

Manuel Lorenzo Justiniano de Zavala y Saenz

Manuel de Zavala (1788-1836) was a leading Texan who worked for the common good. He lived by three principles: love of his fellow man, love of knowledge, and attention to duty.

Zavala loved to learn and made it his goal to become as knowledgeable in as many areas as he could. He studied and excelled in science, philosophy, languages (fluent in Spanish, French, English, German, Italian, Portuguese, Greek and Latin), medicine, and geography. He traveled throughout Europe and developed a love of culture.

He was a visionary for forming the Republic of Texas as it separated from Mexico. He was one of the framers of the Constitution and one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence from Mexico. He even designed the flag of the Republic of Texas. He was elected first Vice President of the new Republic.

Zavala also translated the new laws and declaration into the Spanish language for the benefit of the people living in Texas.

During the Civil War, Zavala was in Mexico, when a frightful epidemic of *cholera* [disease caused by bacteria in the intestines, usually from polluted water] occurred. Zavala, using his medical background, immediately devoted himself personally to assist the suffering. He aided the poor and weak with his money and knowledge of medicine. He gave his help to all who called for him, whether high or low, without price. He forgot about the war and thought only of helping the afflicted.

Throughout his career, Zavala continued to help the common man and take responsibility to improve situations that he encountered. When he was governor in Mexico, a group of Indians appealed to him for mercy and justice. He did not turn them away, but listened attentively to their concerns and then investigated. The Indian village was situated at the foot of the Mountain of Toluca where the people had enjoyed a fresh supply of water from a lake on the top of the mountain. Some wealthy owner had diverted the stream, according to the Indians. Zavala, with some workmen, climbed the mountain to learn the facts. Upon reaching the summit, they discovered the water had been diverted by sluices. Zavala ordered the sluices to be cut, and the fresh water again bounded down to the village.

One writer summed up Zavala's life in these words: "A man of talents, of rare virtues, scholarly and gentlemanly accomplishments, forbearing, patient and constant, prudent in private life and to crown all that, he was in every sense of the word an honest man whose word was as good as his bond. Of all of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, he risked the most. He was the wealthiest man in the beginning of the colonies at the beginning of the revolution. He knew no day of rest from the moment, when in his youth, he consecrated his efforts to humanity."

Augustine Zavala was canoeing with his young son, when the canoe overturned. Zavala rescued his son and swam him to shore. Zavala contracted pneumonia from that rescue and died in 1836.

1. What responsibilities framed his early life? What do his interest areas demonstrate about his character?
2. How did he "see" himself?
3. What responsibilities framed his later life?
4. What do we learn about this responsible man through the cholera story or the story of the Indian Village water problem?
5. How do the steps of responsibility apply in these cases

