

Online Adventure Teaching Ticklers:

A variety of teaching activities and discussion questions related to Cabeza de Vaca.

Adventure 1: Pre-Conquest America

A. Culture is Everything

1) Culture is Everything

- Invite an anthropology professor, anthropologist, or guest speaker with experience with American Indian cultures into your classroom to share information about the variety of Indian cultures that lived in the American southwest at the time of Cabeza de Vaca. How did events in history (for example, disease, Indian policies, etc.) affect these cultures? What is the status of these cultures today?
- Ask each student to select one of the bands of North American Indians (Karankawas, Coahuilteicans, Pimas, Tarahumaras, etc.) Cabeza de Vaca met during his 8year ordeal. Develop a brochure with a map that shows where this culture lived and the geographical features that affected their lives, how they lived, including food, religion, cultural practices, and special events which occurred during the time Cabeza de Vaca was with them.
- Cabeza de Vaca described for the very first time some interesting animals he met, including the opossum, armadillo, gila monster, and buffalo. Ask students to read about these fascinating animals and write up a “life history” to share with the class.
- Read about Acoma, an ancient American community of 3000 Pueblo Indians that still exists atop a mesa in the high New Mexico desert. Find out about its history and culture, and what it went through after its discovery by Coronado’s Expedition of 1540, including a brutal occupation by Spaniards in 1599 who chopped off one foot of each adult male. Develop a wall mural to show what Acoma was like and write “narrative flashbacks” describing important events in its history.
- Ask the students to read and compare Indian legends from tribes who live in the American Southwest. Then have them try their hand at writing interesting Indian legends to explain an aspect of nature they are familiar with— a plant, animal, weather pattern, the sun, moon or constellation, or a cultural practice important to the students. Illustrate these legends and share with students in other classes.
- Develop a model of how Casas Grandes looked at its most successful moment. Write “A Day in the Life of ” story about a person living in Casas Grandes. Tell what the culture was like as you tell the daily story of this person.

- Michael Wood speaks about Cabeza de Vaca's story as a "parable", a simple story with an important moral. Read examples of parables and ask students to write their own examples of a story that has an important moral or meaning to them. Share with other classes.
- Use the internet to learn about the animals and plants that live in the areas that Cabeza de Vaca explored. Develop a "gallery" showing pictures and explaining interesting information about these animals and plants. How have they learned to adapt to their environment?

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