

**Focus on U.S. History:**

# **The Era of Exploration and Discovery**

Kathy Sammis

# **User's Guide to *Walch Reproducible Books***

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1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

ISBN 0-8251-3334-3

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J. Weston Walch, Publisher  
P. O. Box 658 • Portland, Maine 04104-0658

Printed in the United States of America

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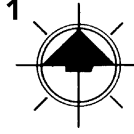
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# The Americas and Early Americans

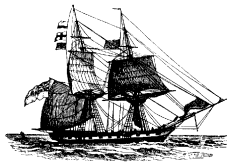
## UNIT 1



## TEACHER GUIDE

This unit has two principal objectives: first, to introduce students to the North American physical environment, which has played a significant role in U.S. history; and second, to introduce students to significant aspects of the diverse cultures and peoples of precolonial North America. (We look at Indian peoples of Central and South America in Unit 5.) At first, the Americas had no people. Then, 20,000 or more years ago, peoples began to cross the Bering land bridge into present-day Alaska and spread from there all across both continents, down to South America's southernmost tip. Across the vastness of two continents, these new

“native” Americans encountered many different environments and living conditions. Shaped by these diverse lands, the people developed many different societies: nomadic hunter-gatherers, settled agriculturalists, apartment dwellers, and others. Nevertheless, Native American societies shared such common elements as religious beliefs, family structure, and gender roles. Like any other culture, Native American life was continuing to evolve and change when the Europeans finally arrived on the continents. The activities for this unit are designed to draw students into a better understanding of North America and early Americans.



## Student Activities

**Early Migrations and Peoples** presents the early migrations visually, with students drawing the migration waves on their map of North and South America (page 5). They also locate ancient American sites that archaeologists have found on both continents. The Extra Challenge activity allows students to investigate one of those sites in depth and present their findings to the class.

**The Map: North America's Environmental Areas** shows students the 10 major environmental regions of the continent. Adapting to the particular environment of a region heavily influenced how the Native Americans who inhabited

it lived. **Filling Out the Map** draws students into the map by having them add major physical features, then write in the names of representative Native American peoples in the appropriate regions.

**A Variety of Dwellings** shows students, again, how various Native American peoples adapted to their environment—in this case, via their dwellings.

**A Native American Village** uses a picture of a Native American village to illustrate life in Indian society. The picture shows a watercolor by Englishman John White, an early colonist.

**The All-Purpose Animal** demonstrates how thoroughly Plains Indians used their staple of life, the buffalo, by having students identify uses for many labeled parts of the animal.

**Speaking in Signs** emphasizes that Native Americans spoke a bewildering variety of languages and overcame potential hurdles to communication by developing a widely understood, universal sign language.

**Peoples and Places** is a four-page chart based on the ten environmental areas of North America. Students fill in the chart, identifying major characteristics of Native American life within each region: geography/climate, sustenance, shelter, social structure/government, major groups/peoples, and typical handicrafts. When the charts are complete, students have a snapshot of the differences and similarities among major groups of Native Americans, and they can more easily analyze the influences of environment and geography on how people

lived. (This is a good group activity—see the Answer Key.)

**Digging Up the Past** makes students aware of how much of our knowledge of early Native American societies comes from archaeology.

**Describing Native Americans** presents two pages of descriptions of Native Americans written by Europeans who made early contact with them.

**Native American Cultures** leads students to identify common aspects of Indian culture described by the European writers. In the Extra Challenge activity, students test the validity of what they have just done by investigating a single Native American group and finding common cultural traits in that group's way of life.

**An Indian Grant of Land** challenges students to evaluate a typical Indian grant of land to Europeans.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## UNIT 1

### STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET

# The Americas and Early Americans



At first, tens of thousands of years ago, no human beings lived on the North or South American continents. Then the world experienced several Ice Ages. The most recent one began 30,000 years ago and ended 14,000 years ago. So much water became ice that the sea level fell. A land bridge—the former sea bottom—called **Beringia** appeared. Scientists

believe this was when the first human beings crossed over from Asia to the American continents. (Some scientists think people may have crossed over during the first Ice Age—50,000 to 40,000 years ago—or even earlier, when Asia and North America were connected—75,000 to 45,000 years ago.)



These primitive people spread all over North and South America. They were the ancestors of the American Indians, or Native Americans. They developed many diverse cultures and hundreds of different languages. All lived in close harmony with nature. Their lives were shaped by the special features of the land they lived on, which varied widely across the continents. In this unit, we'll look at the Native American societies of North America.

We'll investigate the societies of South America in Unit 5.

When studying Native American cultures, we can divide the North American continent into **ten environmental regions**. Natural conditions in these regions had a lot to do with how Native Americans who lived there shaped their lives.

(continued)





Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

# UNIT 1

## STUDENT BACKGROUND SHEET

### The Americas and Early Americans *(continued)*

#### 10 Environmental Regions of North America

<b>Arctic:</b> A frigid region whose people lived in snug domed shelters and hunted.	<b>Subarctic:</b> A region with a harsh climate; its people were wandering, or <b>nomadic</b> , hunters.	<b>Northwest Coast:</b> An area of village-dwelling people with forests rich in fish and game.
<b>Plateau:</b> A harsh, cold area whose people became hunter-gatherers and traders.	<b>Great Basin:</b> Cold and snowy; its people were nomads, gathering scarce seasonal resources.	<b>California:</b> Small bands of people hunted and gathered in this mild climate.
<b>Southwest:</b> In this semi-desert, people either farmed and lived in apartment houses or hunted and raided.	<b>Great Plains:</b> Nomadic buffalo hunting became the way of life on these grasslands.	<b>Great Forest:</b> A region of thick forests, rivers, and lakes; its people hunted, fished, farmed, and lived in villages.
	<b>Southeast:</b> In this mild, humid region, village-dwelling people hunted, fished, and farmed.	

While Native American societies were diverse, they did share common elements:

- **Religion** was an important part of everyday life.
- Tribal **authority was shared** among chiefs and elders, who would discuss important issues, then come to a joint decision.
- **Handicrafts** were an important expression of the tribal society.

- **Trade** with other Native American groups was common.
- The society supported itself by **hunting-gathering** and/or by **farming**.
- The people lived in deep **harmony with nature**.

As with all cultures, Native American societies evolved and changed over the years. Monumental changes were to occur when Europeans finally arrived in the Americas.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1**  
**WORKSHEET 1**

## Map: North and South America

For use with Worksheet 2, Unit 1



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**UNIT 1**  
**WORKSHEET 2**

## Early Migrations and Peoples



The first people to live in the Americas **migrated** (moved) to these continents from **Siberia**, which is in Asia.

**Directions:** Currently, scientists think the earliest Americans migrated here in several different waves. On your map of North and South America, locate the following waves of migration:

*First wave:* before 15,000 years ago

*Athabascan migration:* about 9,000 years ago

*Aleut migration:* about 4,500 years ago



**Further Directions:** Scientists find out about ancient people in America by discovering sites where these people lived and left traces of themselves behind. On your migration map, locate and label these sites where ancient Americans lived. The figures in parentheses give the approximate age of each site.

Debert, Nova Scotia (about 10,600 years old)	Old Crow River Basin, Yukon (27,000 years old)
Marmes, Washington (13,000 to 9,000 years old)	Folsom, New Mexico (9,000 years old)
Meadowcroft Rock Shelter, Pennsylvania (15,000 years old)	Clovis, New Mexico (10,000 years old)
Fort Rock Cave, Oregon (14,000 years old)	Wilson Butte, Idaho (15,000 years old)
Laguna Beach, California (17,000 years old)	Selby, Colorado (20,000 years old)
Tlapacoya, Mexico (22,000 years old)	Burnham site, Oklahoma (26,000 years old)
Tepexpán, Mexico (12,000 years old)	Pedra Furada Rock Shelter, Brazil (32,000 years old)
Monte Verde, Chile (34,000 to 14,000 years old)	Taima-Taima, Venezuela (14,500 years old)
Tierra del Fuego, Chile (Fell's Cave) (11,000 years old)	Jayamachay Cave, Peru (22,000 years old)

**Extra Challenge:** Prepare an illustrated oral or written report on one of the sites on your map. Show and describe the site and artifacts scientists have found there.

