

Geography and Archeology of the River People

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Lesson Overview: This lesson combines some of the main concepts of geography, including location, physical characteristics, and human-environment interaction, with some basic examples of archeology. Students will read the situations on the handout and answer questions utilizing geographic and archeological information.

Objectives: Students will

- Apply the concepts of location, physical characteristics, and human-environment interaction to a hypothetical model
- Identify ways people adapt to and modify their environment
- Discuss which artifacts could be useful for archeologists in discovering past cultures
- Analyze the effects of geographical and human factors that make the archeology of a site difficult to interpret
- Make and interpret charts

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

Social Studies, Grade 7

- Social Studies 113.23 (8A), create thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th and 20th centuries
- Social Studies 113.23 (9B), compare places and regions of Texas
- Social Studies 113.23 (9C), analyze the effects of physical and human factors on major events in Texas
- Social Studies 113.23 (20A), compare types and uses of technology, past and present
- Social Studies 113.23 (21C), organize and interpret information from charts

Materials : “The Geography and Archeology of the River People” (handout) and a blank overhead transparency.

Activity:

Step 1: Divide students into groups of four and have each group read the handout “The Geography and Archeology of the River People.” The students discuss their various opinions about each question based on the situations presented in the handout.

Step 2: Once the groups have completed the handout, discuss the possible answers to the questions as a whole class. Outline some of the students’ answers using an overhead transparency. Discuss the importance of using clues about the environment from the reading.

Closure: Discuss the importance of using artifacts for learning about past cultures.

Extension: Journal writing assignment: “In the year 3000 A.D. archeologists want to learn about human beings in 2000 A.D. Think of different artifacts that they might find and what they would tell about our culture today.”

Have students learn more about ancient artifacts at the Ceremonial Cave exhibit:

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/ceremonial/gallery.html>

More examples of prehistoric artifacts can be found at the Granado Cave exhibit:

<http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/granado/artifacts.html>

The Geography and Archeology of the River People

Directions: Read the situations about the life of the River People. Within groups, discuss and record your answers to the questions that follow the brief readings.

Situation #1

Life with the River People had always been good. Along the river, where they lived, there were extensive grasslands and an abundance of wildlife. For quite some time the River People enjoyed their campsite near the river; it had everything to make life easy-going.

The three women sat down along the rocks. Holding small, smooth stones in their hands, they began crushing small seeds against a large flat rock. After grinding the seeds into tiny flecks, the women could add water and berries to make a food almost like pancakes. These could be cooked on other large flat rocks near the fire.

Meanwhile, some of the men of the tribe were out on the hunt. One small party was searching out small game like rabbits. They had small wooden sticks, shaped like boomerangs. This shape allowed a stick to hit its prey swiftly and with much power. The other group was searching for larger game. Maybe a deer or even a bison had strayed into their area of the river. They were carrying spears with stone points attached to the end and a spear thrower called an atlatl, which was made of a long stick.

Situation #2

The River People noticed that for the past several years, the weather had not been as warm as it used to be. In fact, leaves began falling and tree limbs became bare sooner than before. Finding berries that were good to eat was getting more and more difficult. In the nearby river, the fish didn't come to the surface where they could be speared anymore. Even more depressing was that finding rabbits and other small game became harder and harder. Some members of the tribe were grumbling and wanted to move.

Situation #3

Today the location where the River People used to live has been turned into a National Park. Although the river has been known to flood, it still attracts many visitors. Ranger headquarters, a gift shop, restaurant, and restrooms have been added for the convenience of the tourists. Paved walkways and hand rails have also been added to certain areas of the park, not to mention a parking lot for the cars! Many tourists visit the park each year to enjoy the river and the scenery. Sometimes visitors find small pieces of broken pottery or broken parts of stone tools as they walk along the trails.