

Native American Societies Before European Contact

UNIT 1 · PERIOD 1: EARLY ENCOUNTERS IN THE AMERICAS (1491-1607) · LESSON 2

COURSE	DURATION	REQUIRED DOCUMENT
AP U.S. History	One 50-minute period	The Journey of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca (Fanny Bandelier translation, 1905)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Describe the regional diversity of Native American societies across North America before European contact.
- Explain how the natural environment shaped Native economies, settlement patterns, and social structures.
- Apply causation and sourcing by using Cabeza de Vaca's account to analyze both Native adaptation and European bias.

COLLEGE BOARD CED ALIGNMENT

GEO-1.B Explain how and why various Native American populations in the period before European contact interacted with the natural environment in North America, including maize cultivation in the Southwest and mixed economies in the Northeast and Mississippi Valley.

SOC-1.A Explain how the natural environment shaped the social structures, gender roles, and settlement patterns of diverse Native American societies before 1492.

MIG-1.B Explain the causes and effects of the distribution and movement of Native American peoples across the regions of North America in the period before European contact.

LESSON SEQUENCE

TIME	PHASE	TEACHER & STUDENT MOVES
0-5 min	Do Now	Students respond to the bison-hunters vs. oyster-eaters prompt. Cold-call two responses to surface the idea of environmental adaptation.
5-20 min	Direct Instruction	Slides 3-4: tour the regions (Southwest irrigation and pueblos; Mississippian mound cities; Eastern Woodlands confederacies; Pacific Northwest abundance; Plains bison hunters). Students complete Guided Notes cards on the five key terms.
20-33 min	Close Read	Slide 5: project the Cabeza de Vaca excerpt on the "cows." Students annotate (underline "cows," box the Spanish comparisons, star the uses of the hides) and label the four analytic moves, distinguishing what it shows about Native life from the author's bias.
33-47 min	Apply / FRQ	Students draft the three-part SAQ. Circulate; pull a strong sample to model how part (b) links environment to a specific economic or social result.
47-50 min	Exit Ticket	One-sentence environment-to-society answer; trade and peer-score against the key.

DIFFERENTIATION & ASSESSMENT

SUPPORTS

Sentence stems for the SAQ ("In the region of..., people used the environment by... This shaped their society because..."); a pre-filled card modeling Pueblo irrigation; a word bank (environment, adaptation, surplus, sedentary, mobile, hierarchy); partner annotation and a labeled North America regions map for the close read.

EXTENSION

Compare two Native societies from different regions (for example, Cahokia and a Pacific Northwest coastal people) and write a paragraph explaining how their different environments produced different economies and social structures.

ASSESSMENT

Exit ticket (formative) + three-part environmental-causation SAQ scored against the included answer key.

MATERIALS

Projector + slide deck · printed Student Handout (2 pp.) · Teacher Answer Key · labeled map of North American culture regions · optional extended Cabeza de Vaca excerpt for advanced annotation.