



A Line in the Sand: The Alamo Diary of Lucinda Lawrence

Sherry Garland

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In the journal she receives for her twelfth birthday in 1835, Lucinda Lawrence describes the hardships her family and other residents of the "Texas colonies" endure when they decide to face the Mexicans in a fight for their freedom.

A Line in the Sand: The Alamo Diary of Lucinda Lawrence Details

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From Reader Review A Line in the Sand: The Alamo Diary of Lucinda Lawrence for online ebook

Robin (Saturndoo) says

I was a little disappointed in this book and so far has been my least favorite of this series. I love books written in the diary format but the author clearly doesn't know how to write in this format. Needless to say the writing was really bad. The characters are poorly developed and the plot is seriously lacking. The other thing that I didn't care for was the racism :(The only thing that saves the book is the history. Highly **NOT** recommended. Compared to the other books in this series, this one is an **EPIC FAIL**

Halee says

I can seriously rattle off facts about the Alamo after reading this book! And it was enjoyable too. That's an amazing combination. ;-)

Traci says

Had never read this one! It's not too bad. Not one of my total favorites but still pretty good!

Sarah Crawford says

Lucinda is a young girl living in the area now known as Texas, not far from the Alamo. Her life is pretty much average until trouble starts between General Santa Anna and his troops vs. the people in Texas who want Texas to be an independent state.

At the time, Texas was not American; the area belonged to Mexico. They had opened the area to settlement by people from America then tried to close the door when more people showed up than they expected. The people in the area ended up being divided into those who wanted to stay loyal to Mexico and those who wanted to gain some form of independence from Mexican rule.

The book goes on about various battles that were fought in the area, then covers the most famous of all of the battles, the fight at the Alamo. The book points out that Santa Anna fought under the "no quarters" rule, meaning that his soldiers were not to take any prisoners. Indeed, some men that had surrounded at another area were taken out and executed (something seen in World War II, being done by the Nazis in particular.)

The men at the Alamo never stood a chance, of course. They were vastly outnumbered and outgunned.

The book also points out, interestingly enough, that some of the volunteers that were arriving to fight the Mexicans in the various battles were not necessarily the nicest of people themselves, to put in mildly.

Davy Crockett, of course, is in the novel, along with Jim Bowie and William Travis.

As always, there is a historical section to help put the events in the novel in some sort of perspective. This is another good book in the series, especially in showing that not everyone supported Texan independence and that the war that was fought was conducted under conditions that would (supposedly) not be allowed today.

Rebecca says

Living in the tiny, remote settlement of Gonzales, Texas, in 1835, pioneer farm girl Lucinda Lawrence has just celebrated her thirteenth birthday. Her father is against war with Mexico - he learned the horrors of war firsthand during the War of 1812. Lucinda's brothers find the idea of war glorious - her oldest brother, Willis, is eager to fight against the oppressive Mexicans. Lucinda's mother just doesn't want to lose anymore children - her youngest, a baby girl, died during the journey from Missouri to Texas years earlier. Lucinda's friend, Mittie Roe, wants her father to come home safely from his trading expedition. And Lucinda herself isn't sure what she wants - the Mexicans are treating the American settlers badly, but she fears the war will go poorly for the outnumbered, ragtag settler army.

But like it or not, over the next few months, Lucinda and all her family and friends will be swept up in the war for Texas independence. Some of them will survive, and some of them will not. But through it all, Lucinda matures from a girl to a young woman who knows where she stands and what is worth fighting for. I highly recommend this excellent book, particularly to fans of the Dear America series.

Katherine Kapellen says

I think it was a really good book. I like the details and how the book kind of makes you feel like you are there with them.

Tenille Shade says

This is probably my all time favorite read-aloud for 4th graders. I have read it to my students for the last 9 years, and I cry every time we find out that Willis and Uncle Issac die in the Alamo. The scene during the Runaway Scrape is powerfully written. The students have a very clear picture of what life was like during the Texas Revolution, and I think the novel does a beautiful job helping build background knowledge about pioneer life. The kids learn about dogtrots, chamber pots, hog-killing, and so much more! I would recommend this book to all educators who are responsible for teaching 4th grade or 7th grade TEKS.

Ana Mardoll says

Line in the Sand (Alamo) / 0-590-39466-5

I own almost all the Dear America books and, until this one, I hadn't read a single one that I didn't instantly love. By every measure, this book is dreadful.

The good news is that there is some history here, which salvages a single star. The author has managed to get

historical details right, and in the correct order. I also liked that for awhile the issue is presented as complicated: the author points out that the Mexicans are being aggressive, but the Texans are being deliberately provocative by refusing to follow the laws of the land. Unfortunately, that even-handedness disappears after the first 80 pages or so, and we are left with bad writing, bad character development, and enough racism to make a reader sick.

There is so much wrong with this book that I cannot believe that the Dear America name was stamped on it. I've checked all my Dear America books and can confirm that this particular author did not author any other Dear America or Royal Diary book that I own, so maybe even the editors realized that it wouldn't be a good idea to ask her back for another book. I'll try to list just all the things that are bad here.

1) Bad Writing: The author simply does not know how to write in a convincing diary format. Here's an event in a typical Dear America book: there's a huge event that the heroine has been looking forward to, and she goes and enjoys herself, but the happiness is cut short by a tragic, unforeseen event. Here's how a good author relays those events in diary format: Write about the huge interrupting event, with a quick note that the wonderful, planned event really was wonderful, and note that the narrator will "write later" about the good event after things have settled down, and then follow up.

However, in THIS book, the author insists on putting everything down in the diary in chronological fashion, so you literally get entries where the writer tells all about the planned event, every little detail, and THEN notes at the end that, oh yeah, the town had to suddenly evacuate because the entire Mexican army interrupted the planned event to show up suddenly, impossibly on their doorsteps and thus the diarist has been packing all night and has to go to bed now. What just happened there? A huge emergency is taking place, as we "speak", and yet she had time to write about the party then and there, down to the smallest detail? I guess the color of her dress and the name of the guy she danced with couldn't have waited a day or two to go into the diary?

Even more amusing is the diary entry that states, almost verbatim, "Mother woke up today and did the following mundane chores...oh, and Father's fever broke in the evening so it turns out that he won't die and we won't have to amputate the leg as we all feared." Yeah, that seems like a postscript to me, too.

This nonsense occurs almost every entry and is very jarring. One more example: the diarist routinely copies letters and pronouncements word-for-word into the diary after a single, casual reading of the letter. In other words, the entry will say, "Mr. Bob came into town with a pronouncement that I read aloud for everyone and then he left with it, on his way to the next town. Here is the pronouncement, word-for-word, from my memory." I literally laughed out loud, however, when another announcement - the Texas Declaration of Independence - is NOT recited in the diary, even though the diarist spent all day transcribing the declaration onto dozens of letters and declares that she will remember it word-for-word until her dying day. Yet I guess she was too tired to record it in her diary at that point.

2) Bad Character Development: For the first fifty pages of the book, I could not tell the difference between the diarist's three brothers, and by the time that I could tell them apart, I didn't care anymore. The author made the diarist and her family so stupid and idiotic that I found myself comforted by the hope that maybe *they* would die at the Alamo. Faced with a necessary plot development - family must stay in San Antonio until the last moment to enhance dramatic tension - the author takes the bold ploy of just having a family of sick women, newborns, and other vulnerable persons simply declare that they don't "believe" Santa Anna is really coming. No broken axles or debilitating sicknesses need apply here - the plot device of choice for advancing the action is flat out stupidity.

When finally faced with the realization that they must flee or die, the family packs up all their belongings, leaves their mules tied out in the yard, and goes to sleep about an hour before the sun comes up. Why didn't they set out right then and there, knowing every moment counts? This way, the next morning they can be absolutely astonished that the cleverer of the refugees have left early...and have helped themselves to the family's transportation. What a shock.

When the plot demands it, the characters will also exhibit random changes in values and beliefs. The strangest example of this is the fervent joy the diarist expresses when the Texans hold a counsel and declare independence. This joy is unusual because, (a) earlier she had expressed similar joy over a decision to NOT declare independence and she has apparently changed her mind between then and now and we didn't need to hear about it, (b) the declaration will not make the war less bloody and will likely make it far worse in the short term, so the reasonable emotion here should be "worry" not "joy", (c) and her two brothers and two uncles are, as she writes, being slaughtered in various cities nearby and would surely be of more interest to her than a functionally meaningless declaration of independence which is not worth the paper it is written on unless some military victories occur soon.

3) Sickening Racism: I saved the worst for last. I love the Dear America books because they strive to be very sensitive to other races and cultures. Even in the most racist times, the fictional Dear America girls tend to have enough sympathy and empathy to realize that people with different colors and cultures are still people. This book fails, miserably.

The only mention of American Indians in this book are that they are horse thieves and a dire threat to the colonists. No attempt is made to point out that there might be another side to that story. In the epilogue, American Indians are invoked as a Deus Ex Machina to explain why one brother survived the Alamo massacre - he was kidnapped by American Indians on the way there. That would have been a great opportunity to point out that the American Indians were more noble than the "civilized" Mexicans who would have killed the boy on sight or the "civilized" American and Texan armies who would have conscripted him against his will, but why point that out when you can just paint the American Indians as horrible kidnappers?

The author treats African Americans even worse; the diarist writes that she cannot cross a difficult river at one point because, "There are no men among us...except Negroes." Well, everyone knows that a white man is worth ten black men when it comes to fording rivers and other manual labor! Another golden gem is when the diarist catalogs the horrors that Santa Anna will visit on them: murdering Texans and freeing slaves are listed as equally horrific things. Dear America has shown that it is very possible to handle important historical topics with sensitivity, and it was very much NOT necessary for the diarist to have been a racist (many Texan immigrants were abolitionists, in fact) - it was just apparently a personal choice of the author.

I'm disappointed that Dear America published this book. I do not recommend it - beyond all the criticisms I've leveled here, it was also, unforgivably, outright boring.

~ Ana Mardoll

Israel Graves says

(Popular Series)

This book is a part of the classic popular Dear America Series of books! This book is written in diary format

through the voice of Lucinda Lawrence a young woman who lived in the Texas colonies during the 1800's. Lucinda's family lived in the colonies during the war for Texan Independence. Each diary entry includes a date and a story of what is happened through the words of Lucinda. Some of the entries are as short as just a few sentences and some are pages long. Through the entries the reader feels the emotions running through Lucinda's body. These diary entries provide the reader with a personal connection to Lucinda and her family. When Lucinda writes about being fearful, worried, happy or sad the reader stumbles upon those same emotions through the reading of Lucinda's words. At one point Lucinda wrote about a man who informed their traveling group that the "Mexicans had been defeated" and everyone in Lucinda's group celebrated, at that moment as a reader I felt a sudden burst of excitement for Lucinda and those with her. There are many diary entries in this book such as this one that connect the reader with emotions that Lucinda portrays through her writing. There are some cool features that come with the book alongside the diary entries. The book comes with a ribbon bookmark so that the book actually looks more like a diary. Also included are photographs of the people, their housing, their clothing, pictures of war scenes as well as two maps. One is a modern map of the US showing the approximate location of Gonzalez, Texas where majority of the diary entries take place during the year 1836. The other map is of the cities and rivers that played an important role in Texas history. I would recommend this book for children grades 2-4. This book and many other Dear America Series books pair well with history lessons. Children can learn as much about history through these diary entries as they could from reading a textbook. And although the Dear America series books are written by female narrators these books are appropriate for male readers as well!

Lauren says

This was a really good installment. It had me near in tears close to the end (No, I don't think I'm spoiling anything there; anybody who knows what happened at the Alamo should be able to guess that much). Characters were very enjoyable, and there was great dramatic tension throughout. In fact, if I had any one particular complaint about this book, it's that it's maybe a little too polished. A little too much description and direct dialogue that makes it a little tricky to hold suspension of disbelief that it was the diary of a 13 year old girl. But that's a relatively mild complaint in the grand scheme of things, and one that comes with its own pluses to boot (It was much easier to visualize the scenes in this book than some of the others).

Beth Robey says

I enjoyed this book, but towards the end, all the action occurred in the last fifty pages, where as all that in the middle and beginning? But besides that, a wonderful, adventurous book that made me aware of how hard young girls had to work then.

Please comment if you politely disagree, I will not take offense.

Anna says

what i think about this book is that you can really understand it if you really read it. sometimes in social studies we learn about William B. Travis in class and my teacher thinks that he is so brave and she concludes if he was still alive she would marry him and have a great future. i know right my teacher is crazy but she is a great teacher fun and without a word wonderful and i will never forget that 4th grade teacher.

Beverly says

Ahhh the Alamo...

Ludinda Lawrence was a teen living in Gonzales, Texas. Her father is against war with Mexico, and her oldest brother, Willis, has strong war sentiments. She loses him and 2 of her uncles, at the hands of Santa Anna. We know, the "no quarter" flag went up before fighting began at the Alamo, but few of us realized Santa Anna flew that flag at every Fort. He was bent on killing all Indians, Mexicans, and anyone who could be in rebellion with Mexico.

Grim Facts:

182 men in Alamo *** siege lasted 13 days

6000 soldiers in Santa Anna's army

near Goliad, Tx, 400 unarmed men executed by Mexican forces

Thoughts:

Spanish explorers first saw Texas in 1519, named Tejas (Indian for friend)

Ignored land for 150 yrs., until France's LaSalle claimed it

Spain establishes 36 missions, 1690 - 1793

1821 Mexico declares independence from Spain

Mexico allows Americans to colonize, as a buffer to protect Mexican settlements from Comanches

*must be of good character

*agree to be Mexican citizens, obey Mexican Constitution

*settle and improve land in specified time

*become Catholic

Steve Austin led first group

Lulu says

it was ok

Molly says

This entire series is a wonderful way to learn history or teach it to adolescents. I find today's generations seem to recall more when they learn through other people (pop songs, celebrity gossip, etc.), so what better way to teach history than through someone else's perspective? Yes, "authentic" diaries would be "better", but would the language really hold the modern student's attention? Did the diary writer know what WOULD be important in the context of history? Probably not.
