

Online Adventure Teaching Ticklers:

A variety of teaching activities and discussion questions related to Cabeza de Vaca.

Adventure 2: Cabeza de Vaca and the Fall of America

A. Cabeza de Vaca's Adventures

1) The Life and Times of an Adventurer

- What went wrong? Review the expedition led by Panphilo de Narvaez to “explore Florida”. List all the things that went wrong. Discuss: What could have been done to avoid these problems or were they inevitable?

2) The Mystery of His Route

- Develop a classroom map showing the routes that Cabeza de Vaca is thought to have taken during his 8-year saga. On the map, label the clues and geographical features that Michael Wood followed as he tried to pinpoint the exact route. Conclude by asking students which route they think Cabeza de Vaca took and why.

3) Survival and Transformation

- Cabeza de Vaca's journey was a physical journey travelling to a new place, but it has also been called a journey of transformation, that forever transformed his outlook and life. Ask students to write an imaginative or autobiographical story that shows how a physical journey can also be a journey of transformation.

- Write an imaginative diary of the story of Cabeza de Vaca, Dorantes, Castillo or Estavanico. Ask the students to bind their diaries and make them as authentic-looking as possible. (To make “leatherbound volumes,” crinkle up rough-edged pieces of plain brown paper sacks until they are soft and use to cover card stock or manila folders. Dyeing paper with tea also works. Sew the diary pages together with string.)

- Cabeza de Vaca wrote: “Clearly, to bring all these people to Christianity and subjection to Your Imperial Majesty, they must be won by kindness, the only certain way.” Ask students how they think the world would be different today if the Americas had been approached with kindness by the European explorers.

- One of the major points that Cabeza de Vaca makes in his book about his exploration of the Americas was that the native peoples, which Michael Wood refers to as “the Other,” were not inhuman. The examples he used include: the Indians taking pity on the four Spanish survivors, the Indians not practicing cannibalism, the love of the Indians for their children, the marriage customs and hard work of the Indians, their interest in healing, no evidence of worshipping

idols, and their physical cleanliness. Write a letter to the King of Spain explaining more about what Cabeza de Vaca found and how you believe the King of Spain should treat the natives in the New World.

- Research the Espejo Expedition of 1582 and the Ibarra Expedition of 1565. Where did these expeditions go? What evidence did they find that proved Cabeza de Vaca's story and route?
- Find copies of the paintings of artist Ted de Grazia of Tucson, Arizona. He portrayed the story of Cabeza de Vaca in many of his works. Ask students to examine the paintings and discuss how the style and subject matter of De Grazia's art reflect his personal interpretation of Cabeza de Vaca.
- When Cabeza de Vaca finally met the Spanish slaving expedition headed by Diego de Alcazar, the Indians accompanying him refused to believe that they were "the same race or humanity." Respond to the following statement and explain why the Indians would have thought Cabeza de Vaca was so different. "For we had come from the sunrise, the others from where the sun set. We cured the sick, the others killed the healthy; we went naked, while the others went in fine clothes on horseback with weapons. And also that we asked for nothing and gave away all that we were given; while the others seemed to have no other aim than to steal what they could and never give anything to anybody." How does this statement further give evidence to the transformation that Cabeza de Vaca went through during the 8 years?

B. Debate at Valladolid

1) Bartolome de Las Casas

- Write a biography of Bartolome de Las Casas. What influences and philosophies affected his opinions about the way native peoples should be treated by the European powers?

2) Gines Sepulveda

- Write a biography of Gines Sepulveda. What influences and political philosophies affected his opinions about the way native peoples should be treated by the European powers?

3) The Great Debate: What Do You Think?

- Review the arguments presented by Las Casas and Sepulveda in the Great Debate at Valladolid. Write a letter to NASA explaining how you believe any future lifeforms encountered in our space exploration should be met and why.

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