

Texas Today Grade Level

Unit 2: Age of Contact

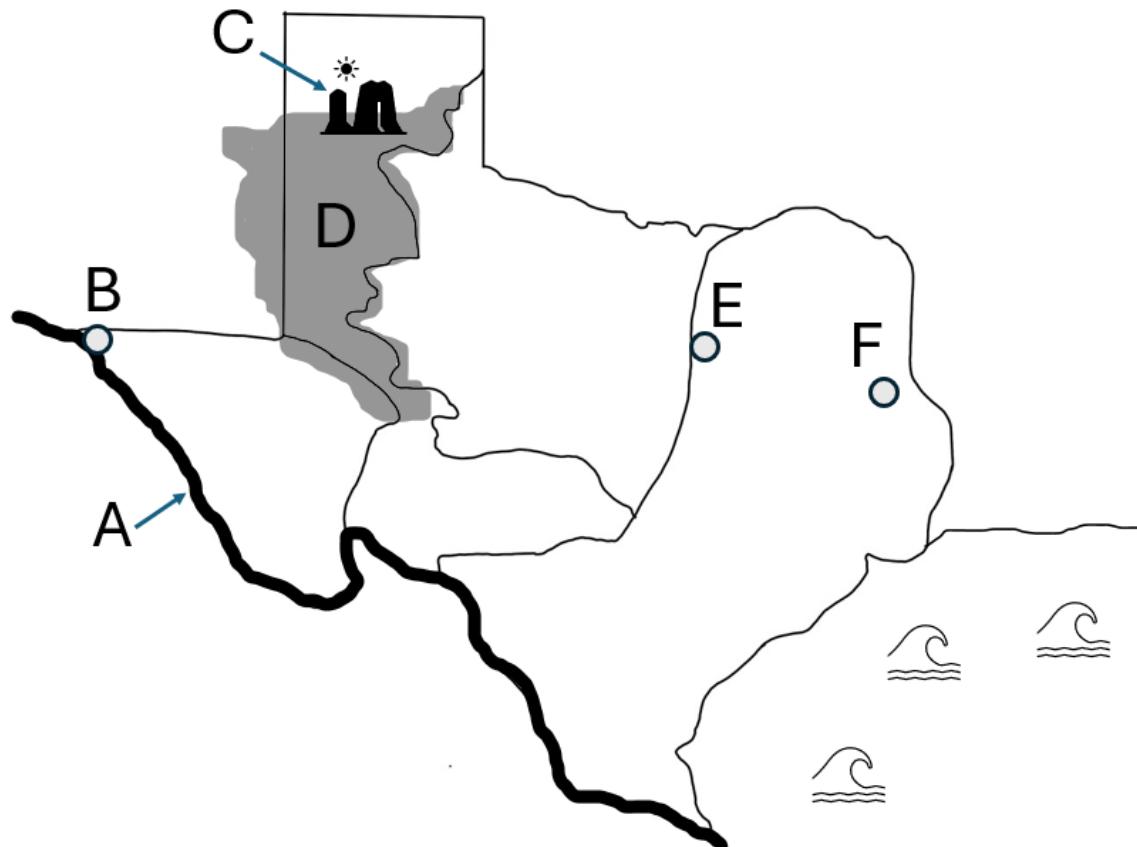
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The Spanish and Indigenous people we have been studying lived over 500 years ago. Even though it's been centuries since they walked the land we now call Texas, we can still see remnants of their influence on the world around them just by looking at some of the geographic names on a current Texas map.

Directions: Read the short passages about six Texas locations on the following page. Use the information and clues in each passage to label the map below. Write three facts from the readings next to each location on the map.



The Llano Estacado

The Llano Estacado is a **geographic landform** that contains primarily grasslands and **mesas**, or flat-topped hills with steep sides. This area covers a large portion of the **Great Plains** of Texas. **Francisco Vazquez de Coronado** is credited with naming the Llano Estacado, which, at the time would have translated to the “**palisaded plains**” or “**stockaded plains**.” The mesas likely appeared to provide **protection from outside threats**, similar to a palisade or stockade. In contemporary Spanish, *llano estacado* translates to “the staked plains.”

The Palo Duro Canyon

The Palo Duro Canyon is a **geographic landform** that is also located in the **Great Plains** in the **Panhandle** of Texas. It is the **second largest canyon in the United States**, after the Grand Canyon. The term *palo duro* means “**hard wood**” in Spanish. The Palo Duro Canyon received its name from **Spanish explorers** who passed through the area and took notice of the abundant **mesquite** and **juniper trees** that grow there.

The Rio Grande & El Paso

The **large river that forms the border between Texas and Mexico** has had many names over the centuries. The name that has continued to the present day – **Rio Grande** – simply means “**big river**” in Spanish. This designation was first given by the conquistador **Juan de Oñate** in the year **1598** as he crossed the river near the present-day west-Texas city of **El Paso**. Oñate is also credited with giving El Paso its original name – **El Paso del Norte** – or the pass of the north. He and other Spaniards traveled through *El Paso del Norte* on their way north into present-day **New Mexico**. Today, El Paso has grown into a large city with more than 678,000 people.

Waxahachie

Waxahachie today is a **small city** of approximately 50,000 people, just south of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. It was officially founded as a Texas city in the year **1850**, however, Waxahachie had been inhabited by **American Indians** for thousands of years before that. The name **Waxahachie** is likely derived from an American Indian word meaning “**buffalo creek**,” however the exact meaning and origin isn’t certain.

Nacogdoches

Nacogdoches, (na-kuh-doh-chus) is another **small city** of approximately 32,000 people in the **Coastal Plains** region of Texas. It is located near the border of Louisiana in the **Piney Woods Forest**. Nacogdoches was founded in **1779** by the Spanish and is considered to be one of the oldest towns in Texas. Before the Spanish ever arrived, however, it had been home to various American Indian tribes including the **Nacogdoche** band of the **Caddo Confederacy**.