

Section

1

The First Texans

Main Ideas

1. Historians organize the past into eras to make their studies more manageable.
2. Anthropologists and archaeologists study the remains of early cultures to learn about the first Texans.

Why It Matters Today

The American Indians were the first people to live in Texas, long before anyone else arrived. Use current events sources to learn more about issues facing American Indians in the state today.



TEKS: 1A, 1B, 2A, 8A, 21B, 21C, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on how historians and others study the past.

Key Terms

- historians
- eras
- prehistory
- anthropologists
- archaeologist
- artifacts
- Paleo-Indians

The Story Begins

In the 1930s a work crew digging out an old streambed near Lubbock uncovered animal bones and a spearhead. Curious, they took the spearhead to a professor at a nearby university. The professor realized that the workers had made an exciting discovery. They had found proof that people had lived in the area for more than 12,000 years!



Studying the Past

Texas has a long history—more than 12,000 years long. Obviously, people living that long ago did not live like we do today. They had no electronics and no money. The earliest people did not even have farms to grow food. Such advances came with the passing of centuries.

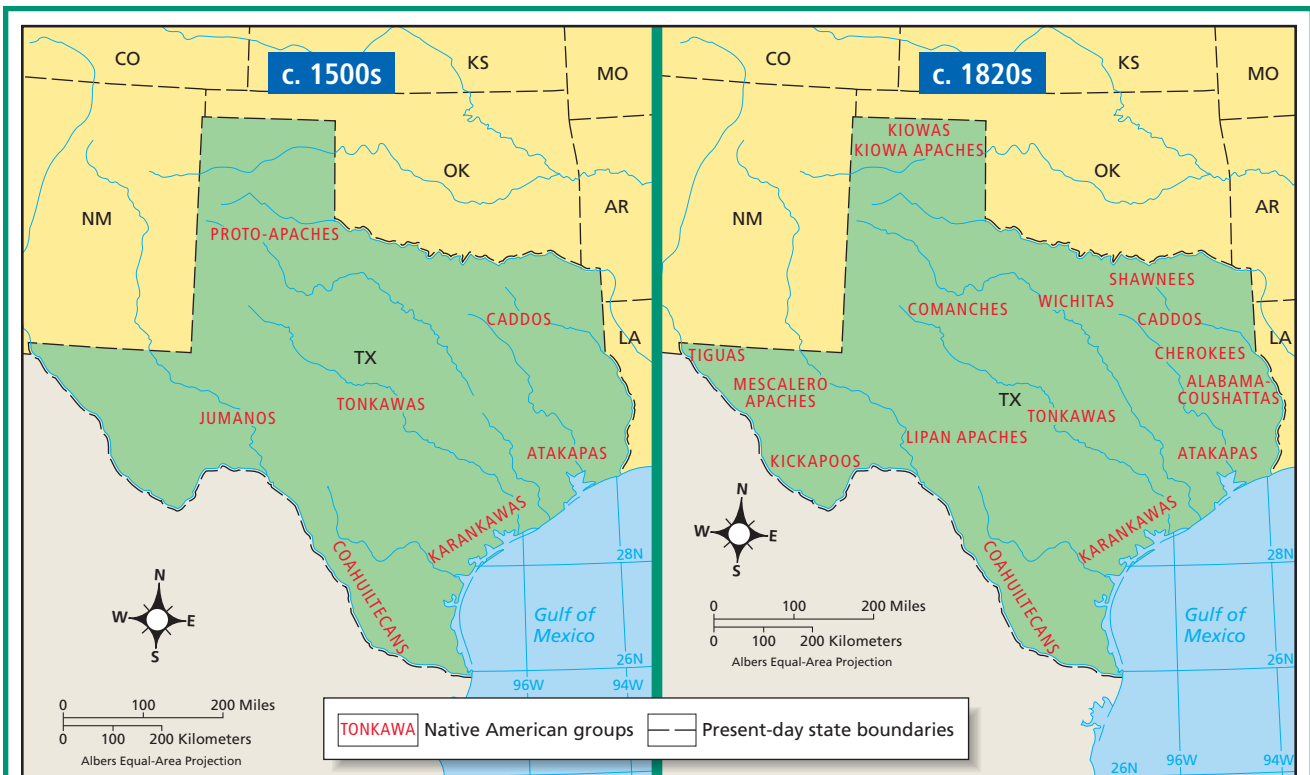
Historians—people who study the past—examine how people and societies change over time. They study how people lived, worked, and thought. But 12,000 years is a long span of time to study. To make their work manageable, historians divide the past into shorter periods called **eras**. If you think of history as a long book, each era is like a chapter. Eras can be of any length. One might be only a few years long. Another might span hundreds of years. The chart on the next page lists major eras in Texas history. How do historians decide what makes an era? They look for a block of time that has some defining characteristic. It might be a political distinction, such as the time Texas belonged to Spain. It might be cultural or economic, like when oil dominated the Texas economy.

Some eras are defined by specific events. For example, the Mexican National Period began when Mexico won its independence from Spain. It ended when Texas formed its own country. Other eras have less defined time spans. The era of Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads refers to a time when farming and ranching were central to the Texas economy. No particular events mark its beginning or end. Because some eras have no clear start or end dates, they can overlap, as you can see on the chart.

Every historian views the past differently. As a result, two historians might divide their studies differently. The chart below shows one way to organize Texas history, but it is not the only way. There is no single way to organize the study of the past.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea What are eras, and how are they useful to historians?

ERAS IN TEXAS HISTORY		
ERA	DATES	DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS
Natural Texas and Its People	Before 1528	Before Europeans arrived in Texas, American Indians lived in the region. They built complex societies in many parts of the state.
Age of Contact	1528–1690	When Spanish explorers arrived in Texas in 1528, they met American Indians for the first time. The contact between the Spanish and American Indians during this period set the stage for future relations between the groups.
Spanish Colonial Period	1690–1821	During this era, the Spanish worked to establish control of Texas. They built missions, forts, and other settlements. Their efforts sometimes resulted in conflict with American Indians, the French, and others.
Mexican National Period	1821–1836	This era began when Mexico won its independence from Spain. The Mexican government worked during this time to encourage settlement in Texas and to maintain control of the area.
Revolution and Republic	1835–1845	During this era, Texans rebelled against the Mexican government and won their independence. The new Republic of Texas then had to figure out how to deal with the challenges confronting a young country.
Early Statehood	1845–1861	The Early Statehood era began when Texas joined the United States in 1845. The state faced several challenges during this period, including war, boundary disputes, and population increases.
Texas in the Civil War and Reconstruction	1861–1874	In 1861 Texas withdrew from the United States. It fought on the side of the South during the Civil War. The period of Reconstruction that followed caused great changes in the state's economy, society, and government.
Cotton, Cattle, and Railroads	1865–1900	During this era, the Texas economy recovered from the Civil War. Cotton farming and cattle ranching were major industries. The expansion of railroads helped both industries to grow.
Age of Oil	1894–1935	The discovery of vast oil fields in Texas led to major changes in the state's economy. The wealth that oil brought to Texas increased the state's influence in the country and the world.
Texas in the Great Depression and World War II	1929–1945	During this era, Texans suffered severe economic hardship brought on by the Great Depression. World War II brought economic revival and led to cultural changes in the state.
Civil Rights and Conservatism	1945–1980	Following World War II, various groups within Texas called for equality and social change. State politics changed as Texans increasingly began to side with the conservative Republican Party.
Contemporary Texas	Since 1980	The period since 1980 has seen significant economic and political growth in Texas. New issues and conflicts challenge Texans as they move toward the future.



American Indians in Texas, c. 1500s and c. 1820s

Interpreting Maps The westward migration of settlers in North America forced new American Indian groups to move to parts of Texas in which other groups had not yet settled.

Human Systems How did the distribution of American Indian groups in the 1820s compare to their distribution in the 1500s? What factors might account for the changes?

★ The First Texans

As you have read, people have lived in Texas for more than 12,000 years. The earliest Texans lived long before the invention of writing. They left no written records behind to explain how they lived. We refer to this period before written records as **prehistory**.

Even without records, we have learned a great deal about how early Texans lived. Most of what we know comes from the work of scholars called **anthropologists**. They want to understand how people live and relate to each other, whether today or in the past. One type of anthropologist, the **archaeologist**, studies the objects that people in the past left behind. Archaeologists sift through layers of earth and explore the oceans looking for **artifacts**—tools, weapons, and other objects made by people. Artifacts give clues about how people lived in the distant past.

Some artifacts had clear uses. Arrowheads, for example, were used for hunting and fighting. Axes and choppers were handy tools. Other artifacts are not so easy to understand. In parts of Texas, including the Pecos River valley, Seminole Canyon, and Big Bend, scholars have found images painted onto or carved into stone. These images often show important events, such as hunts or wars. Some use vividly colored paints



Rock art from Seminole Canyon State Park

made from local rocks. Archaeologists are not sure what the meaning of this rock art is. Some think the art was used to teach lessons. Others think it may have been part of religious rituals.

A few sites in Texas have proved to be particularly valuable to our study of the **Paleo-Indians**, another name for the first Americans. (*Paleo* means “old” or “ancient.”) One such site is Lubbock Lake in the High Plains region. Hundreds of fossils found in that region have helped scholars learn about the types of animals early people hunted. Another valuable site is called the Gault site. Just west of Georgetown, it is filled with artifacts of the Clovis culture. The Clovis culture appeared in North America between 11,000 and 12,000 years ago. Not far away from Gault in Salado, diggers at the Buttermilk Creek site have found even older artifacts. These could be as old as 15,500 years, created long before the Clovis culture developed.

Over the centuries, Paleo-Indian culture changed. Many animals that early people hunted, including mammoths and giant bison, became extinct. As a result, people had to adapt to new ways of life. In the process, they developed distinct cultures with their own languages and belief systems.

Groups moved into and out of Texas. Some moved in search of new lands, while others were forced to leave their old lands. The maps on the previous page show the movement of some American Indian groups in Texas. Because many groups lived in the same area, they tended to develop some similar culture traits. Bands that lived in the same area and shared customs are called culture groups. You will learn more about some of the culture groups that lived in Texas in the following sections.

Reading Check Analyzing Information How do anthropologists and archaeologists learn about the distant past?



Alibates Flint Quarries

The Alibates flint quarries are located in the central Panhandle of Texas. The flint beds cover about 10 square miles. American Indians used Alibates flint to make tools and weapons. Spearheads made from Alibates flint have been found as far away as Colorado. In 1965 the flint quarries were declared a national monument. Today visitors can see waste flint, broken tools, and stones that American Indians used as hammers. **Why has Alibates flint been found far away from the quarries?**



Section 1 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- historians
- eras
- prehistory
- anthropologists
- archaeologist
- artifacts

2. Identify and explain

the significance of the following in Texas history:

- Paleo-Indians

3. Sequencing

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to identify, in sequence, the major eras in Texas history. For each era, list its defining characteristics.

Era	Defining Characteristics

4. Finding the Main Idea

- Why do historians divide the past into eras?
- What have archaeologists discovered about Paleo-Indians in Texas?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Analyzing Information Identify one particular era of Texas history that you would like to study. Write a paragraph describing why you find that era interesting.

Consider the following:

- the eras into which Texas history is divided
- the events and ideas that define each era of Texas history