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LESSON 1
FIRST ENCOUNTER

OVERVIEW

Chokma (Hello),

Thank you for your interest in the Chickasaw Nation Student Curriculum. We are pleased to offer this curriculum that explores our deep history, culture and traditions. The curricula are designed to inform and educate individuals about the dynamic history of our Chickasaw leaders, monumental events and culture. Chickasaw historians, researchers, archaeologists and other educators, as well as tribal elders, have developed this curriculum to share our story.

We are excited to offer Unit 3. Each lesson focuses on a specific event and/or individual throughout the Chickasaw Nation’s history and is complete with its own lesson plan, reading material, discussion questions, student activity, student quiz and reference list for convenience. All provided materials have been reviewed and approved by the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture & Humanities and the Chickasaw Nation Department of Communications & Community Development.

The Chickasaw Nation would like to thank you for your support. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Joe Thomas, special assistant to the secretary of the Chickasaw Nation Department of Culture and Humanities, at (580) 436-7258 or joe.thomas@chickasaw.net.

*The following Oklahoma Academic Standards, as outlined in the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s 2014 Social Studies guide, are to be used only as a basic guide. Other standards may be applicable that could be based on a teacher’s own interpretation of the lesson material or ability/need to make a conceptual connection:

Grades 9 – 12

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 1.3: Compare and contrast the goals and significance of early Spanish, French, and American expeditions including the impact of disease, interactions with Native Americans, and the arrival of the horse and new technologies.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 1.4: Compare and contrast cultural perspectives of Native Americans and European Americans regarding land ownership and trading practices.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 2.3: Integrate visual and textual evidence to explain the reasons for and trace the migrations of Native American
peoples including the Five Tribes into present-day Oklahoma, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, and tribal resistance to the forced relocations.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 2.4A: Summarize the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction Treaties on Native American peoples, territories, and tribal sovereignty including the required enrollment of the Freedmen.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 3.1: Compare and contrast the development of governments among the Native American tribes, the movement for the state of Sequoyah, the proposal for an all-Black state, and the impact of the Enabling Act on single statehood.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 3.2: Describe and summarize attempts to create a state constitution joining Indian and Oklahoma Territories including the impact of the Progressive and Labor Movements resulting in statehood on November 16, 1907.

United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2A: Summarize the reasons for immigration, shifts in settlement patterns, and the immigrant experience including the Chinese Exclusion Act, the impact of Nativism, Americanization, and the immigrant experiences at Ellis Island.

United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2B: Examine the rationale behind federal policies toward Native Americans including the establishment of reservations, attempts at assimilation, the end of the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee, and the impact of the Dawes Act on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.

United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2C: Compare the contrasting viewpoints of Native American leadership's resistance to United States Indian policies as evidenced by Red Cloud and his Cooper Union speech, Seattle, Quanah Parker, and Chief Joseph as expressed in his I Will Fight No More Forever speech.
LESSON PLAN

BENCHMARKS

The following Oklahoma Academic Standards, as outlined in the Oklahoma State Department of Education’s 2014 Social Studies guide, are to be used only as a basic guide. Other standards may be applicable that could be based on a teacher’s own interpretation of the lesson material or ability/need to make a conceptual connection:


Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 2.3.

Oklahoma History and Government: The Foundation, Formation, and Transformation of Oklahoma, Content Standard 2.4A.


United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2A.

United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2B.

United States History: The United States: The American Nation in Transformation, 1878 to the Present, Content Standard 1.2C.
SET (5 min.)

*Note: The following is a suggested script for you, the teacher, to reference while discussing this lesson plan. Based on a number of factors, such as your students' ages or maturity level, you may choose to deviate from the script as you see fit.*

“Let’s start today with a fun question. What could change about our world if aliens with technologies and perhaps animals we had never seen before landed tomorrow? What might they bring with them, and how might it affect us? [Take a couple of minutes to talk about the question.] There are probably more things that we can’t think of, too. Whether our world would be better or worse, it would certainly be different, and we would sit here today, having no idea how much our lives were about to change.

“Now you have some idea of what it was like for Chickasaws and other Native American tribes when they encountered Europeans for the first time. Does anyone know who Christopher Columbus was? [Pause for response. Multiple acceptable answers.] Good! His successful voyage to the Caribbean in 1492 paved the way for other Europeans to explore the Americas. Together, these men altered two whole continents because of the cultures, technologies, religions and diseases they brought with them.

“Today, we will be talking about the first meeting between the Chickasaws and a group of Europeans. Though the Chickasaws would meet people from England and France, the first Europeans they ever met were actually from Spain. You’re going to learn about their first encounter with the Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto in the year 1540. By the end of the lesson, you’re going to know all about that meeting and what happened afterward.”

OBJECTIVES

1. The students will practice reading out loud
2. The students will interact with the reading by answering discussion questions.
3. The students will decode a message.

READING PROCEDURES (20 min.)

a. The teacher will read the first paragraph of text to the students, and then ask the first discussion question. The students will answer.

b. The students will continue the reading, with the teacher stopping them at appropriate points to ask the remaining questions.
If the students are uncomfortable with oral reading, the teacher may wish to consider reading the entire passage to model good reading habits. For students who already display great comfort with oral reading, the teacher may wish to have the students read the entire passage. Teachers should feel free to stop the reading and pose knowledge questions about the text—e.g., asking students to define words or explain more. Similarly, the discussion questions may be answered in discussion, as intended, or the teacher may use them to make a free response worksheet for the students.

**MATERIALS**

1. Reading text (provided)
2. Discussion questions (provided)

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL**

1. First Encounter video

**EVALUATION**

The teacher will grade students based on some combination of the following: their oral reading, their participation in discussion and any comments made that the teacher considers particularly insightful. These grades may be evaluative or for completion, at the teacher’s discretion.

**ACTIVITY PROCEDURE (20 min.)**

a. The teacher will introduce the activity to the students: “Now that you know about the Chickasaws’ first encounter with the Spanish, here’s a fun decoding exercise for you to do. Can you decode the message?”

[Answer: “Spaniard Hernando de Soto was the first European to make relationships with the Chickasaw people.”]

**MATERIALS**

1. Decoding the Message (provided)

**EVALUATION**

The teacher will grade the decoding activity for completion.
CLOSURE (5 min.)

“So, what have we learned today? Who was Hernando de Soto? Did he get along well with the Chickasaws? Why or why not? [Pause for brief answers to questions.] Good! The Chickasaws’ meeting with de Soto was the first time they had encountered Europeans, but it would not be the last. However, for the next 150 years, the Chickasaws had contact only with other tribes so de Soto didn't change their world much. It was not until the French claimed the Chickasaw homelands in 1682, thus challenging the British claim to the southeast, that Europeans would become a more permanent part of the tribe’s world, resulting in changes in how Chickasaws lived their lives. But that’s a subject for next time!”
REFERENCE MATERIAL

Prior to the first European exploration party to reach Chickasaw territory in 1540, the Chickasaws were a thriving people. They had a series of trails that stretched throughout the North American continent. These trails provided avenues to trade needed goods and to communicate with tribes such as the Choctaws, Muscogee (Creeks) and Natchez. During this time of great trade and communication, European countries such as Portugal and Spain were exploring the world in search of trade routes and natural resources. To finance these expeditions, they also searched for one particularly valuable natural resource: gold. The Chickasaws were aware of a possible encounter with an exploration party but unsure who and when. This begins the Chickasaw’s story of “First Encounter.”

Chickasaws resided in the southeast portion of the North American continent in parts of present-day states Mississippi, Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee. Here, they were surrounded with an abundance of natural resources such as rivers and streams, trees, plants and game. They utilized the trees to construct their
summer and winter homes, a council house, corn crib (food storage house) and dugout canoes. These canoes were used to float up and down the major waterways including the Mississippi, Illinois, Tennessee, Ohio and Tombigbee rivers. They hunted bear, deer, turkey, rabbit, squirrel and birds, which were an abundant source of food for their families. These animals were not only used for food but as a trading source with tribes. As they traded with these tribes, they became aware of the threat of strangers seeking gold. The trading trails and waterways were their communication networks that provided news of invaders and attacks on tribes.

In 1539, the report of a European invader seeking gold was recorded in history. Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto and his conquistadors landed on the banks of Tampa, Florida. In December 1540, Chickasaw warriors spotted the Spanish explorers near the upper waters of the Tombigbee River. Displaying bravery and defensive tactics to these invaders, the warriors sent volleys of arrows toward the Spaniards who were trying to cross the Tombigbee River on rafts they constructed. The Chickasaw warriors held de Soto and his conquistadors for several days, eventually letting the Spaniards reach the west bank of Chickasaw territory.

The chroniclers in de Soto’s expedition called the Chickasaw land the “Province of Chicaza.” The Spaniards called them Chicaza because they could not properly pronounce Chikasha (Chikasha), their name in the Chickasaw language. This was the first time Spaniards observed Chickasaw villages, families and environment. The Spanish were amazed to see the land open and free of trees, with a large population spread to the land. They took notes on how they lived and the food they ate, like tanchi’ (Chickasaw word for corn). The Spanish were also puzzled to see such sophistication, intelligence and a tight-knit community among a group of indigenous people. The European perspective of indigenous people during this time included the following: uncivilized, uneducated and un-Christian. Even though Chickasaws were, and still remain an advanced group of people, de Soto believed he could do as he pleased in his search for gold in Chickasaw territory. The Spaniards captured a number of Chickasaws, and sent them back to their main villages carrying de Soto’s demands.
that he be allowed to meet with Minkolosa (Black Leader), the Chickasaw minko’ or leader at the time. The Chickasaw leaders reluctantly agreed in order to maintain peace with the Spaniards, and for the safety of their people, and sent gifts of skins, shawls and food.

De Soto needed to provide his men and livestock with shelter and food for the winter. The Spaniards took over one of the Chickasaw’s abandoned villages and built additional structures to winter their hundreds of men, horses and hogs. As the days passed, the Chickasaw leadership developed an uneasy, but increasingly regular contact between themselves and the Spaniards. On one occasion, the Spaniards joined the Chickasaw warriors to battle against a neighboring tribe. By early March 1541, de Soto was preparing to leave the Chickasaw village and continue his search for gold. Trouble began when he called the Chickasaw leaders together and demanded that they supply 200 people to carry his group’s baggage. Tired of the visitors and wearied by their demands and impositions, the Chickasaws decided to rid themselves of the unwelcomed guests.

Before dawn, the Chickasaw warriors attacked de Soto’s encampment and burned it to the ground. Armed with torches and flaming pots, the warriors set fire to the straw roofs and structures that the Spaniards inhabited. In a matter of minutes, the village was engulfed in flames. In the chaos, the Chickasaws attacked the frightened Spaniards. Chickasaw bowmen shot the soldiers and horses in what became a rout. A dozen or more Spaniards and more than 50 horses died. Great quantities of military gear, clothing, weapons and all but the smallest pigs were lost in the fire.

The Chickasaw warriors withdrew into the night rather than risk suffering great losses, leaving the Spaniards to regroup at another site a short distance away. One Spanish chronicler said that it was “a great mystery of God” why his entire group of soldiers wasn’t wiped out. However, it was a southeastern tribal custom to strike a hard but quick blow without losing many men. This had been Southeastern custom for centuries. Left without much in the way of clothing or shelter, the Spaniards fashioned thick grass mats for bedding and slept in defensive
formations on the freezing ground. With many wounded, the Spaniards set about re-forging their fire-damaged weapons, collecting what food they could find and rebuilding their strength for their continued journey ahead.

By late April 1541, the Spaniards completed their preparations and de Soto led his men out of the “Province of Chicaza”—Chickasaw territory. De Soto continued to search for gold, but in reality the Chickasaw warriors drastically altered his plans, causing his mission to become futile. De Soto’s men were now merely focused on survival in the unforgiving world they set out to “explore and conquer.” A little over a year later, in May 1542, de Soto died from complications of fever near the banks of the Mississippi River. In order to hide his death from the indigenous peoples and uphold his constant claims of divinity, his men sunk his body in the Mississippi River. The desperate survivors then headed overland to Mexico; however, they decided it was too far to reach, so they returned to the Mississippi River and traveled down the Gulf Coast until they reached a Spanish town. Over half of the Spaniards died on the trip.

Chickasaw ferocity was well known before this event, but it caused a new wave of fear that continued to spread far and wide. Later writers dubbed Chickasaw warriors the “Spartans of the Mississippi Valley” after the famed ancient warriors of Sparta, Greece, and the warrior reputation continued to grow. As a result, very few Europeans set foot in Chickasaw territory for almost 150 years.

The Spaniards were with the Chickasaw for approximately three months, and during that time they only slightly exposed the tribe to European culture, ideas and technologies. Sadly, exposure to European diseases killed more Native Americans than any warfare on this continent. Over the next generations, Chickasaw culture would be altered forever. Waves of new people would swarm into the Chickasaw homelands, and they would have to fight for their rights not only on battlefields, but also in the political arena of treaties and legislation.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was Hernando de Soto’s goal in launching an expedition to North America? Why was this goal so important to the Spanish?
   
   Sample answer: His goal was to find gold and a passage east, but in a larger sense he was seeking fame. By conquering the natives and proclaiming land for the Spanish crown, he would be well compensated, and tales of his exploits would make him world famous. It was important for the Spanish to find gold because they needed to finance their war with France.

2. What was the relationship between the Spanish and the Native American tribes they encountered in North America?
   
   Sample answer: The first encounter created a stir because this was the first time Chickasaws encountered Europeans. The Chickasaws were ready to attack, but were also intrigued by the Spaniards. The Spaniards, on the other hand, were there to exploit the Chickasaws for their resource: gold. The Spanish would soon make overtly rude demands causing great unrest with the leaders of the Chickasaws. In time, the Chickasaws would attack the Spaniards and drive them out of their village.

3. How did Chickasaws treat Hernando de Soto and his men?
   
   Sample answer: In the beginning the Chickasaws were fascinated by de Soto and his men. The Chickasaws supplied the Spaniards with a place to rest for the winter, gifts and food. Eventually, the Spanish began imposing rude acts and demands onto the Chickasaws. The Chickasaws no longer welcomed the guests in their territory and would soon force the Spaniards out.

4. Did the Hernando de Soto expedition have an immediate impact on the Chickasaws after the Spanish departure from their homelands in 1541?
   
   Sample answer: No. The Spaniards were with the Chickasaws for approximately three months, and during that time they only slightly exposed the tribe to European culture, ideas and technologies.

5. In your opinion, how do we know so much about the Chickasaw’s first encounter with the Spaniards?
   
   Sample answer: The history of the Chickasaw’s first encounter was recorded by both the Spanish explorers and the Chickasaws; however, the two methods of documentation were different. The Spanish chronicled their adventures in journals, paintings and letters. The Chickasaws documented their first encounter through oral stories, passing the history down from generation-to-generation.
STUDENT QUIZ

1. The proud history and fierce warrior spirit of the Chickasaws designated them the ________?
   a. Spartans of the Upper California Valley
   b. Spartans of the Lower Tennessee Valley
   c. Spartans of the Mississippi Valley
   d. Spartans of the Upper Tennessee Valley

2. During the Chickasaw’s first encounter with the Spanish, they resided in parts of present-day states ________, ________, ________, and ________.
   a. Alabama, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Dakota
   b. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Mississippi
   c. Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
   d. Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Missouri

3. Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto and his fleet dropped anchor on the shores of present-day ________ of May 1539.
   a. Mississippi
   b. North Carolina
   c. Virginia
   d. Florida

4. In December of ________, the Chickasaw warriors spotted the Spanish explorers near the upper waters of the Tombigbee River.
   a. 1540
   b. 1541
   c. 1542
   d. 1543
5. De Soto took many Chickasaw men hostage and demanded to see the _______, the Chickasaw leader at the time.
   a. Governor
   b. Tishominko
   c. Minkolosa
   d. Tushka

6. The Spaniards approached the Chickasaw leadership demanding _______ Chickasaw men to carry his group’s baggage.
   a. 50
   b. 200
   c. 500
   d. 1000

7. Because of the Spaniards demands and impositions, the decision was made to _______ the Spaniards.
   a. defend
   b. invite
   c. attack
   d. none of the above

8. Armed with torches and flaming pots, the warriors set fire to the straw roofs and structures. In a matter of _______, the village was engulfed in flames.
   a. seconds
   b. minutes
   c. hours
   d. days
9. One Spanish chronicler said that it was a “_________” why his entire group of soldiers was not wiped out.
   a. “great mystery of hope”
   b. “great mystery of wisdom”
   c. “great mystery of Spanish faith”
   d. “great mystery of God”

10. On May 21, 1542, de Soto died from complications of _________.
   a. gunshot wounds
   b. arrow through the heart
   c. fever
   d. pneumonia
REFERENCE LIST


Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun: Hernando de Soto and the South's Ancient Chiefdoms, by Charles Hudson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).
The Great “Unconquered and Unconquerable” Chickasaw Nation.

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