

## Section

# 5

## The Plains Culture Area

### Main Ideas

1. Plains Indians, including the Tonkawas, hunted buffalo.
2. The Apaches, Comanches, and Kiowas were fierce warrior groups in Texas.

### Key Terms

- tepees
- bands
- Comanchería

### Why It Matters Today

The Plains Indian groups depended on the buffalo, which was later driven nearly to extinction. Use current events sources to learn more about the buffalo or an animal that is in danger of disappearing.



TEKS: 2A, 8A, 10A,  
20A, 21B, 22D

### myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on the American Indians of the Great Plains.

## The Story Continues

The hunters had finally killed their prey. The buffalo would provide food for everyone, but the hunters had to quickly prepare the buffalo and move on. If they lost track of the herds, the people might starve. A European explorer described how they removed the buffalo hide. “They cut the hide open at the back and pull it off . . . using a flint as large as a finger, tied in a little stick. . . . The quickness with which they do this is something worth seeing.”



## The Indians of the Plains

The Great Plains on which the buffalo roamed for centuries stretch from Canada into southern Texas. Before the arrival of Europeans, American Indian groups farmed on the edges of the plains. From time to time, they entered the plains to hunt the buffalo. These animals were enormous—some weighed 1,600 pounds and were 6 feet tall at the shoulder and 10 feet long. Men and women together hunted the buffalo on foot, sometimes chasing them over cliffs to kill many at once.

Buffalo hunting changed dramatically when the Spanish introduced horses to the region. By 1700 most southern Plains Indians owned horses. Once mounted, they moved out onto the plains to follow the buffalo herds. Their hunting grounds had become much larger.

Most Plains Indian groups shared some common cultural characteristics. Most lived in **tepees**, movable homes made from animal hides stretched over long poles. They made food, clothing, tools, and weapons

from various parts of the buffalo. For example, women made a food called pemmican from dried buffalo meat. They pounded the meat into a powder to which they added nuts and berries. In summer Plains Indian **bands**, usually a few families, gathered for celebrations.

**Reading Check Drawing Inferences and Conclusions** Why did the Plains Indians move after they got horses?

## ★ The Tonkawas

One group of Plains Indians, the Tonkawas, lived on the north-central plains of Texas and on the Edwards Plateau. Like most Plains groups, the Tonkawas depended on the buffalo for food, clothing, and shelter. Because they lived south of the largest buffalo herds, though, the Tonkawas also had to rely on other food sources. They hunted small animals, such as rabbits, rattlesnakes, and skunks, and gathered berries, fruits, and nuts. Like other Plains Indians, the Tonkawas wore clothing made from buffalo skins. The men wore their hair long and parted in the middle, while women wore their hair either long or short. Both men and women painted their bodies.

In the 1700s the Tonkawas were driven from their hunting grounds by the Apaches. The Tonkawas tried to adjust to the loss of their major source of food and hides—the buffalo—but had little success at farming. Surviving Tonkawas often joined other American Indian groups, and by the 1900s the Tonkawas no longer existed as a separate group.

**Reading Check Analyzing Information** Why did the Tonkawa lifestyle change after they were driven from their hunting grounds?



Image Credit: (b) ©George Catlin/Smithsonian Art Museum, Washington, D.C. USA/Art Resource, NY



### VIDEO

Great Plains  
Indians

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### Interpreting Visuals

**Buffalo.** Texas Indians used a variety of techniques to hunt buffalo. **What hunting method is illustrated in this painting?**

## That's Interesting!

### Naming the Apaches

Although we call them the Apaches, the group did not refer to itself by that name. They called themselves either the *Inde* or *Diné*, both of which mean “people.” The term *Apache* probably comes from one of two sources. It could derive from the Ute name *Awa’tehe*, or it could come from the Zuni word *apachu*, which means “enemy.”

## ★ The Apaches

The Apaches were another American Indian group that lived on the Texas plain. Scholars believe that the Apaches migrated to the American Southwest between A.D. 1000 and 1400. Their original homeland was far to the north in Canada. Two Apache groups, the Lipan Apaches and the Mescalero Apaches, settled in Texas. The Lipans lived between the Texas Hill Country and the Rio Grande. The Mescaleros, who lived in western Texas, eventually were forced to move to present-day New Mexico.

The Apaches were organized into bands that traveled, hunted, and fought together. The bands were made up of extended families, led by the most prominent family member. Groups of bands often lived close together for defensive purposes or for ceremonies. Like other groups, the Apaches adapted quickly to the introduction of the horse to the Americas, and horseback riding changed their way of life. Apache hunters were skilled riders, and riders often worked as a team when hunting buffalo. They surrounded buffalo herds and used bows and arrows to kill the animals.

Because buffalo were so large, hunters could not easily transport the bodies of animals they killed. Instead, they collected everything they could use off the body out on the plains. They preserved buffalo meat and used hides for many purposes. For example, if they needed to cross a river, they stretched hides over branches to make tub-shaped boats. Like other Plains groups, the Apaches also used buffalo hides for making clothing and shelter.

Some Lipan Apaches farmed, which was unusual for Plains Indians. Their crops included beans, corn, pumpkins, and watermelons. When the buffalo moved, however, the Lipan Apaches followed. Some Apaches who did not farm traveled to New Mexico to trade for food with other American Indian groups there.

Most Lipan Apache men cut their hair very short on the left side but allowed the hair on the right side to grow long. The men tied feathers and other decorations to their hair. They also plucked out all their beard and eyebrow hair. Both men and women wore earrings. Women also wore copper bracelets.

The Apaches often raided their neighbors for goods. Because mounted Apaches could easily attack Pueblo villages and Spanish towns, they became feared throughout Texas. However, the arrival of the more powerful Comanches, along with pressure from the Spanish, led to the decline of the Apaches. In addition, many Apaches died from European diseases. By the early 1800s, many Apaches had been driven out of Texas.

**Reading Check Summarizing** How did the presence of horses shape Apache culture?

## The Comanches and Kiowas

The Comanches originally lived in what is now the western United States. After they acquired horses, though, the Comanches moved onto the Great Plains. In the early 1700s, they moved into Texas. Like the Apaches, the Comanches lived in bands. Each band was headed by a peace chief and a war chief. The peace chief was usually an older man, while the war chief was the band's best rider and fighter. These leaders, with assistance from other respected men, made important decisions for the band.

Their skill as buffalo hunters quickly made the Comanches a wealthy group. They traded goods made from the buffalo with other American Indians. The Comanches were also skilled fighters. They controlled much of the plains, including northern and western Texas, which the Spanish called the **Comanchería**.

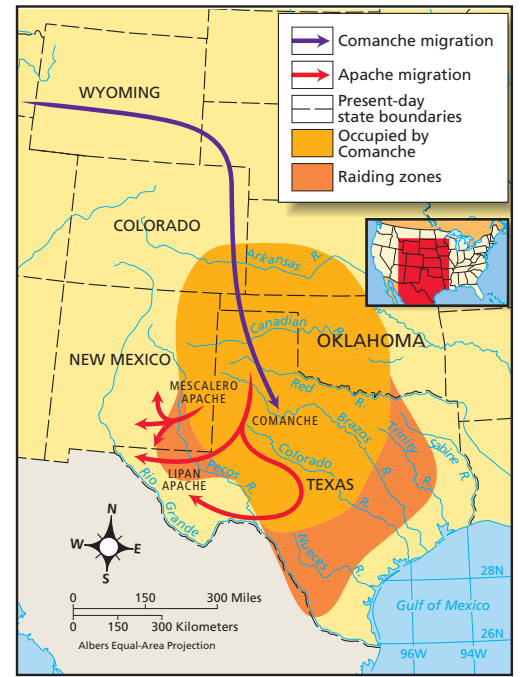
The Kiowas were the last Plains group to arrive in Texas. They moved from the northern plains sometime in the early 1800s to escape from enemies. The Kiowas hunted buffalo and gathered berries, fruits, and nuts. Although they did not farm, the Kiowas did trade with neighboring groups. Kiowa men did the hunting and fighting. They wore their hair long, but over their right ear the hair was cut short. Kiowa women prepared buffalo hides, sewed clothing, and made pemmican. Skilled fighters, the Kiowas became allies of the Comanches. Both groups fiercely resisted being forced from their Texas hunting grounds and abandoning their way of life.

**Reading Check Comparing** How were the Comanches and Kiowas similar?

## Comanche Migration to Texas 1700–1800

**Interpreting Maps** During the 1700s the Comanches migrated into the Great Plains region of Texas, which had been Apache territory.

**Human Systems** How did the migration of one American Indian group affect the lives of other American Indians?



## Section 5 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

### 1. Define and explain:

- hunting grounds
- tepees
- bands

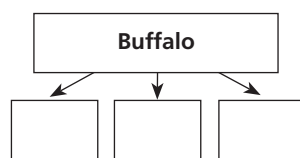
### 2. Identify and explain

the significance of each of the following in Texas history:

- Comanchería

### 3. Evaluating

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to explain why the buffalo was important to Plains Indians.



### 4. Finding the Main Idea

- Describe Plains Indian culture.
- Compare the Apaches, Comanches, Kiowas, and Tonkawas.

### 5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

**Analyzing Information** Imagine that you are a Plains Indian. Write a short song explaining how the arrival of Europeans affected you. Consider the following:

- how horses affected hunting
- the movement of groups into Texas