

Read each of excerpts below

Listen to the interview on NPR with Kyle Ward

*Excerpt #1: 1911*

Henry William Elson and Cornelia Eliza MacMullan, *The Story of Our Country* (New York: Thompson Brown Company; Johnson, Blagen & Co., 1911), 132–133.

*Texas had now come into the Union, but there was still trouble with Mexico. That country seemed bent on a quarrel. President Polk did not desire it, he made an effort to settle the question by treaty; and this might have been done had Mexico been willing to yield certain points. "Texas has no right as an independent state to seek and receive admission into the United States," she said. And then she insisted that the dividing line should be the Nueces River, while Texas laid claim to the Rio Grande.*

*President Polk, fearing an attack, sent General Zachary Taylor to the disputed territory. And not many days passed before General Taylor received a letter from the Mexican general, Ampudia. "Your Government has not only insulted but has provoked the Mexican nation," he wrote, "and in this case, by orders of my Government, I require you to break up your camp and retire to the other bank of the Nueces River. If you insist upon remaining upon the soil, it will clearly result that arms, and arms alone, must decide the question."*

*What was General Taylor's answer? "The instruction under which I am acting will not permit me to go back from the position I now occupy. I regret the alternative which you offer, but, at the same time, wish it understood that I shall by no means avoid such an alternative, leaving the responsibility with those who rashly commence hostilities."*

*It was not long after this that war was declared. General Taylor did not wait for more soldiers to arrive, but marched on and defeated the Mexicans near the mouth of the Rio Grande, although they outnumbered him. The enemy fled across the river, but Taylor pursued them and captured Matamoros. He then moved up the Rio Grande to besiege Monterey, one of the most strongly fortified cities of Mexico.*

*Example #2: 1995*

James W. Davidson and Michael B. Stoff, *The American Nation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995), 366.

*In January 1846, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to cross the Nueces River and set up posts along the Rio Grande. Polk knew that Mexico claimed this land and that the move might spark a war. In April 1846, Mexican troops crossed the Rio Grande and fought briefly with the Americans. Soldiers on both sides were killed.*

*President Polk claimed that Mexico had "shed American blood upon the American soil." At his urging, Congress declared war on Mexico. Americans were divided over the war. Many people in the South and West wanted more land and so were eager to fight. Northerners, however, opposed the war. They saw it as a southern plot to add slave states to the Union.*

