *The Leadership of Speaker Sam Rayburn*, book, Washington D.C.: 1961. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu.

texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph14386/m1/136/?q=sam%20rayburn%20letter
(Accessed June 23, 2018).

★ Representative Jack B. Brooks of Texas: “None of the thousands of Members of the House of Representatives who have served with Sam Rayburn have been untouched by his personal example of dedication to freedom and his love for our democracy. None of the millions of Americans now living are without some benefit from Sam Rayburn’s devotion to the well-being of each of us.”

Citation: United States. Congress. (87th, 1st session: 1961). House. *The Leadership of Speaker Sam Rayburn*, book, Washington D.C.: 1961. University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, texashistory.unt.edu.

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Site Visit Recommendations

- Complete the pre-visit lesson or other introductory lessons prior to your field trip.
- Divide students into small groups, each with an adult chaperone.
- Make sure students bring pencils. Pens and markers are not allowed in the exhibits.

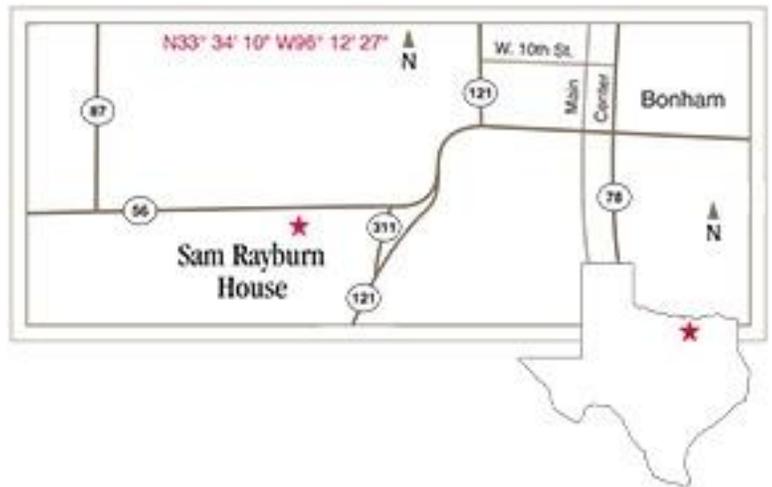
Information

To schedule a site visit field trip for your students, please call 903-583-5558.

For admission prices and hours of operation, please visit us online at <http://visitsamrayburnhouse.com>.

Contact Us

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