

## *How can I best use these materials to support the Social Studies TEKS for Grade 7?*

Texas ghost tales derive from both truth and imagination. “Which is which?” is a question adolescents will eagerly pursue. Seventh graders will appreciate the “Haunted Legends” discussion on the different ways people “believe in” things. These high-interest materials also support TEKS content for grade 7.

- Ghost legends often derive from an unusual event related to an individual in a particular place and time in history, such as the lights of Bailey’s Prairie, based on the Austin Colony’s Brit Bailey, or the hanging 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. (See our “Spirits of the Alamo” Web pages.) 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. Many illustrate a change from an agrarian to an urban society or the consequences of failing to make that change.
- Ghost legends such as those about 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.
- The “Haunting Legends” activity relies heavily upon primary sources such as informants, site visits, and newspaper reports (or the lack of them!) to examine the rich and diverse cultural background of Texas and identify the different racial and ethnic groups that settled in Texas to build a republic and then a state.

Activities support the essential knowledge and skills:

- History: Students doing the “Haunting Legends” project are required to determine the date or era of their tale and how it fits into local or state history. In a classroom divided into five or six research teams, some tales may even “explain” the outcome of historical events, such as the ghost dogs in Brazoria County who foiled a plot to rescue Santa Anna after his capture at San Jacinto (“Ghost Dogs of Orozimbo,” see Bibliography, Foster). Tales may draw upon various eras of history (some but not all of 7.2-7.7).
- Geography: In the “Haunting Legends” activity, students contribute to creating a thematic map of ghost sites and haunted places in their community (7.8). In the “Ghost Towns” photograph and question, discussion may lead to (7.10) understanding the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas or to (7.11) analyzing the effects of the changing population distribution in Texas.
- Economics: (7.12) the factors that caused Texas to change from an agrarian to an urban society.
- Culture: Examining a variety of stories, such as the J. Mason Brewer tale, stories from the bibliography, and stories reported by student teams from the “Haunting Legends” activity, can cumulatively help students explain how the diversity of Texas is reflected in a variety of cultural activities and performances and describe how people from selected groups attempt to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to the larger Texas culture. The Ghost Writer’s Glossary and photographs of the various cucuis represented in the exhibit offer specific examples of historic and current Spanish influence on English vocabulary.
- 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.