

**INCREASED BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPATING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS**

Dear Principals, Curriculum Directors and Seventh and Eighth Grade History and English Teachers,

The Battle of Flowers Association announces its 27th Annual Texas History Essay Contest. **New this year is the addition of an eighth grade level of the contest that will be judged separately from the seventh grade level.** The contest is for all seventh and eighth grade students from San Antonio area schools. Please encourage your students to compete for the honor of representing their school in this contest by writing an original 350 to 700 word historical essay on the topic:

**EXTRA! EXTRA! Texas Journalists Making History**

In the early days of the nineteenth century, when the land that was to become Texas was a vast expanse of wildness and political unrest, along with settlers came a stream of individuals who risked life and limb bringing the press to Texas. The earliest “newspapers” were single sheets and most often espoused or denounced a singular cause. They communicated passionate opinions about loyalty to Mexico or Spain, or they advocated for insurrection, revolution and statehood, or they announced important Declarations. In those uncertain times it was not uncommon for printing presses to be spirited from town to town to escape impending threats and for newspapers to be initiated and closed down routinely.

Likewise, early permanent newspapers communicated the political, religious and special interest voices of their journalists. Simple geography and inclement weather made gathering what we could call “news” difficult. But through an exchange system of printing the articles from each other’s papers, and personal eyewitness or word of mouth reports, they began reporting on military and political events and publishing key political documents. In this way journalists contemporaneously captured the history of events as well as expressing opinions.

In that era, publishers, editors and printers were men of fortitude, grit and courage who endured erratic revenue, paucity and delays of supplies, and unpredictable distribution. Most were part-time, also being civic leaders or soldiers, businessmen or politicians who were engaged primarily in these endeavors. Nevertheless, by the Civil War Texas had spawned over 400 “newspapers.”

In each subsequent era of Texas history, the evolving technology and demographics had their effects on how journalists told and distributed their stories and opinions. The railroads, telegraph and telephone enhanced both content and distribution. Film, programmed radio and TV news and networks brought additional dimensions and immediacy to reporting. Categories of coverage broadened to include agriculture, business, entertainment, social issues, sports, law. Texas news rooms, whether newspaper, radio, or television, went from one room, one-man offices to buildings teeming with the life of beat reporters and complex equipment.

Moreover, Texas journalists, from their own points of view, in their own styles, cast in different roles, not only told the stories of Texas but were an integral part in making history and creating change. Some participated personally in historical events. Many used their trade to advocate their politics. Some shined a light on abuses and conditions that in turn lead to reforms. Whether the arena was the small towns of Texas or the big cities, an editor or publisher exerted great influence by telling the other side of a story, calling out public officials, and bringing unknown facts forward affecting elections and political movements. And from small town editors to big city reporters, to journalist scribes who painted word pictures of the era, to media conglomerates, to TV anchors, they made contributions to what we know of Texas history and national history.

Texas is rich with the legacy of journalists. This year’s topic invites you to choose from an era a journalist, group of journalists, publication or production, and discover who they were and share how their work either told an important part of the Texas story, contributed to history or influenced change from a perspective that inspires you. You might choose to tell the story of how an early newspaper like the *Telegraph and Texas Register* and Editor Gail Borden not only influenced the movement but became part of the story of the Texas Revolution, or you might choose to focus on a single Texas journalist, like Caro Crawford Brown, telling a single historically important story of corruption and why that mattered. You could find your inspiration in the role of a paper like *La Prensa* that served as the leading Spanish-language paper and Mexican cultural voice. Consider journalists whose stories of Texas have come from their personal experiences and observations of Texas that provide a kind of contextual history. Examples are how Elmer Kelton used his personal observations and knowledge of Texas to tell a huge story of the era, the West Texas drought, or Américo Paredes who chronicled life on the border in the early 20th century. Are you inspired by a media campaign in any era that influenced reform? Or by the evolution of technology and its impact on telling the stories of Texas?

Think of the headlines of the eras and the multitude of significant events that were reported about Texas. What

The topic and description are intentionally broad to provide an opportunity for creativity and personal inspiration. “Making History” includes the recording and publishing of facts describing people, events, conditions, natural phenomena, and actually being part of history. We encourage and invite you to focus on one Texas journalist, group of journalists, publication or journalistic production or enterprise to illustrate how he/she/it made history. You may choose from the topics below or select one that fits within this Topic Description. **Remember that the core events of your topic must have occurred at least fifty years ago, prior to 1972**.

**\*Suggested Topics**

The Story of *Gaceta de Texas*Godwin Brown Cotten and the *Texas Gazette*: Revolutionary Journalism  
Gail Borden and the *Telegraph and Texas Register*Texas Journalists and Annexation  
Ronnie Dugger, *The Texas Observer*Liz Carpenter: Press Secretary and Media Advisor  
Ignacio Lozano and *La Prensa*Texas Journalists and Sam Houston  
Vivian Castleberry, *Dallas Times Herald*Texas Editors Influence Reforms in the Progressive Era  
*The Galveston News*Caro Crawford Brown, Courthouse Reporter, *Alice Daily Echo*George Bannerman Dealy, *The Dallas Morning N*ews and the Making of a Giant

Lenora Butler Rolla, *The Dallas Express*Julia Scott Reed, *The Open Line*Américo Paredes  
Don Hampton Biggers, West Texas Crusader  
Bob Schieffer, *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, Kennedy Assassination  
Dan Rather, KHOU-TV, Hurricane Carla  
Mary Austin Holley, Eyewitness to Early Texas Life  
Oscar O’Neal Griffin, Billy Sol Estes  
George McElroy, A Life of Firsts, *The Informer* and *Houston Post*Ben Ezzell, *The Canadian Record*J. Frank Dobie  
William Sidney Porter, O. Henry, *Rolling Stone* and Other Writings  
Walter Cronkite  
The Hobbys of Houston  
Jovita Idar, *La Crónica* and Beyond  
Elmer Kelton, The Texas Dust Bowl  
Charles DeMorse, Father of Texas Journalism  
Jim Lehrer, *Dallas Times Herald* and KERA *Newsroom*Francis Moore and the Republic of Texas  
Staley T. McBrayer, “The Orville Wright of Offset Newspapers”  
Eugene Alexander Howe, *Amarillo Globe-News* and the Tactless Texan  
Spanish Language Newspapers of Texas  
The Impact of the Galveston Storm of 1900-*The Galveston Daily News*

Col. Charles S. Diehl, *San Antonio Light* Alfred H. Belo  
John Henry Brown

Blackie Sherrod

Suggested Topics\*

\*These are suggestions. You may have a personal connection or interest in an important Texas journalist not listed here. You are not limited to these suggested topics.

Please select your school’s two best essays and submit them to contest co-chairs at the address below. The deadline is Monday, January 11. 2021. Include the attached statement of originality, signed by students whose essays you select.

Entries will be judged on content, creativity, the interest generated, accuracy and appropriateness of topic (70%), and on neatness of presentation, grammar, spelling and quality of research (30%). Title page and resource materials listed in standard bibliographic form should be on separate pages (not counted toward the length of the essay). References will be checked for accuracy and plagiarism software will be utilized. Please note that essays must fall within the 350 to 700-word length to qualify for the contest. Please make sure your essays are titled!

The first place winner of the Essay Contest in each grade will be invited to ride in the 2021 Battle of Flowers Parade!

The Texas History Essay Contest is held in conjunction with the Battle Flowers Annual Oratorical Contest in which Texas college students research, write and deliver original speeches on a similar topic.

Winning Essay Contest authors will be honored at the Oratorical Contest, which begins at 9 a.m. on Friday, February 22, 2019 at the Witte Museum in San Antonio. PROMPTLY AT 1:00 p.m., the first, second and third place winners of the Essay Contest in each grade will receive plaques and awards for their accomplishments.

**PRIZES:** In addition, SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADE first place winners will receive laptop computers, and the second and third place winners will receive monetary prizes of $500 and $250 respectively. Winning essays will be displayed and Participation Certificates will also be presented. The first-place essays will be published in the Battle of Flowers Parade program. Teachers submitting the first prize student essays will receive $1000 for their department.

We invite winners and their teachers to attend the luncheon as guests of the Battle of Flowers Association. Essay guests check in at 11:45 a.m. and have lunch where the winning authors will read his/her essay to the crowd! We invite other interested students, parents and teachers to attend the Oratorical Contest and Essay Contest Awards (open to the public) and, if they choose, to make a paid reservation for lunch ($30.00) by mailing a check to Mrs. Paola Lloyd, 227 Geneseo Road, San Antonio, Texas 78209.

Oratorical Contest finalists repeat their speeches to a new set of judges in the afternoon session, which begins at 1:15p.m. after the Essay Awards and everyone is invited to attend.

We hope that you will encourage your students to compete! Please complete the attached participation form and send it to the address below if you plan to participate. To help you publicize the Essay Contest, we have enclosed a flyer for you to copy, post and distribute.

Please contact me if you have questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Tricia Tobin and Lynn Cunningham  
Essay Contest Co-Chairs

350 Terrell Road

San Antonio, Texas 78209