

# Unit 01: Natural Texas and It's People

## Historians at Work

**History** is the study of past events. Historians study the past to learn about human origins, our present, and to help us make decisions about the future. History involves more than stories about world-changing events. In fact, there are many diverse stories that make up humanity's **collective**, or shared, history—including your own story. However, not all understandings of history are based on accurate or complete information.

Historians often divide the past into eras. Each **era** is a period of time that is associated with a particular person, event, or quality. This type of **classification**, or arrangement of things into groups, helps historians study large patterns in human history. There are several different ways to organize events of the past. For example, the **chronological** form follows the flow of time.

Historians use different tools to study the past. These tools help them arrange information and present it clearly. Historians use graphs to present facts using numbers. Bar graphs compare numbers side by side. Line graphs show changes in something over time. Circle graphs show how a whole is divided into different parts. **Diagrams** are

another type of illustration that presents information in a visual way. One type is a cross-section diagram that shows what something might look like if you could see it cut in half. Tables organize information and make it easier to compare and understand. In a similar way, a **database** is a large collection of information about some group or activity. A **timeline** is used to show events in chronological order, whereas a **model** is used to show a three-dimensional representation of a place or event.



## Texas Geography

Geography is the study of the Earth. Geographers study **physical geography**, which involves learning about Earth's natural features, or **landforms**, as well as its vegetation and weather patterns. Geographers also study **human geography**, which focuses on people and their ways. For example, geographers may study a people's **culture**—its customs, ideas, beliefs, and skills.

Geographers use five themes to study a place. These themes offer different ways of looking at the same place and organizing information about it. One theme is location—where a place is. Every place has an **absolute location**, the precise spot on Earth the place is found. Place also includes **relative location**, or where a place is compared to some other place. The second theme, called place, studies the physical and human characteristics of an area. The third theme studies the interaction between people and the environment. The theme of movement deals with how people move from one place to another. The theme of region focuses on the ways certain features define different places.



Geographers use different tools to study the Earth. These tools help them arrange information and present it clearly. A **globe** is a sphere with a map of the Earth printed on it. Geographers use a **projection** to transfer curved surfaces onto flat maps, which they use to show all or part of the Earth on a flat surface. They also use graphs to present facts using numbers.

Texas is the second largest state in the United States. Most of Texas has hot summers and mild winters. In addition to several cultural regions, the state has four physical regions. The Coastal Plains region covers the eastern third of Texas. It is the largest region. The North Central Plains region is rolling and has many **buttes**, which are steep sided hills. The Great Plains region is dry and has few trees. Here, ranchers raise cattle, sheep, and goats on the grasslands, and some people farm. The smallest Texas region is the Mountains and Basins region, which is the driest in Texas. Forests grow on some mountainsides, which get more rain.

## The American Indians of Texas

Many thousands of years ago, Earth was in a long period of very cold weather called an **ice age**. Sea levels were lower, and a bridge of land connected Asia and North America. The people who came across this land bridge were likely the first people to reach the Americas.

These early people were **hunter-gatherers** (or nomads) who lived by finding wild



animals and plants to eat. They left no written records, and the time when they lived is called prehistory. **Archaeologists** study this time. They learn about these people by looking at **artifacts**, or the objects that the people left behind.

By the mid-1500s, several groups of American Indians lived in Texas. Each group lived in one of four culture regions. Within each region, different groups shared key cultural practices and features.

The Caddoes, Atakapans, and Wichitas lived in North and East Texas. They practiced some farming, and they also traded with neighboring groups.

The Jumango, Concho, and Tigua peoples were the three main groups living in West Texas. They lived in large buildings called pueblos. **Pueblos** are large groupings of brick homes made from **adobe**, a mixture of sun-dried mud and straw. The Puebloan peoples were good farmers and skilled traders.

The Western Gulf region is a dry plain. The Coahuiltecans and Karankawas lived in this region as hunter-gatherers. They lived in many small bands. The Karankawas also fished.

The Plains region cultures benefited from the use of the horse, which the Spanish introduced to North America. The main American Indian groups living in this region were the Tonkawas, Comanches, and Kiowas. Most of these groups depended on the buffalo for food, shelter, and other needs.



About 100,000 Native Americans live in Texas today. Most belong to groups that had not lived in Texas before. The Tiguas are the only group from the past that still lives in Texas. Other Texas Indians now live on **reservations** in Oklahoma. A reservation is land set aside by the government for American Indians to use.