

Teacher's Desk

Expedition To The Texas Coast: Exploring The Wreck Of The French Ship La Belle is a unit of study about the French in 17th Century Texas. It is also about the discovery and recovery of the frigate, *La Belle*, which sank in 1686, on the Texas coast at Matagorda Bay in the Gulf of Mexico.

Review the social, political and economic conditions of the world as you follow the French explorer La Salle on his last expedition to establish settlements for France in North America. Explore the incredible artifacts discovered on board La Salle's ship, *La Belle*, which have been recovered and preserved during the past ten years by the Texas Historical Commission, using state-of-the-art marine archeological technology.

Rationale: The nucleus of this unit of study is the Essential Questions. Concepts of exploration and colonization are explored.

Essential Questions:

1. How does geography affect history?
2. Why is the recovery of *La Belle* a major breakthrough in Texas history?
3. What can we learn from the artifacts recovered from *La Belle*?
4. Why were the French determined to establish permanent settlements in North America?
5. How did the French presence in Texas affect Spanish conquest and claim?
6. How did Native Americans in Texas respond to the French presence?

Design: The integrated curriculum format for 4th and 7th grade students offers Texas history content with opportunities for processes and skills development. The unit includes activities appropriate for social studies, language arts, science, mathematics and fine arts. An overview of the content is presented in the overview essay-*La Belle: An Historical Perspective*, found in the Data Bank. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are referenced by content area in each lesson.

Plan to Visit: If you live in the Austin area plan a field study visit to the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, where students may view primary source material from *La Belle*. Additional student activities are available for these visits. Also, plan to attend the Museum's summer seminars for educators where there is opportunity to explore the story further.

Lessons

- Discovery in The Sand
- Cast in Bronze
- Faces In The Crowd
- Fort St. Louis Site
- *La Belle*
- Late Breaking News
- New World-New Home
- The Age of Exploration

Resources

- Unit Matrix
- Tips for the Teacher
- Glossary
- Annotated Bibliography
- Websites
- Credits
- Lesson Evaluation
- Data Bank
 - Essential Questions
 - Overview Essay: *La Belle: An Historical Perspective*
 - Lesson Essays
 - Handouts
- Image Bank

