

## **Hernando De Soto and His Exploration of La Florida**

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### **Summary:**

Hernando De Soto was a Spanish Navigator and conquistador. He gained much of his wealth by trafficking slaves and came to win large areas of land in the Spanish colonies, as well as gold mines and trade ships. In 1537, rich and bored, De Soto pressured the King Charles V to allow him to lead his own expedition into the heart of what is now know as the United States of America. Since De Soto financed his own trip, King Charles V granted him both the governor-ship of Cuba, as well as the ruler of lands and people of La Florida. In May 1539, Hernando De Soto landed with 600 to 700 men, twenty priests, nine ships, 220 horses, pigs, and fierce war dogs on the western coast of Florida, in Bradenton. He named this place, *Espiritu Santo* after the Holy Ghost. De Soto's army became dependent on the Native Americans for food among other survival needs. Students will learn more about De Soto's travels, challenges, and discoveries in La Florida by using websites to research information.

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will state what they know about Hernando De Soto, what they want to know, and what they learn through this lesson.
2. Students will use the Internet to research facts about Hernando De Soto explorations.
3. Students will write a biography about Hernando De Soto's life.

### **U.S. History Event or Time Period:**

16<sup>th</sup> Century—European Colonization of North America

### **Grade Level:**

4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> grade

### **Materials Needed:**

K-W-L-H Chart copied for each student or a transparency to do whole class, a research template for each student, computers with Internet access, and an assessment for each student

### **Lesson Time:**

One class period---K-W-L-H chart to find students prior knowledge of explorers

One class period---Internet Research with research template as well as writing interesting facts found

One class period---Read Guided Reading Informational Sheet & Glossary highlighting the most important facts.

20 minutes-Assessment

## **Lesson Procedures**

This lesson should be used in conjunction with a unit on European Explorers and other related lessons on United States/Florida History.

1. The teacher will present the explorer Hernando De Soto to the students.
2. The teacher will run copies of the KWLH chart for students to complete and share.
3. The teacher will run copies of 'A Report on a Person in History' form along with giving students 2 websites to use: [http://library.thinkquest.org/J002678F/de\\_soto.htm](http://library.thinkquest.org/J002678F/de_soto.htm) and <http://dhr.dos.state.fl.us/kids/history.cfm>. The students will use these websites to complete their research template.
4. The teacher will run copies of the Guided Reading Informational Sheet and the Glossary of Terms. As the class reads these together, they may add information that they have learned with their individual research done previously.
5. The teacher will prepare students for an assessment by highlighting important facts from the informational sheet.
6. The teacher gives the test.

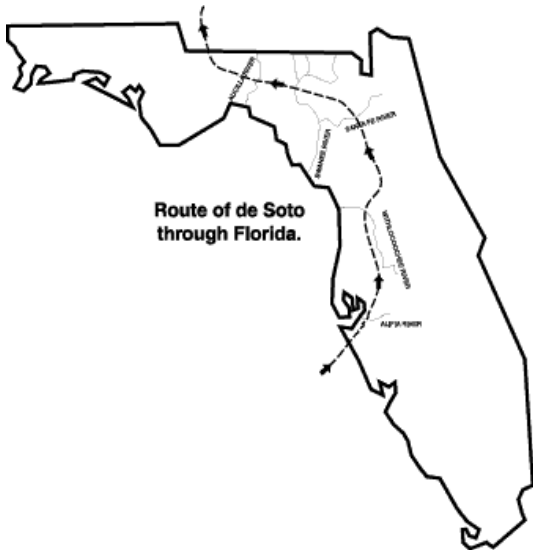
Optional:

1. Using the 'Report on a Person in History,' the teacher will have the students write a five-paragraph report on Hernando de Soto's explorations.
2. The teacher will have students choose another European explorer and report to the class using the same procedures as in this lesson. (ESOL students will be paired with another student to complete this assignment.)

**PHOTOS**



Photo of Hernando De Soto



Route of De Soto through Florida



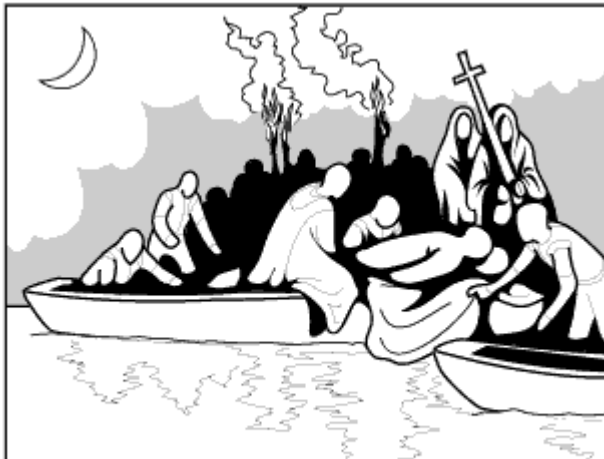
Photo of an armed Spanish Conquistador.



Area explored by Hernando De Soto and his men.



An engraving depicts Native Americans carrying away the dead.



**When de Soto died, his men buried him in the Mississippi River.**

**Information Courtesy of:**

National Park Service-De Soto National Memorial

(Insert attached K-W-L chart as a PDF file.)

## Report on a Person from History

### HERNANDO DE SOTO

The person's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

Other names this person was known by: \_\_\_\_\_

Where did he/she live? \_\_\_\_\_

Why is this person remembered, famous? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe three or more important events in his/her life.


List some of his/her accomplishments.


How has this person affected our lives?


## Hernando De Soto Expedition Background

In the early 1500's, the growing nation of Spain had few industries and resources to rely on, and yet was the wealthiest nation in Europe and the most powerful nation abroad. The Spanish domain extended from the West Indies through Central and South America. These new territories had tremendous natural resources of gold, silver, emeralds, and dyestuffs. A class of professional soldiers that is now referred to as Conquistadors emerged with the conquest of these New World territories.

With the choice of being poor in Spain or possibly gaining riches in the New World, men were eager to enlist with the armies of conquest bound for the New World with the promise of fame and fortune. These were men like Hernan Cortes conqueror of the Aztec Empire (1519-1523), Francisco Pizarro conqueror of the Inca Empire (1526-1535), Juan Ponce de Leon, discoverer of La Florida (1513), and of course, Hernando de Soto. (The name de Soto is literally translated as "of Soto" and there are many spelling variations: deSoto, de Soto, DeSoto).

It is believed that Hernando de Soto was probably born in the year 1500 in a region of Spain known as Extremadura. Soto was only about 14 years old when he first set sail from Spain, about 1514. His time spent fighting off both Spanish poachers and native peoples of Panama and Nicaragua left the young conquistador with riches and a thirst for gold. This was soon quenched when he joined Francisco Pizarro in his famous conquest of the Inca Empire in Peru. In 1537, now rich but growing bored, de Soto pressured the King to allow him to lead his own expedition into the heart of what is now the Southeastern United States. In exchange for De Soto personally financing the trip, King Charles V granted him both the governor-ship of Cuba, as well as ruler over the lands and peoples of La Florida, which included all of North America!

In June 1538, de Soto arrived in Cuba with 622 soldiers. There he purchased slaves (the expedition needed porters) and recruited camp followers (including a handful of women), artisans, priests, an engineer, 200 horses, a herd of pigs, and fierce war dogs.

On May 30, 1539, de Soto and his army arrived in Tampa Bay. In July 1539 de Soto left a temporary base of 100 men and supplies at Camp Ucita, and began his expedition to the interior of La Florida. Soon after, Juan Ortiz presented himself to de Soto. Juan Ortiz was a survivor from an earlier Spanish expedition and had been living among the Indians in the area for twelve years. Glad to be back among his own countrymen, he offered his services to de Soto and became invaluable as the expedition's interpreter.

Early on in the march, Soto's army became dependent on the Native Americans for food. When chiefdoms he encountered had little to give, de Soto's army took it by force, often enslaving the natives to help carry supplies to their next destination. Hungry and impatient for gold, they took any native guides that they thought were misleading them and threw them to the war dogs.

Although they passed through many areas that would have been suitable for a colony, de Soto insisted they continue searching for gold. At Cofitachequi, Hernando de Soto records meeting a female chief who welcomed his army and gave him fresh water pearls. But de Soto was convinced there were even wealthier chiefdoms to be found, and he pushed his army on. After the battle of Mabila in 1540, where 22 of his men were killed and many of his supplies were lost, Hernando de Soto refused to meet a supply fleet anchored at present-day Pensacola Bay, afraid his soldiers would desert him and return to Spain.

Native Americans inflicted even greater damage at Chicasa, where de Soto lost more soldiers, as well as horses, pigs, clothing, weapons, and food. In May of 1542, de Soto died of fever and was buried in the Mississippi River. The expedition died with him. His successor, Luis de Moscoso, made an attempt to reach Mexico by land, but turned back. In the summer of 1543,

the survivors built boats and abandoned over 500 of their Indian slaves in alien country. They sailed down the Mississippi River and reached the safety of Panuco, Mexico in September.

The Entrada was deemed a failure by the crown. No colonies or trade routes were established. No gold or riches were found. Over half of de Soto's men were killed during the four-year mission. The unintended legacy of the expedition was the information recorded by the survivors relating their adventures and encounters with the Native peoples in the rich lands of the American Southeast. More importantly, it was devastating to the native peoples of the Southeast. Thousands of Native Americans had been slaughtered by de Soto's troops. Many more would die of European diseases (such as smallpox, plague and influenza) for which they had no immunity. This caused the social, political and religious traditions of these peoples to crumble, forever changing the face of North America.



## **Cultural Glossary**

Conquest - Winning or conquering, usually by war or fighting

Conquistador – One of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish conquerors of the New World

Disease – A destructive process in an organism, an illness

Entrada – Spanish for foray; often used to describe the earliest Spanish explorations in the Americas in which they foraged and lived off the land as they went

Expedition – A journey or an excursion for a specific purpose, a trip

Deem – To think, believe, or judge

Legacy – Something handed down from previous generations or from the past

Ucita – De Soto's 1539 base camp at Tampa Bay. Comprised of 100 men, the camp was on the site of the Indian village of Ucita

War Dog – A vicious dog trained to fight in battle, used by the Spaniards

## Assessment

### Test-Hernando De Soto Expedition

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Write T for true statements and F for false statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Spain was the wealthiest nation in Europe and the most powerful nation abroad.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. De Soto was about 20 years old when he first set sail from Spain.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Juan Ortiz was an interpreter for the DeSoto Expedition.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. De Soto's army carried all of their food with them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. De Soto was very kind and friendly to the native guides.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In the battle of Mabila in 1540, 22 of De Soto's men were killed and many of his supplies were lost.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. De Soto found gold in America and returned to Spain as a very wealthy man.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Thousands of Native Americans were slaughtered by De Soto's troops.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Many more Native Americans dies of European disease for which they had no immunity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. De Soto's expedition greatly changed North America.

Fill In The Blanks.

- 11. The Spanish had a class of professional soldiers called \_\_\_\_\_.
- 12. The main thing that De Soto was looking for in North America was \_\_\_\_\_.
- 13. De Soto was buried in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 14. The animals that De Soto took with him were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
- 15. The De Soto Expedition was considered to be a \_\_\_\_\_.
- 16. The greatest gain from the De Soto Expedition was the \_\_\_\_\_  
taken back by the survivors about the land and people of the American Southeast.

## Test Answer Key

1. T
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. T
7. F
8. T
9. T
10. T

11. Conquistadors

12. gold

13. Mississippi River

14. horses, pigs, and dogs

15. failure

16. information