



Classroom Activity

Indian Village at Lake Okeechobee

OVERVIEW

Students will be divided into groups to learn about the account of Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda. After reading the primary source and discussing it with their group, they will make a drawing of what an Indian village around Lake Okeechobee would have looked like. They will then share their drawing and explain why they drew them the way they did.

OBJECTIVE

- Students will understand how to use a primary source to better understand the past.
- Students will understand how the Indians around the area of Lake Okeechobee lived when the Spanish arrived.

MATERIALS

- Map of Florida
- Copies of the account of Fontaneda
- Pencils, crayons, and large pieces of butcher paper

VOCABULARY

eel: A long, snake-like fish

enumerating: To name one-by-one

truffle: An edible fungus that is found underground near the roots of trees

PROCEDURE

Explain that the class will learn about the Indians who lived around Lake Okeechobee at the time of the arrival of the Spanish by reading and discussing an account written by Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda. Ask a student to find the location of Lake Okeechobee on the map, then have the student identify where he or she live. Divide the students into groups. Give each group a copy of the attached account of Fontaneda. Ask one or more of the students to read the account aloud. Instruct each group to create a picture of an Indian village based upon the account after they have discussed what should in the picture. First the groups should discuss these questions, which can be written on the board.

1. What does the account tell us about the Indians?
2. What does the account not tell us about the Indians?
3. What aspects of life in the Indian village will be included in the drawing?
4. What else do you know about early Florida natives that you could incorporate into the drawing?

The students will then draw the picture as a team, so the paper should be big enough that all students can participate. You may want the students to sketch the drawing before coloring it. The groups will then display their drawing and explain to their classmates why they drew the picture as they did. The second group will do the same, but will also politely agree or disagree with the first groups' rendition of the account and if necessary, explain why they disagree. This will continue until all groups have had a chance to speak. If time allows, the groups may wish to redraw their picture after class discussion. This activity also could be done with students working individually or using a computer-aided drawing device.

“ . . . On this lake, which lies in the midst of the country are many towns, of thirty or forty inhabitants each, and as many more places there are in which people are not numerous. They have bread of roots, which is their common food, the greater of the time; and because of the lake, which rises in some seasons so high that the roots cannot be reached in consequence of the water, they are for some time without eating this bread. Fish is plenty and very good. There is another root, like the truffle over here, which is sweet; and there are other different roots of many kinds; but when there is hunting, either deer or birds, they prefer to eat meat or fowl. I will also mention, that in the rivers of fresh water are infinite quantities of eels, very savory, and enormous trout. The eels are nearly the size of a man, thick as the thigh, and some are smaller. The Indians also eat lagartos (alligators), and snakes, and animals like rats (possums), which live in the lake, fresh-water tortoises (gopher turtles), and many more disgusting reptiles which if we were to continue enumerating, we should never be through.

“These Indians occupy a very rocky and very marsh country . . . The men go naked, and the women [wear] a shawl made of a kind of palm-leaf, split and woven.”