

EXPEDITION TO THE TEXAS COAST

EXPLORING THE WRECK OF THE FRENCH SHIP LA BELLE

Title Fort St. Louis Site

Subject(s) Social Studies or Science

Grade 4th and 7th

Duration 45 minutes

Overview

This lesson explores the Fort St. Louis archeological site in relation to the concepts of how location and place affect history. The lesson may be taught in either social studies or science class.

Essential Question:

How does geography affect history?

Objectives

Students will:

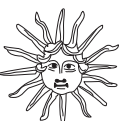
- locate Matagorda Bay and the site of Fort St. Louis on a map.
- describe the topography, climate, physical characteristics of Matagorda Bay of the Fort site in the late 17th Century and compare them to the area today.
- collect, analyze, and synthesize data to explain how the environment aids or hinders a settlement.
- tell the story of three cultures present on the Texas coast in the 17th Century.

Teacher Preparation (Steps 1- 7)

1. Review *Tips for the Teacher* regarding strategies for delivering lessons and using the resources from the Data and Image Bank.
2. Materials
 - Reproduce (one per student) *Connecting Geography and History: Student Data Collection Guide*.
 - Identify pages in student text about the Gulf Coast geographic region.
 - Lesson glossary.
3. Preparation
 - Review information on the geography of the Gulf Coast region, Matagorda Bay, and the Fort St. Louis site in the textbook.
 - Place appropriate library books on reserve.
 - Schedule one class period in the computer lab.
4. Content

The geography and history of Matagorda Bay and Fort St. Louis.

 - Review Student Data Collection Guide story *Connecting Geography and History*.
 - Read from the Data Bank: 1) *Early French Settlements in North America*, 2) *La Belle Timeline*, 3) *People and Places* and 4) *La Belle: An Historical Perspective*.
 - Review these images from the Image Bank: 1) Maps: *The French "Settlement" of 1686* and *Map of Matagorda Bay*, 2) illustration by Charles Shaw: *Fort St. Louis*, and the photograph of the *La Belle* cannons.
 - Review lesson vocabulary.



5. Skills
 - Research online
 - Analyze, compare and contrast, summarize, make generalizations, infer, and draw conclusions
6. Product
 - Completed Student Data Collection Guide
7. Assessment
 - Determine criteria for completion of the Guide.

Lesson Delivery (Steps 1-6)

1. Focus
 - Project the image of *Fort St. Louis* by Charles Shaw. Discuss the physical characteristics of the fort as shown in this painting.
 - Project the image of the *Map of Matagorda Bay*. Discuss the map, comparing and contrasting the area in 1686 to the area today.
2. Content

Project the selected images from the Image Bank.

 - Discuss the characteristics of the fort as shown in the painting.
 - Discuss the map, comparing and contrasting the area in 1686 to maps of the area today. Provide background information (identifying, explaining and discussing) the following:
 - Matagorda Bay, Garcitas Creek and the Fort site as found on the map.
 - Determining the origin of some artifacts at the Fort site has been difficult because three cultural groups were present there over time: the Karankawa, the French, and the Spanish. Artifacts of each cultural group have been layered one over the other.
 - Buffalo was plentiful along the banks of the creek.
 - The Spanish mission and presidio that was first built in 1721 at the site of Fort St. Louis moved further inland because of the harsh coastal climate and attacks by the Karankawa.
 - The Karankawa lived on the coast and around the area of Garcitas Creek before, during and after the French and Spanish settled there. They were friendly to the French at first, but became hostile in defense of their land and possessions after French colonists stole their canoes.
 - The Gulf of Mexico and Texas were both claimed by Spain; therefore French presence was not acceptable to the Spanish. The Spanish military routinely monitored the coast and had visited Fort St. Louis on several occasions.
 - The climate greatly affects life on the coast, then and now.
3. Guided Practice
 - Generate, with student input, a list of vocabulary words appropriate to the lesson ensuring that all the words from the lesson's list are included. Examples: climate, weather, up-river, tributary, estuary, sediment, and bronze.
 - Review the lesson as students write a short definition of each term.
 - Distribute *Connecting Geography and History Student Data Collection Sheet* and review the instructions.
4. Independent Practice
 - Students will read about the Gulf Coast geographical region in their textbook and the story in *Connecting Geography in History*.
5. Assessment
 - Completion of *Connecting Geography in History*.
6. Closure
 - Discuss the climate and weather along the Texas coast then and now. Has it changed significantly? Does it affect how people live there today?



Vocabulary

aground, bronze, climate, cofferdam, culture, establish, estuary, marine, priest, sediment, settler, tributary, weather, wilderness

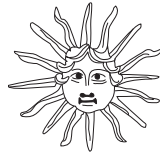
Resources

1. *Tips for the Teacher*
2. Glossary
3. Websites: Texas Beyond History, Handbook of Texas Online and Texas Historical Commission
4. Data Bank: 1) *Early French Settlements in North America*, 2) *La Belle Timeline*, 3) *People and Places* and 4) *La Belle: An Historical Perspective*
5. Image Bank: 1) Maps: *The French "Settlement" of 1686* and *Map of Matagorda Bay*, 2) illustration by Charles Shaw: *Fort St. Louis*, and the photograph of the *La Belle* cannons
6. Student textbook; geography unit on the Gulf Coast region and the history of French in Texas'
7. Library reference books

TEKS

	4 th Grade	7 th Grade
Social Studies	2A,B; 6B; 22A-C	8A; 9B,C; 22A-C
Science	6A; 7A	2C; 3A





EXPEDITION TO THE TEXAS COAST: EXPLORING THE WRECK OF THE FRENCH SHIP LA BELLE

Student Name _____

Connecting Geography and History Student Data Collection Guide

Instructions

Recall and review the story about Fort St. Louis and the geography of the Texas Gulf Coast region. Read the story below to complete Parts I and II.

Encounters: Three Cultures Who Lived Near Matagorda Bay

A very long time ago the Karankawa lived along the Texas coast. They ate fish and fowl, and traveled along Matagorda Bay in their dugout canoes. There were bison on the plains nearby. The climate was very hot in the summer and winter storms brought freezing rain in the winter but the Karankawa survived.

The Karankawa were frightened when strangers in large ships sailed nearby. In 1685, three ships anchored near the bay. One ship ran aground. Another ship managed to sail into the bay. The strangers planted their French flag on the shore and soon built huts on the banks of the Garcitas Creek that flows into the bay. They named their settlement Fort St. Louis. Some of these Frenchmen needed transportation so they stole canoes from the Karankawa who had been friendly to them.

Soon clashes took place between the Karankawa and the French. The French didn't understand the ways of the natives. They didn't know how to peel the cactus before eating it or watch out for the rattlesnakes. Their leader left them often to search for a great river. Many died and some were killed by the Karankawa. After only a few years there were no more people at Fort St. Louis.

In 1689, the Spanish found Fort St. Louis. They buried the Frenchmen who had been killed and buried eight cannons from the fort. The Spanish planned to return for the cannons. In 1721, another group of Spanish came to the bay. On the very site where Fort St. Louis once stood, the Spanish built a mission and presidio. They called it La Bahia which means, "the bay" in Spanish. Just like the French people at Fort St. Louis, the Spanish had a difficult time living in the hot, humid climate with violent storms. The Karankawa were not friendly. In a few years the Spanish abandoned their mission and presidio, and moved inland away from the harsh climate and the Karankawa.

Karankawa, French and Spanish possessions remained on the banks of the Garcitas Creek long after all three groups left the bay area. Bison no longer roamed there. Other settlers moved in. Ranchers from across the Atlantic Ocean arrived and began to herd cattle over the land. More the 300 years passed before the eight bronze French cannons were discovered on the Keeran Ranch near Victoria. Later they found Spanish pottery and Karankawa artifacts.

Part I: Answer the questions and complete the statements.

1. Name the three groups who lived near Matagorda Bay many years ago.

_____, _____, & _____

2. Which group lived there first? _____

3. How did the French and the Spanish get to the Texas Gulf Coast? _____

4. List three things in nature that made the French and the Spanish ill.

_____, _____, _____

6. List three things in nature that were useful to the people who lived along the coast.

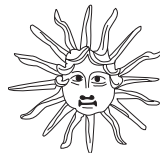
_____, _____, & _____

7. If you had lived at Fort St. Louis with the French or at La Bahia mission with the Spanish what might you have done to befriend and maintain peace with the Karankawa?

8. Why do you think the Spanish chose to build their mission where the French fort had been located?

9. What physical conditions would you face living on the Texas Gulf Coast then or now?

10. List at least four elements of nature that you would see or feel if you visited the Gulf coast today.



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The Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum * www.TheStoryofTexas.com

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