

Fort St. Louis: Grading a Settlement and an Explorer



Subject and Grade Texas History, 7th
(can be adapted for 4th)

Author Jason Terry (2023), adapted from “Fort St. Louis: A Do-It-Yourself History” by Carol Schlenk (2009)

Time duration Two 45-minute class periods, or one if students are familiar with the material

Objective Students will work in groups to evaluate the success of the French explorer La Salle and his settlement in Texas, Fort St. Louis.

TEKS ***Social Studies, Grade 7***

(2A), compare the cultures of American Indians in Texas prior to European colonization such as Gulf, Plains, Puebloan, and Southeastern

(2B), identify important individuals, events, and issues related to European exploration of Texas such as Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the search for gold, and the conflicting territorial claims between France and Spain

(9A), identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and explain the positive and negative consequences of the modifications

(10A), identify why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled

(20A), differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas

(20B), analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions

Materials

1. Access to the Texas Beyond History website:
 - <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/index.html>
 - <https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/images/lasalle-timeline.html>
2. La Salle and Fort St. Louis Research assignment
3. Report cards

Activities and procedures

Day One

Step 1: Explain to students that one of the Six Flags Over Texas is the French Flag, and that while the early French settlement of Texas was not ultimately successful, it played a very important role in European exploration and settlement in Texas.

Step 2: Advise students that they will be researching the history of Fort St. Louis, completing an initial research assignment, and then using this information to complete a report card to evaluate La Salle and his settlement, Fort St. Louis.

Step 3: Guide students to the Texas Beyond History *Fort St. Louis* exhibit:

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/index.html>

Step 4: Distribute Fort St. Louis Research Assignment and allow students time to finish. (Note: If students are already educated and familiar with the events surrounding La Salle and Fort St. Louis, the research assignment is not required.)

Day Two

Step 1: Discuss the differences between primary and secondary sources (see vocabulary). Some of the best information we have about Fort St. Louis can be found in the journal (a primary source) of the French soldier and explorer, Henri Joutel. Traveling to Texas from his native France, Joutel accompanied La Salle on every step of their expedition to find the mouth of the Mississippi River in the New World. After La Salle's murder by his own men, Joutel returned to France in 1688, taking his journal with him. Portions of this journal are found on the Fort St. Louis page of Texas Beyond History.

Step 2: Allow students to work in pairs or in groups of 3-4. Distribute report cards. Have students work together to debate/evaluate La Salle's accomplishments and to complete the report card. Advise students that they do not necessarily need to agree on everything and allow them to have different grades and rationales if they feel strongly about a topic. In the last portion of the report card, students must quote primary or secondary sources from Texas

Beyond History (or another source) as proof of their conclusions and grading.

Lesson Closure:

1. Allow students to explain their grades on the report cards and discuss their reasoning.
2. Ask students the following question: “After conducting your research, how do you think Fort St. Louis affected future European exploration and settlement in Texas?” Have them explain their answers. Then point out that even though the settlement and most of its inhabitants didn’t survive, its existence spurred Spanish interest in settling Texas. Then ask how Texas might have been different today if the French had been much more successful in Texas. Possible answers include: more French spoken in Texas, more Texas French place names, such as cities, rivers, counties, etc.

Extension Activities

- Have students write an alternate history story wherein they ‘fix’ something that went wrong on La Salle’s Expedition (such as losing one of the boats or angering the Karankawa) and rewrite the story of what happened from that point forward.
- Fort St. Louis: A Recipe for Disaster. Have students create and fill out a recipe card for Fort St. Louis. (Ingredients might be a pinch of disease, 1 tribe of angry Karankawa, a gallon of French ego, etc. Cooking directions might be: Lose 1 ship to pirates. Stray 400 miles off course,

then bake for several years in the hot Texas sun, etc.) Recipe card templates are available online.

Assessment La Salle Research Sheet and Report Card

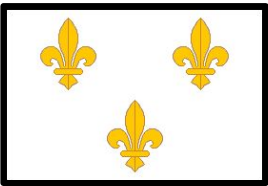
La Salle Research Assignment

Use these websites and other resources to locate your information:

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/index.html>

<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/stlouis/images/lasalle-timeline.html>

1. What country was La Salle from?
2. Where did La Salle intend to build a French colony?
3. How many settlers did he start out with?
4. How many boats did he start out with?
5. What tragedy befell La Salle's first boat, the *Saint-Francois*?
6. Where did La Salle, his settlers, and his remaining 3 boats end up by mistake?
7. By what name is La Salle's colony known?
8. What happened to La Salle's 3rd boat, *Le Joly*?
9. After *Le Joly* was gone, how many settlers remained at La Salle's colony?
10. Describe the French settler's relationship with the Karankawa.
11. Describe La Salle's relationship with the Caddo tribe.
12. What happened to *La Belle*, La Salle's last remaining ship?
13. What did La Salle attempt in 1687 to save the colony?
14. By this point, how many settlers were left at the colony?
15. What happened to La Salle in March of 1687?
16. What ultimately happened to the last remaining French settlers in January of 1689?
17. Who were the only survivors of the French colony in Texas?



Report Card

Explorer: *La Salle*

Year:

Country:

Subject	Letter Grade: A, B, C, D or F	Justification of Grade/Comments: (Detailed explanation of why you awarded this grade with examples.)	Primary or Secondary Proof
Leadership Skills			
Relationship between explorer and Natives encountered			
Decision Making			
Accomplishes goals			
Impact on Texas History			