

MICHAEL P. SPRADLIN

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Texas Rangers: Legendary Lawmen

by Michael P. Spradlin

Illustrated by Roxie Munro



About the book:

In the 1820's, Texas was a rugged, lawless place. The men who banded together to protect fellow citizens from the threats of frontier life became known as the Texas Rangers. Any unmarried man with a good horse and a sharp shot could be selected to join the ranks. As they patrolled the frontier, the Rangers were present for many of the most famous moments in Texas's exciting history—they defended the Alamo alongside Davy Crockett and Jim Bowie, spied on the Mexican army during the war for independence, and chased down outlaws in the booming oil towns of the wild west.

The thrilling history of these legendary lawmen is detailed in this fast-paced and richly illustrated account. Readers will be rootin' for the Rangers at every turn and learn a thing or two about keepin' the peace.

About the author:

Michael P. Spradlin is the author of several books for children and teens including the Spy Goddess series. He lives with his family in Lapeer, Michigan, but he wishes he were from Texas. Visit him at www.michaelspradlin.com

Roxie Munro is an award-winning illustrator whose work has appeared on the cover of the New Yorker. She was born in Texas and has illustrated several books with a Texas/Western theme, including The Inside-Outside Book of Texas, Ranch, and Wild West Trail Ride Maze. She now lives in New York City. Visit her at www.roxiemunro.com

Author Interview:

1. What is the most interesting fact or document you ever found while doing your research?

There were so many. My favorite document was a telegram sent by Ranger Captain Leander McNelly to Ranger headquarters in Austin,

Texas. Captain McNelly had been repeatedly warned and reprimanded for crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico when chasing bandits and rustlers. He sent a telegram telling his bosses his activities: how many bandits he'd shot, how many head of cattle he'd recovered, etc. At the end of the telegram he said "Wish You Were Here" and signed it Captain Leander McNelly, Matamoros, Mexico.

To me one of the most interesting facts I uncovered is how multi-cultural the Texas Rangers were in their earliest years. The muster rolls from the 1830's show numerous Hispanic and Native American members of various companies. I think that is something that a lot of people don't realize.

2. Can you explain your process for research?

I just tend to dive in and become totally immersed in the subject. For this book I made several trips to Texas, including a couple of visits to the Texas Ranger museum in Waco. I visited as many of the sites mentioned in the book as I could because I wanted to get a feel for the places I was writing about.

3. At this moment what books are on your nightstand?

I have a biography of Teddy Roosevelt called *Mornings on Horseback* by David McCullough, a novel by Stephen Hunter titled *The 47th Samurai*, a novel *Love Walked In* by Marissa De Los Santos, and a history of World War II. It's a fairly eclectic list.

Pre-reading:

Brainstorm a list of words that you think about when you hear "Texas" or "ranger." What do you think you'll learn about before reading this book?

Questions to consider:

1. How were the Texas Rangers born? Would you have liked to have been one? Why?
2. What happened at the Alamo? How were the Rangers involved?
3. Why did the Comanche's name a location "enchanted rock?" What gave Captain Hays his advantage?
4. Explain why some rangers put moist soil in their mouths. Did it work?
5. How did Major McCullough use a disguise? Have you ever tried to disguise your own identity? What do you think is the most important thing to change about yourself.?
6. List a Texas Rangers duties after the Civil War and what he could expect for pay.

7. In the 1870's where was a particularly lawless and dangerous place to work and live? How did the Rangers help? Would you want to live somewhere like that?
8. What is a boomtown? Who helped control them? How did he solve some of the most famous Texas crimes?
9. How were the Rangers involved with bringing down Bonnie and Clyde? Why do you think people were so interested in these two people?
10. Compare the Texas Rangers of today with those of the past.

Projects:

Reading:

As you read try to make connections in the following areas.

<p>Text to Text: (How does this book remind you of another book you've read? In what ways?)</p>	<p>Text to Self: (Does this remind you of anyone? Anyplace? Any time in your life? Why?)</p>	<p>Text to World: (Does this remind you of something you've heard about in the news? In your town or school?)</p>
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Writing:

Several of the pages in this book are short biographies of important Texas Rangers. Write a biography of someone whom you consider a hero or inspiration. Use Texas Rangers as a mentor text.

History:

Research a group of people who have protected your own state or town. How did they get started? Do they still exist today? What about your region made it unique that it needed additional protection?

Math:

Texas is 268, 601 square miles

1. How many square miles is your state?
2. How many square miles smaller (unless you're in Alaska) is your state?
3. How many times would your state fit inside Texas?

Art:

Create WANTED posters like they used in the old



west to catch criminals. Depict either outlaws that the Texas Rangers tracked down in the book or depict favorite characters from books. Use the WANTED posters as a great bulletin board or hallway display.

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and children's author. Visit her website to find hundreds of guides to children's literature.