

Primary Document Summary: James K. Polk, "Calling for a Declaration of War against Mexico"

... The strong desire to establish peace with Mexico, on liberal and honorable terms, and the readiness of this Government to regulate and adjust our boundary, and other causes of difference with that Power, on such fair and equitable principles as would lead to permanent relations of the most friendly nature induced me ... to seek the reopening of diplomatic relations ... An Envoy of the United States repaired to Mexico with full powers to adjust every existing difference ... The Mexican Government not only refused to receive him, or listen to his propositions, but after a long-continued series of menaces, have at last invaded our territory and shed the blood of our fellow-citizens on our own soil.

... The redress of the wrongs of our citizens naturally and inseparably blended itself with the question of boundary ... I could not, for a moment, entertain the idea that the claims of our much-injured and long-suffering citizens, many of which had existed for more than twenty years, should be postponed, or separated from the settlement of the boundary question ...

Thus the Government of Mexico, though solemnly pledged by official acts in October last to receive and accredit an American envoy, violated their plighted faith, and refused the offer of a peaceful adjustment of our difficulties. Not only was the offer rejected, but the indignity of its rejection was enhanced by the manifest breach of faith in refusing to admit the Envoy, who came because they had bound themselves to receive him.

Key Words:

Summarize the meaning of the text.

. . . the Mexican Government refused all negotiation, and have made no proposition of any kind.

. . . I had ordered an efficient military force to take a position "between the Nueces and Del Norte." This had become necessary to meet a threatened invasion of Texas by the Mexican forces . . . The invasion was threatened solely because Texas had determined, in accordance with a solemn resolution of the Congress of the United States, to annex herself to our Union, and, under these circumstances, it was plainly our duty to extend our protection over her citizens and soil . . .

The movement of the troops to the Del Norte . . . under positive instructions to abstain from all aggressive acts towards Mexico, or Mexican citizens, and to regard the relations between that Republic and the United States as peaceful, unless she should declare war, or commit acts of hostility indicative of a state of war. He was specially directed to protect private property and respect personal rights.

Key Words:

Summarize the meaning of the text.

The Mexican forces at Matamoras assumed a belligerent attitude . . . General Arista, who had succeeded to the command of the Mexican forces, communicated . . . that “he considered hostilities commenced, and should prosecute them.” . . .

The grievous wrongs perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens throughout a long period of years, remain unredressed; and solemn treaties, pledging her public faith for this redress, have been disregarded . . .

Our commerce with Mexico has been almost annihilated. It was formerly highly beneficial to both nations; but our merchants have been deterred from prosecuting it, by the system of outrage and extortion which the Mexican authorities have pursued . . . and, in official proclamations and manifestoes, has repeatedly threatened to make war upon us, for the purpose of reconquering Texas. In the meantime, we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted, even before the recent information from the frontier of the Del Norte. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.

As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon, by every consideration of duty and patriotism, to vindicate, with decision, the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country.

Key Words:

Summarize the meaning of the text.