

Lorenzo de Zavala

1788–1836



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Lorenzo de Zavala was the first vice president of the Republic of Texas. He worked for Texas independence and helped draft the Texas Constitution.



As you read the biography below, think about how Lorenzo de Zavala's intelligence and determination helped him accomplish all that he did.



Lorenzo de Zavala, CHA 1989.83/
Courtesy State Preservation Board,
Austin, Texas

Lorenzo de Zavala was born in a village near Mérida, Yucatán, in Mexico, which was a Spanish colony at the time. After graduation, Zavala started a political career that would last more than 25 years.

Beginning in 1807, Zavala founded and edited several newspapers. He wrote many articles that supported democratic ideas and reforms in the Spanish government. Because of his political beliefs, Zavala was sent to prison twice. While a prisoner, Zavala taught himself to read English and learned enough from medical textbooks to be able to practice medicine once he was released from jail.

After a brief medical practice, Zavala soon returned to politics, and he continued to write pamphlets and editorials about democracy. He went to Madrid in 1821 to work with the Spanish government. When Mexico won its independence from Spain, Zavala returned home and helped establish Mexico's first republican government. He served as governor of the state of Mexico and later as secretary of the treasury. Zavala also became an *empresario* and worked to bring new settlers to Texas.

With a change of government in Mexico in 1830, Zavala was forced to leave the country. He was able

VOCABULARY

empresario businessperson who promoted migration to the Texas colonies

to return home in 1832 and serve again as a governor and in the Mexican Congress. The next year, President Antonio López de Santa Anna appointed Zavala to represent Mexico in Paris.

When Zavala heard that Santa Anna had suspended Mexico's constitution, he resigned from his diplomatic post. He ignored Santa Anna's order to return to Mexico and went to Texas in 1835. Zavala was immediately drawn into Texas politics and became an active supporter of the independence movement. He helped draft the constitution of the Republic of Texas and proposed a design for the first Texas flag. Zavala earned the respect of many Texan delegates, who appointed him vice president of the new Republic of Texas in May 1836.

Zavala resigned from the vice president's office in October 1836 and returned to his family's home on the Buffalo Bayou, southeast of Houston. One month later, Zavala caught pneumonia and died.

In addition to his contribution to history, Zavala is also remembered as a skilled writer, best known for his two-volume history of Mexico.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. What subjects did Lorenzo de Zavala study?

2. **Draw Conclusions** Do you think Lorenzo de Zavala would be interested in politics today? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY

3. Use an encyclopedia to learn more about Texas. On a blank sheet of paper, draw the state of Texas and cut it out. Use this paper to write a few facts about Texas.