

How do we know what we know? *Foundations*

Unit 2: The Age of Contact

Name: Date: Period:

Think back . . .

We learn a lot about the people of the past by studying the artifacts and records they left behind. Think back to **Unit 1: Natural Texas and its People**. What do you remember about why it is often difficult for people today to study the lives and stories of the early American Indians of Texas? ***Circle all correct statements.***

- (A) Many American Indians left no written record of their lives
- (B) Many American Indians didn't care about preserving their history
- (C) Most information about American Indians was written by the Spanish

Much of what we believe to be true about early American Indians in Texas, we have learned from the European explorers who encountered them. These accounts have been useful at providing information we would not have otherwise. It is important to recognize, however, that they provide only one side of the story.

Let's take a look at one account written by the first known explorer to encounter American Indians in Texas – a Spanish man named Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca.

A little background information:

Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish explorer who traveled with several hundred others to the Americas during the early 1500s. Like many Spanish explorers, **their primary goal was to search for gold and riches.** They started out in the Caribbean on their way to Mexico but got so lost they ended up in Florida and eventually even Texas! Can you imagine being ***that*** lost? They experienced disease, starvation, capture by various American Indian tribes, and even hurricanes. **They lived among several American Indian tribes in Texas for years.**

Finally, eight years after they had set out, the few who survived made it to their destination of present-day **Mexico City**, where they knew they would find many other Spaniards. **Cabeza de Vaca wrote a book about his experiences.** In English, it is called "*The Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca.*" The excerpts in your activity are from his book.



Primary Source Activity

There are four primary source excerpts about Cabeza de Vaca's time among various American Indian groups in Texas. Follow the instructions to complete the activity.

Part I: Match each Excerpt Card with the Translation card that best restates the excerpt in modern language.

Part II: Complete the chart below based on your excerpt and translation cards.

Excerpt	Translation	Summary Choose the option that provides the best summary of each excerpt.
A		a) The people of this tribe often struggle with a lack of food. b) The region where this tribe lives has abundant resources. c) The climate of this region is hot and humid.
B		a) Family relationships are not as important to this tribe, and people leave their families easily. b) Family relationships are easily broken for the people in this tribe. c) Family relationships are strong in this tribe, especially related to children.
C		a) The people of this tribe are very protective of their possessions. b) The people of this tribe have little but are very generous. c) You can take whatever you want from the people of this tribe.
D		a) This tribe forced me to work so hard that I experienced a lot of pain. b) This tribe was a very hardworking group and life with them was difficult. c) Cabeza de Vaca wanted to leave this tribe because they didn't have much food.

Part III: Answer the following comprehension questions about the primary source excerpts.

- ___ 1) Based on the information provided in Excerpt A, which of the following tribes do you think Cabeza de Vaca was most likely living with at the time?
- The Caddo of the Coastal Plains because of the abundant crops and resources.
 - The Coahuiltecan of the Coastal Plains because of the harsh living conditions, fish, and lizards.
 - The Comanche of the Great Plains because of the harsh living conditions and dependence on bison.
 - ~~The Jumano of the Mountains and Basins because of the high elevation and irrigation-based farming.~~
- ___ 2) What can we learn from Cabeza de Vaca's account in Excerpt B?
- ~~The mobility of the Indigenous people with whom he was living.~~
 - The food and natural resources the Indigenous people used.
 - The types of shelter that the particular group of American Indians built.
 - The culture of the family relationships of the group he was living with.
- ___ 3) How does Excerpt D differ from the other excerpts in this activity?
- The others discuss culture and lifestyle of the tribes, while D discusses how one tribe treated Cabeza de Vaca.
 - The others demonstrate the relationship between the Indigenous people and the Spanish while D depicts the relationship between tribes.
 - The others present a negative view of the tribes Cabeza de Vaca stayed with while D shows a more positive depiction.
 - ~~All answers are correct.~~
- 4) **Make a prediction:** There were many Spanish explorers who came after Cabeza de Vaca. Do you think their experiences will be similar or different? Why?