

SAM RAYBURN HOUSE

— STATE HISTORIC SITE —

Bonham, Texas

Pre-Visit Guide

Grade 7

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.

TEKS

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

- (A) identify the leadership qualities of elected and appointed leaders of Texas, past and present, including Texans who have been president of the United States; and
- (B) identify the contributions of Texas leaders, including Sam Rayburn.

(21) Social studies skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies 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, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about 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 and conclusions;
- (C) organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;

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Materials

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

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.

Activity: Mr. Sam

10 minutes

Introduce students to “Mr. Sam” and display an 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. To date, 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.

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

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“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

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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.



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

Courtesy of Texas Historical Commission.

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Media Activity: Mr. Sam, Mr. Speaker

15 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.
- At age 29, Rayburn became the youngest Speaker of the House in Texas history.
- The Great Depression ushered the Democratic party back into majority power.
- Rayburn supported the Civil Rights Act of 1957.
- Rayburn “ran Congress” along with Texas senator Lyndon Baines Johnson.

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.

Activity: Mr. Sam, A Leader for Texas

20 minutes

In 1961, a book was published commemorating Rayburn’s tenure as the longest serving Speaker of the House in history. Rayburn’s colleagues in the U.S. House of Representatives, both Democrats and Republicans, shared their congratulations and compliments for his achievement.

Display or distribute “**The Rayburn Touch in Legislative Leadership**” handout and have them do a close-reading to answer the following questions.

Display the questions. Discuss the students’ answers:

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- **What qualities made Sam Rayburn a successful leader?**
[Answers may include the ability to identify with the everyday American, his selflessness, and his bold/creative but temperate exercise of power, understanding farm (rural) and urban toil]
- **Which state did Wright Patman represent?**
[Texas. The introduction notes that Rayburn was a “fellow-Texan” of Patman]
- **Name the four acts noted by Rep. Patman as being important to Sam Rayburn’s legacy.**
[Rural Electrification Act, Railroad Holding Company Act, Securities and Exchange Act, Federal Communications Act]
- **What issue was tackled by the 1944 bill described in Patman’s story?**
[funding for farm to market roads]
- **In what major war was the U.S. involved in 1944?**
[World War II]

To continue discussion, ask:

How was the funding of farm-to-market roads critical for

- the constituents of Rayburn’s 4th district of Texas,
- all Texans,
- all rural Americans.

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Assessment

Evaluate student participation and printouts 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.

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>

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Media Organizer: Mr. Sam, Mr. Speaker

Fill in the blanks as you watch the video.

The Rayburn family moved to Texas in _____. At age _____, Rayburn became the youngest Speaker of the House in Texas history.

The _____ ushered the Democratic party back into majority power.

Rayburn supported the _____ of 1957.

Rayburn “ran Congress” along with Texas senator _____.

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

Fact 1: _____

Fact 2: _____

Fact 3: _____



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Activity Image: The Rayburn Touch in Legislative Leadership

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).

The Rayburn Touch in Legislative Leadership

This will be known in history as the Wright Patman story because it illustrates what the tributes in this book mean by the Speaker's legislative direction, his identity with the everyday American, his selflessness, and his bold and creative but temperate exercise of his enormous power. Representative Patman—who has known fellow-Texan RAYBURN intimately for a half century—tells it like this:

RAYBURN had known as a boy the backbreaking toil of the farm, as later experience taught him the needs of the urban toiler.

And so his heart and his effort went with the people.

If you ask what that means I answer:

It means, first of all from my standpoint, the Rural Electrification Act.

It means the Railroad Holding Company Act.

It means the Securities and Exchange Act.

It means the Federal Communications Act.

It means far and deep in RAYBURN's leadership the rightness of the Federal Government helping the farmer with farm-to-market roads.

I was in SAM RAYBURN's office in the Capitol in 1944.

Bill Robinson, of Utah, chairman of the House committee dealing with roads and highways, came in and asked Mr. RAYBURN to let him take up the highways bill.

RAYBURN asked: "What have they got in there for country roads?"

Bill Robinson said: "We don't have anything that's designated but we expect to have part of the authorized funds spent on secondary roads."

RAYBURN said: "Have your committee agree to an amendment that will earmark 30 percent of the funds for farm-to-market roads."

Robinson seemed to agree on the figure and RAYBURN said: "We will then take it up and pass it."

That day in 1944 that bill was agreed upon and shortly thereafter passed and its advantages have continued and are observable throughout the farm country down to this day.

There is, as you can see, little rhetoric involved in this kind of leadership, and less self-glorification.

But it was done.

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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.

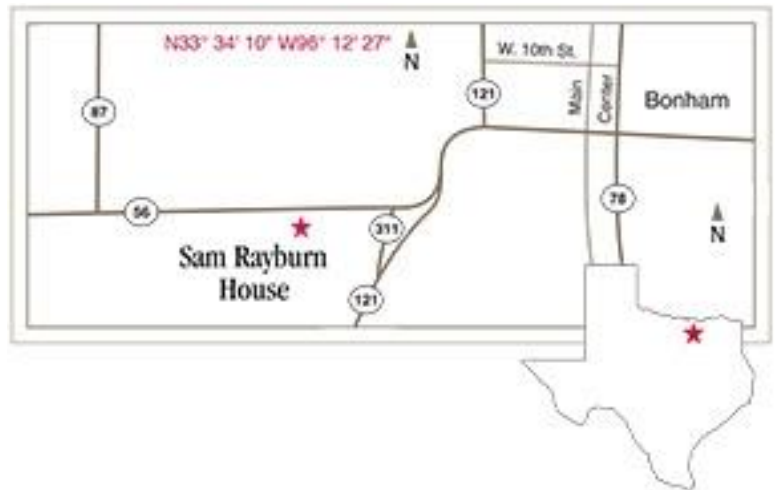
Information

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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Bonham, TX 75418
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sam-rayburn-house@thc.texas.gov



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