

Lesson Plan 1: **WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

Grade Level: 4-8

Overview:

The students will work in pairs to develop dictionary skills as they search for interesting words that represent the achievements and personal characteristics of Cabeza de Vaca and the other conquistadors.

Objectives:

The students will:

- Summarize the achievements and personal characteristics of Cabeza de Vaca.
- Use words beginning with the letters of Cabeza de Vaca's name to represent his achievements, experiences, and personal qualities.
- Compare the strengths and weaknesses of the conquistadors examined in the Conquistadors Online Learning Adventure.

Related National Standards:

Language Arts:

- Demonstrates competence in the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
- Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas.

History:

- Understands aspects of the Spanish exploration, conquest, and immigration to the Americas in the centuries following Columbus.
- Understands characteristics of the Spanish and Portuguese exploration and conquest of the Americas.

Materials:

Dictionaries
Drawing paper and felt pens or crayons

Procedure:

1) Review with the students the story of how the title "Cabeza de Vaca" or "head of a cow" was given to Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca's family. (In the year 1212, one of his mother's ancestors, a shepherd named Martin Alhaja, had used a cow skull to mark an unguarded mountain pass. This helped the Spanish Christians sneak-attack and win an important battle against the

Moors.) The name “Cabeza de Vaca” was an honorary title commemorating this important victory, which Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca wore proudly.

2) Divide the students into pairs to recall the life story of Cabeza de Vaca. Ask them to list the significant experiences, achievements, risks, and personal characteristics of this man.

3) Ask the pairs of students to spell Cabeza de Vaca’s name (or Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, if you wish more of a challenge!) in a vertical line down the left side of a sheet of drawing paper. For each of the letters in his name, have the students use their dictionaries to find an interesting word that represents one of his personal characteristics, or one of the experiences, achievements or risks he endured in his life. Encourage the students to be creative and thoughtful in selecting their words, so that their completed project will more effectively represent what they have learned about Cabeza de Vaca and have more personal meaning to them. If you wish, you might demonstrate how to select an interesting word for the letter “C” and model how the dictionary offers countless interesting words for the students to select.

4) Encourage the students to use colored markers or crayons to decorate the letters of “Cabeza de Vaca” and neat black penmanship for the rest of the letters of their dictionary words.

5) Ask the students to share their completed word selections with each other. Compare and contrast the words selected by the students and reinforce the idea that some words are more interesting and have more meaning and power than other ordinary words.

6) Use the same format to compare and contrast the personal characteristics and achievements of the four conquistadors in the Online Learning Adventure. Conclude by asking the students to select the conquistador they most admire and explain why in a paragraph. Post these paragraphs by their “name posters” for other students to read and discuss.

Assessment Recommendations:

Teachers may wish to set criteria for how well the words create a picture in the reader’s mind, and model this with the first letter “C”. The number of letters in the words, the use of vocabulary words, etc. may be specified also.

Extension and/or Adaptation Ideas:

To further develop the students’ vocabulary and dictionary skills, ask them to develop sentences or write a story with their newfound words. Post these on a bulletin board and use these words in spelling lessons.

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