

## *How can I best use these materials to support the Social Studies TEKS for Grade 4?*

Texas Ghost Stories help us to understand our multicultural heritage and ourselves. The highly motivating content of this issue directly supports the content goals for 4th grade in the following ways:

- Many ghost tales derive from legends about an individual at a particular place and time in history, such as the story of the lights of Bailey’s Prairie, based on the Austin Colony’s Brit Bailey, and the story of Chipita Rodriguez, whose ghost reappears whenever a woman is executed in Texas. Ghosts are often found in historical locations such as the Alamo or Mission Espíritu Santo at Goliad with historic “reasons” for lingering in those sites. Ghost legends illustrate the strength of the oral tradition, retelling “what happened” in the lives of contemporary Texans.
- Local “ghosts” reflect their terrain and the people who lived there. The Headless Horseman races across the coastal plain, wild horses stampede on a Panhandle mesa, cucuis prevail in Spanish-speaking South Texas, while the Ghost of White Rock Lake mirrors the big-city upbringing and ambitions of a young Dallas woman.
- Ghost towns often reflect changing patterns of economic activity or changing environmental factors. Legends such as La Llorona illustrate the importance of wealth, class, and ethnicity in colonial New Spain and in subsequent eras in which variants of this tale are set.
- In addition, the theme of “Ghost Legends and Cucuis” embraces content from other strands, notably Language Arts, allowing for a greater depth of understanding of complex materials and inviting full use of a student’s critical thinking skills in recognizing cause-and-effect relationships, making comparisons and contrasts, and making and predicting outcomes.

Activities support the essential knowledge and skills:

- History. Depending upon which “ghosts” your community offers, students will find information and enrichment related to (4.1) pre-Columbian and native American groups, (4.2) European explorers and settlers; (4.3) the revolutionary and republican period; (4.4) the Civil War and subsequent growth of the cattle and oil industries and railroads, and the fading of Native American peoples and society in Texas; (4.5) urbanization and technology.
- Geography: Interview forms for the “Haunting Legends” activity emphasize establishing a sense of time and place related to the “ghost story.” Students are expected to (4.6) apply geographic tools and (4.7) interpret maps by locating the “residence” of their ghost on a county or city map. To bring home the concept of cartography, draw in highways, rivers, parks, and other landmarks that students are familiar with “on the ground.” Use directional terms and measurements. Extend your map to include the surrounding counties. (Consider the July 2002 flooding and the importance of knowing the linear path of a river which students know mainly from one bridge or crossing!)
- Economics: The Ghost Towns photograph and question will lead to discussion of (4.8) settlement patterns and (4.9) adaptation to and modification of environment and the consequences of such modification; (4.10) economic patterns and conflicts of interest between Native Americans and European immigrants and (4.11) motivations for exploration and settlement; and (4.11 and 4.12) describing, explaining, analyzing, and giving examples of free enterprise in Texas and patterns of work and economic activities.
- Culture: The folklore of ghost legends and cucuis, including the J. Mason Brewer story and others from the bibliography along with students’ own “Haunting Legends” offer samples of oral literature to help students (4.20) understand the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our region’s history and culture. Some student teams may also discover ballads, corridos, proverbs or dichos, art, handiwork, or artifacts.
- The “Haunting Legends” group activities and interviews were developed to incorporate the possibility of practicing all of the Social Studies Skills itemized in 4.22, 4.23, and 4.24 as students seek out and use primary sources such as local histories, newspaper articles, and informants who reside in their own communities. Actual skills used will vary.