

Sampler Unit: Natural Texas

Natives & Their Texas

Long before Texas's ten-gallon hat was filled to the brim with cowboys and revolutionaries it was home to dozens of native tribes. Who were they? What were the intertribal relations like before the Spanish arrival? How did their reaction to the incoming conquistadors affect their relations with one another?



Seeing as many of the primary documents of the different tribes came from European letters and journals, all we know about the natives was written by outsiders who more often than not didn't understand the languages nor the people. They wrote of the Gulf Coast Karankawas who they painted in a negative light. They were falsely labeled as cannibals and this led them to have a harsher image - but the Karankawas were much more than the explorers gave them credit for. They wrote of the East Texas Caddo tribe, who intrigued the Spaniards because of their massive trade network. The

Jumano were riddled about exploration journals and created an endless headache in the minds of historians. Then, of course, are the well-known Apache and Comanche whose lives are far different now from in their earlier and more violent days.

Students will learn about the cultural gap between these five native tribes. This unit will provide a deeper understanding of the untamable Texas and preface the next unit which will delve into why no European could, nor would, settle there for another century and a half.

Era

- Prior to European exploration
- Soon-to-be Texas

Duration

45 minute sessions per lesson

Vocabulary

- Semi-Nomadic
- Ciudad
- Pueblo
- Concept of slavery

Unit Goals and Essential Skills

- Identify the different eras of history, specifically Natural Texas and People and the Age of Contact (TEKS 113.19 b 1 a)
- Study the history of Texas beginning with it’s first appearance in historical texts (TEKS 113.19 a 1)
- Identify various Native groups prior to Spanish exploration (TEKS 113.19 b 2 a)

- Analyze the elemental factors behind nomadic migrations and native settlements, such as physical, weather, and climate (TEKS 113.19 b 8 b)
- *For more, see a comprehensive list of included Standards at the end of the lesson plan.*

Unit at a Glance

Lesson 1

Karankawas: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-karankawas/> Finding their home in the Gulf coast, this tribe were of the first to greet the Spanish explorers. They feasted with them and took them into their village, showing their kindness and hospitality even to complete strangers. In return, the conquistadors called them savage cannibals. This lesson showcases the Karankawas debut in Spanish writings, but in a way the exposes their true nature and characteristics so that we may better learn about their extinct tribal nation.

Lesson 2

Jumano: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/jumano/> These curious people have confused historians in many ways. This unit gives us a glimpse into their lifestyle and customs within the tribe. It also follows their existence that fizzles out as more and more of their ways and people became integrated with their Mexican neighbors, eventually losing their traditions altogether.

Lesson 3

Caddo: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/caddo/> This nation's genius has long survived history. The Europeans, upon meeting the Caddo, instantly became envious of their labyrinth trade network. This was the reason for their longevity in history. Spaniards were in awe of their business strategies and learned from them, that is until they found their French rivals already knee-deep in the network themselves.

Lesson 4

Apache: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/apache/> Though still around today, the Apache way of live has greatly evolved since their beginning. Raiding, plundering, kidnapping, warring horse thieves is no longer part of their prerogative, however, in early Texas - this is how they survived.

Lesson 5

Comanche: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-comanche-people/> Though late to the party, the Comanche became the most feared entity in the wild frontier. Taking notes from the Apache way of life, this tribe added a bit of spice to their means of survival. They raided villages, looted, plundered . . . all of the things we know of the Apaches - but they did it on horse back.

Warm Up Questions

Karankawa: History is written by the victorious, and it's no surprise that the victors of the Native Americans were Europeans. So, what would benefit the Europeans most when writing about the native tribes? Would they be friendly to their culture's history, or would they lie to steer other invaders and explorers away?

Jumano: Imagine your family has, for years, been attacked and exploited by your neighbors. The neighbors to the left of you take what is yours and call it their own, but they've done this your entire life. The neighbors to the right of you do the same, but they've just recently moved in and you know nothing about them, except they're more violent than the others. Now, having each of these neighbors depleting your resources, your food water and basic needs to live, you've nothing left to give. Your only choices are to stay in your home, starve, and die, or to move in with your neighbors to the left for protection. Do you stick it out and live your life, or do you join forces with your neighbors and help them do the same to another house?

Caddo: The enemy of my enemy is my friend, yes? Keeping that in mind, Texas was faced with two European groups both eyeing for trade with the Caddo natives, the French and the Spanish. So, how would it benefit the French by giving guns to the Caddo? Would they be more likely to shoot the enemy who refused to trade weapons with them, or the ones who trustfully handed them over? In light of this, who do you believe had a better relationship with the natives, France or Spain?

Apache: There are certain ways of life that wouldn't carry over into today's world, the Apache way of life in early Texas is one of those. They survived on raiding villages, taking captives, and running off with horses. In the modern world it's easy to see why this way of life wouldn't survive - but what about then? How could you subdue one tribal nation that is a seemingly unstoppable force?

Comanche: A lot of people we consider Texan, aren't even originally from Texas. Take Stephen F. Austin, Davy Crockett, and Sam Houston - not Texans. The Comanche tribe is one of many in that category. How did they end up here? Why would they have migrated here? How did they maintain their survival? And, perhaps most importantly, why did they stay?

Unit Activities

- In the 19th century when the Caddoans were forced northward into Oklahoma, only 244 people made it to the reservation. Do some research and find the different situations that jeopardized the lives on the march north.
 - We don't have any written accounts of what the Amerindian peoples thought of the Spanish when they first showed up. All we have was written by the Spaniards, or written by natives only many years after conquest. De Vaca tells us that when the Karankawas saw their bedraggled appearance - these men were soaked through with salt water, naked, unshaven, dirty, smelly, worn down, (hardly impressive) - the tribespeople drew back in fright, before giving a loud, mournful cry. What would they have said had been able to write down their thoughts? That's for you to decide. Place yourself on a Texas coast much different from anything a modern Texan would see, now; all of a sudden, strangers emerge from the surf, almost like monsters from the sea. How would you describe these men who come upon your homeland? Either write those thoughts down in a letter or journal type format, or draw a picture of the drenched men emerging from the sea.
 - Create a video explaining the five different tribes. Make it as creative as you want - but make sure it's informative!
 - Natives had several types of shelters. Nomadic tribes often lived in teepees, as they were easier to transport, and more grounded natives lived in homes such as pueblos. Do research on native homes and find one that calls out to you - then build it! Design it on your own or with a group and draw it or build a prototype to showcase your new knowledge of indigenous Texas.
 - Print out a large map of Texas and pinpoint the territories of the different tribes. Draw the territory borders and find out which tribes were allies and which were foes, color coordinating the two.
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Resources

PRIMARY

The Account and Commentaries of Governor Alvar Nunez de Vaca, of what occurred on the two journeys that he made to the Indies, 37. Texas State University. (Accessed August 21, 2020) <https://exhibits.library.txstate.edu/cabeza/exhibits/show/cabeza-de-vaca/relacion/la-relaci-n---p-36>, 40-42.

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Assessment Questions

- I. Q. Though still around today, how did the Comanche and Apache way of life change? Why?
 - II. Q. How did the Spanish benefit from labeling the Karankawa tribe as cannibalistic?
 - III. Q. How did the Caddo remain protected from their enemies?
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Furthering the Lesson

SUGGESTED READING

We Came Naked and Barefoot: The Journey of Cabeza de Vaca across North America; Cabeza de Vaca

Los Ades, the First Capital of Spanish Texas; Francis X Galan

Came Men on Horses: The Conquistador Expeditions of Francisco Vásquez de Coronado and Don Juan de Oñate; Stan Hoig

Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History of Colonial New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California; John L. Kessell

The Conquest of the Karankawas and the Tonkawas, 1821-1859; Kelly F. Himmel

The Karankawa Indians of Texas: An Ecological Study of Cultural Tradition and Change; Robert A Ricklis

Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition; Cabeza de Vaca

A Land So Strange: The Epic Journey of Cabeza de Vaca; Andres Resendez

Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians; John R. Swanton

VIDEOS

See videos linked in Hunt The Past's lessons

<https://huntthepast.com/topics/caddo/>

<https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-comanche-people/>

<https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-karankawas/>

<https://huntthepast.com/topics/jumano/>

<https://huntthepast.com/topics/apache/>

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

<https://mescaleroapachetribe.com/our-culture/>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Apache-people>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Karankawa>

RELATED OR SIMILAR UNITS

The Mapuche: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/mapuche/>

The Taino: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-taino/>

The Maya: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/the-maya/>

The Tlaxcala: <https://huntthepast.com/topics/tlaxcala/>

Reflect, Close, & Preface to Next Unit

The five different tribes in this weeks unit represent various areas of Texas but are in no way all encompassing of the Texas natives. These lessons merely highlight some of the key tribes in early Texas history and set the stage for future lessons which greatly involve natives. We will find in the next unit that their livelihood would take an abrupt turn after the European arrival. They had battled each other and defended their territories against tribal nations - but nothing would compare to the beasts that would emerge from the sea.
