



DISCOVERING Alabama

Teacher's Guide

Native American Festival

Synopsis

Human presence in Alabama can be traced back to around 11,000 years ago. Over time, these pre-historic peoples developed lifeways progressing from hunting and gathering to highly organized chiefdoms with sophisticated systems of religion, trade, and agriculture. By the historical era, Alabama natives had developed into the tribes that today are most often the subject of popular interest—the Choctaws, Cherokees, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Seminoles. (The Seminoles had only a limited presence around the southern border of the state.) By the mid-1800s, most Indians had been forced out of Alabama. Since that time, remaining tribal remnants have sought to preserve important aspects of Native American heritage.

This video takes viewers on a visit to the annual Native American Festival held at Moundville Archaeological Park in Moundville, Alabama. Each year, authentic Native American craftsmen, artists, storytellers, and others convene for a several-day-long event to share Native American ways with the public and visiting school groups. The video features a variety of these Native American spokespeople as they demonstrate their skills, celebrate their traditions, and reflect on their impressions of modern society in contrast to Indian cultures.

Suggested Curriculum Areas

Science
Geography
Social Studies
Art

Suggested Grade Levels

4–12

Key Concepts

Natural Heritage
Cultural Heritage

Key Skills

Research & Reference
Classification
Communication



THE UNIVERSITY OF
ALABAMA



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Before Viewing

1. Ask each student to develop a “time line” of major events that have occurred during his/her life. This can be a personal time line about their own life, their family, etc., or it may include events of national and global importance as well. Next, place students in small groups with the assignment to develop an expanded time line showing major events they anticipate will happen over the next 50 years. Discuss with students their reasons for including various anticipated events.

2. With the students in small groups, ask each group to: (a) develop a time line of what they think were the major periods and events of Native American history in Alabama, and (b) compile a list of “things we know about Southeastern Indians.”

While Viewing

Have students note the Indians and other re-enactors they see in the video. Ask them to pay attention to what these experts say and the activities they present. As the class views the video, students should watch for how their lists of things “we know” about Native Americans may be correct or incorrect.

Video Mystery Question:

Various dilemmas of our modern age can be linked to popular modes of lounging, lazing, loafing, and otherwise exhibiting rump-planted physically and intellectually disengaged behavior (as in “couch potato”). How does the video make reference to this linkage? (Answer: Toward the end

of the video, a particularly outspoken Indian artisan states rather bluntly and, some of us would contend, admirably, that the youth of today must “get off their keisters” if there is to be any hope of perpetuating important Native American skills and traditions.)

After Viewing

1. Review the students’ time lines of Native American history and their brainstorm lists of “things we know about Southeastern Indians.” Discuss how the video might have added new information. Use the time line on the back page of this guide for further information. Discuss Jimmy Sanders’ quote near the end of the video, “[It] seems like [the removal] just happened!”

2. What was the point of the last part of the video? (Too-fast pace of modern life; the separation of modern daily life from things of the earth.) Do you think this perspective is true? What things about modern life could you easily give up? What things would be hard to give up?

Extensions

1. Ask if the class knows about Moundville. Show the *Discovering Alabama* video program #14, “Moundville.” Consider visiting the Native American Festival held at Moundville each year during the first Wednesday–Saturday in October.

2. Arrange to have a living historian visit your school to present a program in authentic Southeastern Indian dress and equipment. If you don’t know

anyone who does this, call the Alabama Museum of Natural History, Programs Department at 205-348-9473, or contact your local history museum.

Philosophical Reflections

What if you lived in a paradise in which all of your needs were readily found? You had been living there for thousands of years and thought you had the exclusive attention of your gods. Then, an alien spaceship suddenly lands, and great ugly beings covered in bulletproof skin emerge riding giant biting and kicking animals. Beings who kill indiscriminately and from a great distance, and who carry strange diseases that devastate whole villages. Beings who can communicate and travel over great distances to a world about which you know nothing. Beings who claim that you aren’t human.

How about that for a nightmare! A bit overstated, perhaps, but this is similar to what Native Americans experienced, beginning in 1492, as their Stone Age culture encountered the highly organized, technologically equipped representatives of European nation-states.

The ensuing period of clash between Europeans and Native Americans was more than a conflict over territory. This was a period of struggle between two cultures, each with different ways of life, different systems of belief, and each shaped in part by a different natural heritage, i.e., the lands, resources, and natural conditions influencing the development of their respective cultures.

Today, as we head into the next millennium, how might we con-

trast these two cultures in selecting desirable qualities for the future of our American society? What cultural values are desirable with regard to protecting the natural environment? Are there aspects of Native American lifeways or beliefs that might be desirable for the future?

Nature in Art

Read the stories of Southeastern Indian tradition of the great winged and horned serpent, who controlled the watery Under World. (Start by looking in George E. Lankford's book about Native American legends or another book on Indian stories; see Additional References & Resources.)

Ask students to draw the serpent using their imaginations. Since this is a mythological creature, there are no photographs or drawings, but here is what artists who lived in about 1300 had in mind when they carved such images onto pottery. Remarkably dragon-like, isn't it?



Two versions of the horned water serpent



Community Connections

1. Research the Native American history of your community. For assistance, try the Alabama Indian Resource Center at Moundville, 205-371-2234 (opens in October 2000), which will specialize in presenting high quality programs to schools and communities.

2. Conduct a community survey to learn about residents with Indian ancestry. Ask someone in the community or a parent with Indian ancestry to visit the class and discuss their Indian heritage.

Additional References & Resources

Moundville: An Introduction to the Archaeology of a Mississippian Chiefdom by John Walthall is a good introduction.

Moundville Expeditions of Clarence Bloomfield Moore edited by Vernon James Knight contains the most up-to-date information.

Sun Circles and Human Hands: The Southeastern Indians Art and Industries edited by Emma Lila Fundaburk. The text is somewhat dated, but it remains the best picture book of Southeastern Indian art and artifacts.

Native American Legends. Southeastern Legends: Tales from the Natchez, Caddo, Biloxi, Chickasaw, and Other Nations compiled and edited by George E. Lankford is an excellent book on Southeastern Indian folklore.

Moundville Archaeological Park, general information: 205-371-2572; **Alabama Indian Resource Center**, publications and programs: 205-371-2234; **Alabama Museum of Natural History**, general information: 205-348-7550; programs: 205-348-9473.

Parting Thoughts

In the long period of cultural clash between American Indians and European explorers and settlers, there were to be heroes and villains on both sides. Therefore, we should avoid assigning full blame to either side. Nevertheless, the near total loss of the Native American culture is a shameful tragedy. The fact that Indian roots remain in our family trees is a spirit bond that should evoke reverence for the native people who once were stewards of this land we call Alabama.

Oh yeah, I almost forgot. **So much** of Alabama—place names, traditions, foods, even the locations of many roadways and communities—are rightfully credited to Alabama Indians and reflect their close attention to the state's natural features. In my view, such careful attention for Alabama's lands, waters, and wildlife is a lesson we should retain from Alabama Indians. It is perhaps the best way of truly respecting our Native American heritage.



Happy outings,

Dr. Doug

Alabama Native American Time Line



Discovering *Alabama*

Activity/Information Sheet

Native American Festival

PRE-HISTORIC ERA OF ALABAMA HISTORY (No written records)

- ca. 11,000 BC **PALEO-INDIAN Tradition:** Oldest evidence of Native Americans in Southeast; nomadic hunter-gatherers range widely in Tennessee Valley and elsewhere in Alabama. Rapid disappearance of Ice-Age animals—mammoths, mastodons, and giant ground sloths.
- 6000 BC **ARCHAIC Tradition:** Indians hunting and gathering in a more local home range, use of seasonal foods, increasing use of vegetables in diet—nuts, seeds, acorns, berries, etc. Bluff shelters and cave sites, shell mounds, and high spots by rivers. Most large points are from this era.
- 1000 BC **WOODLAND Tradition:** Intensive use of local resources, particularly plants. Cultivation of plants—squash, pigweed, lambs quarters, etc. Large permanent villages, increased population; burial mounds; use of pottery, bows, and arrows. Many sites throughout Alabama.
- 1000 AD **MISSISSIPPIAN Tradition:** Corn, bean, squash agriculture, distinctive pottery, highly organized chiefdoms, governed by religious/political strong man; flat-topped mound building. More than one thousand mound sites in Alabama, near all the large streams—notably Moundville, Bottle Creek, Baldwin Co.; Bessemer Mounds, Jefferson Co.; Ft. Walton, Florida; Etowah, Georgia.

PROTO-HISTORIC ERA OF ALABAMA HISTORY (Few written records)

- 1500 **First European (Spanish) exploration of Gulf Coast:** Alabama Indians meet the first Europeans—Piñeda, 1519; Narváez, 1527.
- 1540 **Hernando de Soto:** With an army of over seven hundred, de Soto enters Alabama by way of Coosa River from Georgia. Meets Chief Tuscaloosa in east central Alabama. Battle of Mabila, October 18, 1540; that fall, moves west to Mississippi.
- 1560–1699 **Alabama's "Dark Ages":** Drastic depopulation of Indians, mostly due to disease. Collapse of Mississippian culture, organization of historic-era tribes—Choctaws, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Creeks.

HISTORIC ERA OF ALABAMA HISTORY (Many written records)

- 1699 **French Colonial Period:** First French colony established on Dauphin Island in 1699, then Ft. Louis de la Louisiane on Alabama River at 27-mile bluff in 1702; Mobile in 1712. Spanish establish Pensacola in 1699.
- 1717–1763 **Tension in North America between France and Britain:** Fort Toulouse established at fork of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers with Alibamu tribe (Creeks). French lose French & Indian War, abandon Fort Toulouse in 1763.
- 1763–1783 **British Colonial Period:** Indians generally pro-British during the Revolutionary War (1775–1783). British lose; U.S. government established.
- 1783–1819 **U.S. Territorial Period:** Alabama part of Mississippi Territory (1798), Alabama Territory (1817). Indians are increasingly pressured:
- **economically:** Indians dependent on trade goods, collapse of deerskin trade leaves Indians in debt, treaties exchange land for debt forgiveness
 - **culturally:** great pressure to live like whites on farms and give up traditional Indian ways
 - **physically:** constant pressure from surrounding Americans, rum trade has disastrous effect
- 1811–1813 **Creek Civil War:** Division within Creek Nation: peace or "white" faction urges cooperation with Americans while "war" faction, led by Red-Sticks, urges traditional life-style and advocates war against whites. Fighting occurs between factions.
- 1813–1814 **Creek War:** Red-Sticks provoked into attacking American settlers; whites invade Alabama. Andrew Jackson defeats Creeks at Horseshoe Bend. Treaty of Fort Jackson destroys power of Creeks.
- 1817–1822 **The Great Alabama Land Rush, "Alabama Fever":** Settlers flock into Alabama filling recently vacated Indian lands. Alabama statehood in 1819 increases pressure on remaining Indians. Some go to Florida and join the Seminoles.
- 1828–1838 **Andrew Jackson elected President:** The Indian Removal Act of 1830 requires all Native Americans to move across the Mississippi, mostly to Oklahoma—Choctaws (1832), Creeks (1836), and Chickasaws (1837). Some groups were removed by force. The tragic and devastating removal of the Cherokees in the winter of 1838 is called the Trail of Tears.
- 1838–1960s **The Stay-Behinds:** A few scattered Indians remained in the poorest and most remote corners of Alabama. Some, notably Creeks near Poarch, Alabama, retain vestiges of traditional culture, but all are discriminated against until the Civil Rights era of the 1960s.

drawing by Joe Belt