

Texas Insights - August 2012

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The Texas State Historical Association, in cooperation with its partners, is proud to offer *Texas Insights*, an electronic newsletter designed to share opportunities for Texas teachers and students while promoting effective instructional practices. The newsletter is distributed via email in August, October, January, March, and May.

Featured Institution

Texas Beyond History

Using Archeology as a Lens for Discovery: Students (and Teachers) Dig this Virtual Texas History Museum!

Texas Beyond History (TBH) is a unique virtual museum with hundreds of “nooks and crannies” to explore right in your classroom. The website’s interactive format, wealth of imagery, and layers of authoritative information are effective teaching tools allowing for enriched, interdisciplinary learning for students at all levels.

Created at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory at the University of Texas at Austin, in partnership with Texas State University, the free public education website combines vividly illustrated, online “exhibits,” interactive learning activities for students, and standards-based lessons about the cultural history of Texas. Spanning at least 13,500 years, that legacy represents over 540 generations and hundreds of diverse cultures. From Paleo-Indian mammoth hunters and Archaic “Iron Chefs,” to Spanish empresarios, French explorers, Buffalo soldiers, frontier settlers, sharecroppers, sugar makers, and Piney Woods loggers, their stories can be discovered on TBH.



Texas’ rich heritage can be explored geographically as well as culturally through time. While learning about the ingenious ways in which Texas’ native and early historic peoples adapted to challenges in different



parts of the state, students also gain understanding of the varied natural resources in each region and how environments changed through time. Understanding that complex legacy helps students appreciate their place in the long march of human history.

For some students, the excitement of archeology and the thrill of discovery spark a greater interest in learning. For most of the immense span of human history in Texas, there is no record—there are no books, and no eyewitness accounts. Instead, all we can use to tell

the stories of Texas are the remains of ancient campfires, stones, bones, and other mysterious traces of once-flourishing Native American societies. This is the "material evidence" upon which archeologists base most of their interpretations, using a variety of interdisciplinary techniques. As Dr. Dirt, the Armadillo Archeologist tells us on TBH, archeology is the science that makes history.

How TBH Works

Students tell us that using the website is like digging through an archeological site. With information presented in "layers" of varying detail, students can follow their own interests, particularly in the Kids Only sections. There, students enter a 3-D carousel where the hands of a clock on the state of Texas turn backwards in time. By selecting one of several pathways, such as "Adventures into the Past," students can join Dr. Dirt traveling back in time and across thousands of miles to visit peoples of different cultures in the state's distinctive geographical regions. They can choose from dozens of interactive activities such as "Imagine It," with its multiple doorways to learn about ancient foods, weaponry, and shelter. Or they may choose a specific culture, such as the East Texas Caddo (*World of the Caddo*). Getting into later history, students can travel with Cabeza de Vaca in south Texas in *Journey with an Explorer*, or travel to the Texas frontier to *Meet the People of Fort Griffin and the Flat!*. For extra enrichment, many students will enjoy perusing the related general-audience exhibits to learn more about the sites and subjects. There also is an illustrated student glossary, a section for fun and games, and a guide for doing student research using TBH.

In the Teachers section of the website, content is organized by subject area, offering tools for interdisciplinary learning in social studies, science, math, art, and language arts. Developed by teachers and curriculum specialists, the lessons (more than 60) and multi-day unit plans, including handouts and graphics, may be downloaded as pdf files. Many of the lessons are correlated to the exhibits and student activities, making a rich learning package. For example, the lesson *Whose Buffalo?*, is correlated to the Red River Wars exhibit. In the two-part lesson, students examine how the Plains Indians vied with white commercial buffalo hunters for the millions of Great Plains buffalo, and are asked to create an illustrated broadside supporting the interests of either the Indians or the commercial hunters.



Who We Are

Created in 2001 in collaboration with 17 different institutions, Texas Beyond History is an educational outreach developed to share the treasures of the past curated at the Texas Archeological Research



Laboratory and other facilities and museums across the state. Praised by scholars and students for its accuracy and depth of content, TBH has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Humanities in EdSitement, the Best of the Humanities on the Web and by the Society for American Archaeology with its 2008 Excellence in Public Education Award. By working in partnership with dozens of individuals and organizations, TBH helps tell the stories of the millions of people who have settled

the land we call Texas.