People Were Already Here

Learn: Before European expeditions entered the Southeast, Indigenous communities already lived in the region with their own governments, knowledge, trade connections, and ways of life. The lands now called Alabama were and remain important to Indigenous peoples. Later encounters did not begin the history of these communities.

Example: A map might show a European expedition moving through a region. It should also identify that Indigenous communities already lived there. A map's labels reflect choices about whose story is shown.

1. Who lived in the Southeast before European expeditions arrived?

2. Name one feature of community life that existed before the expeditions.

3. Why is it misleading to say the expedition began the region's history?

4. What could a map include to show more than one perspective?

Save a private copy or print. Do not enter private identifying information.

An Expedition and Its Goals

Learn: In 1539, an expedition led by Hernando de Soto landed in Florida and traveled through parts of the Southeast. Spanish leaders sought wealth and power. Expedition members encountered Indigenous communities with their own leaders and goals. The exact route through parts of Alabama remains disputed.

Example: A historical account can describe what expedition members hoped to find. It does not follow that every Indigenous community welcomed the expedition or shared its goals.

1. In what year did the expedition land in Florida?

2. Name one goal of Spanish leaders described here.

3. Did Indigenous communities have their own leaders and goals?

4. Why should a map show uncertainty where the exact route is disputed?

Mabila and Resistance

Learn: In 1540, the expedition reached a town called Mabila. Alabama's state archives describes Indigenous leader Tascalusa and his warriors resisting the Spanish force. Fighting caused many deaths and the town was burned. The event affected Indigenous people and the expedition; an adult can help discuss the difficult history.

Example: A careful summary names the people involved and acknowledges both Indigenous resistance and the harm caused by the fighting. It does not need graphic details.

1. What town is named in the lesson?

2. Who led the Indigenous resistance described by the Alabama archives?

3. In what year did the fighting occur?

4. Name one effect of the fighting without using graphic details.

Reading Sources and Perspectives

Learn: Accounts of an expedition can differ depending on who wrote them and what information they recorded. Many surviving written accounts were made from the expedition's perspective. Historians also use archaeology and Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, while recognizing what is uncertain. A source's author, date, and purpose help readers evaluate it.

Example: If a source describes a route, ask who made the account and how the route was reconstructed. A debated location should be labeled uncertain rather than presented as exact.

1. Name two kinds of evidence that can help historians study encounters.

2. Why does the author's perspective matter?

3. What two details about a source can a reader check?

4. How should a map present a location scholars have not established?

Independent Evidence Check

Learn: Read the source notes and answer independently. An adult may read directions, but should not provide answers. Distinguish what a source states from what it cannot establish.

Example: Source A: Alabama's state archives identifies Mabila, Tascalusa, and resistance in 1540. Source B: The National Park Service says the expedition's route through parts of Alabama is disputed. These are brief notes, not complete accounts.

1. Which source names the place and leader?

2. What year does Source A give for resistance at Mabila?

3. What does Source B say is uncertain?

4. Why do these two short notes not tell the whole story of every community?