Pre-AP Texas Missions Article of the Week due 10/2

1. Take on the role as an American Indian living in a Spanish mission in Texas.
2. You may be an adult or a child.
3. Provide details about your family.
4. Create a story of how you and your family ended up inside the mission, and what your daily life is like.
5. Be specific about your daily life. (What kind of job do you do, foods you eat, how do you spend your free time, etc.)
7. Have fun with the assignment.
8. Create a picture depicting a scene from life in a Spanish mission. Provide a brief explanation of the scene. The picture should be colored, and draw on a standard piece of copy paper.
A Day in the Life of a Mission (cont.)

Historical Background Information

Spanish conquistadors came to Texas to claim lands for the Spanish crown. They brought with them Roman Catholic missionaries. The missionaries, or Franciscans, established missions in Texas. Their job was to convert the natives to Catholicism. The missions were like small towns that provided for the people within its walls.

A mission was more than just the church building. There were a variety of buildings to house priests, American Indians, and soldiers. Workshops, classrooms, shops, blacksmiths, tailors, kilns, granaries, cemeteries, gardens, and even orchards were part of the missions. All of these things were found inside walls that would protect the people of the missions from hostile attacks. The Franciscans worked to get a mission established and productive. Then they would move on to establish missions in other areas. Some of the most successful Spanish missions were established in Texas.

Not only would the missionaries instruct the American Indians in the Catholic faith, but they would also teach the natives new trades. Two of the most important trades were farming and raising cattle. These two trades provided the necessary food to sustain life at the mission. Each of the missions had their own ranch for raising sheep, goats, and cattle. These animals provided the people of the mission with meat, wool, milk, cheese, and leather. Spanish ranching in Texas laid the groundwork for the American cattle industry. Other industries developed within the early missions. These industries included weaving, iron working, and carpentry.

A standard day at a Texas mission was spent in work and religious study. Each day began with a morning prayer. This was probably followed by religious instruction. At noon the bells would ring calling the people together for more prayer and instruction. This was followed by another service in the evening. Between the time that was spent in religious services, the people of the mission were busy with daily jobs that supported the mission. Most of the men worked outside the walls of the mission to plant and maintain the fields. Others stayed behind working in the shops: weaving, woodworking, and metalworking. Women and girls made pottery and baskets and prepared the food. Children spent their days learning Spanish, playing games, and helping their parents. After the evening meal and religious services, the people played games, danced, and sang before going to bed.

The Spanish control continued to grow in Texas, especially in the late 17th century. In response to France’s expansion into Louisiana, Spain established six missions in eastern Texas. These missions were far from Mexico. So, a halfway point was created between the eastern Texas missions and the missions in Mexico. Mission San Antonio de Valero (or the Alamo) was the first of a series of missions that were established along the San Antonio River. Unfortunately, the missions in eastern Texas were not successful due to malaria, drought, and French invasion.

Three of the eastern Texas missions were relocated to the San Antonio Valley in 1731. The missions along the San Antonio River were Mission San Antonio de Valero, Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, Mission San Juan de Capistrano, Mission San Francisco de la Espada, and Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción. The missions were built close together for several reasons. First, there was only one presidio (fort) to protect the people of the missions. The people of the missions were in danger of attack from northern Indians. Irrigation, which was vital to the success of the missions, was only possible in the upper ten miles of valley. Therefore, the close proximity of the missions was necessary. The San Antonio missions thrived during the mid-18th century.