



9-12: ANALYZE A PRIMARY WRITTEN SOURCE

A primary source is a work that gives original information. It is something that comes from a time being studied or from a person who was involved in the events being studied. Some primary sources supply factual information about a subject.

Directions: Read the sections from Pedro de Castañeda's account from Coronado's expedition and answer the questions listed below.

Observe Its Parts

Who wrote it?

Who read/received it?

When is it from?

Where is it from?

Try to Make Sense of It

What is it talking about?

Write one sentence summarizing this document.

Why did the author write it?

Quote evidence from the document that tells you this.

What was happening at the time in history this document was created?

Use It as Historical Evidence

What did you find out from this document that you might not learn anywhere else?

What other documents or historical evidence are you going to use to help you understand this event or topic?

Narrative of the Coronado Expedition

By Pedro de Castañeda of Nájera

AUTHOR: Pedro de Castañeda, a member and chronicler of the Coronado expedition (1540-1542), was a native of Nájera, a town in the state of Vizcaya in northern Spain. At the time of the organization of the Coronado expedition, Castañeda was at a Spanish outpost at Culiacán, in northwestern Mexico. He was married and had at least eight children. Castañeda's original account, *Relación de la jornada de Cibola compuesta por Pedro de Castañeda de Nájera donde se trata de todas aquellos poblados y ritos, y costumbres, la cual fué el año de 1540*, has been lost, but a copy made in 1596 is in the Lenox Library in New York City.



PREFACE

Narrative of the Expedition to Cibola,¹ undertaken in 1540, in which are described all those settlements, ceremonies, and customs by Pedro de Castañeda of Nájera.²

It seems to me, most noble Sir,³ that the desire to learn and the eagerness to acquire truthful information concerning matters or events that have taken place in remote regions, and of which there is little knowledge, is an appropriate thing indeed and one that is common in virtuous men. Therefore, I do not reproach some inquisitive persons who, doubtless with good intentions, have often importuned me considerably to explain and clarify for them some doubts generally held regarding specific matters which they had heard took place during events of the expedition to Cibola, or the new land, which the good viceroy, Don⁴ Antonio de Mendoza,⁵ – may he be with God in His glory – planned and ordered, and on which he sent Francisco Vázquez de Coronado as captain-general.

¹ The place name Cibola is likely a Spanish corruption of Shíwona (Land of the Zuñi) or Ashíwi, the Zuñi word for themselves.

² Nájera, a small historic community on the Najerilla River, tributary of the Ebro River in northern Spain. Castañeda's birth city was a royal seat in the early thirteenth century. King Fernando III was crowned there in 1217.

³ Castañeda addressed his narrative to a prominent but otherwise unnamed personage. A strong candidate was Alonso de Zorita, a powerful royal official in Mexico City. In the early 1560s, Zorita revived interest in Coronado's travels and even proposed a return expedition to the north.

⁴ A title denoting high rank, now a term of courtesy for a gentleman.

⁵ Antonia de Mendoza, an intelligent and humane nobleman, arrived in 1535 to serve as the powerful viceroy of New Spain. Mendoza disgraced one rival, Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán, and curbed the strategic ambitions of another, Hernán Cortés. After toppling Guzmán, Mendoza needed a new governor for this former rival's northwestern conquests. He chose one of his loyal companions from the 1535 voyage to the New World, a young gentleman from Salamanca named Don Francisco Vázquez de Coronado.

They are right, indeed, in wanting to learn the truth, for the reason that people very frequently magnify or belittle, without regard to reality, things which they have heard, perhaps from those who were not familiar with them. Matters of importance they reduce to nothing; and those that are insignificant, they convert into such remarkable ones that they appear incredible. This may very well have been caused by the fact that, as the land was not permanently occupied, no one has been willing to spend his time writing about its peculiarities. Wherefore there was lost the information of that which God did not permit – He knows why – that they should enjoy. Indeed, whoever should wish to busy himself writing about what happened in the expedition, as well as what was seen in those lands and the ceremonies and customs of the natives, would have plenty of substance with which to test his mind. And I believe that he would not lack material, which, if presented truthfully, would be so marvelous as to seem incredible.

Furthermore, I believe that some of the stories told are the result of the twenty years and more that have passed since that expedition took place.⁶ I say this because some make it an uninhabitable land, others have it bordering on La Florida, others on Greater India, which seems to be no small exaggeration. They may have some basis or cause on which to found their assertions. There are, likewise, those who tell about some very strange animals, while other who went on the expedition affirm that there are no such animals and that they have not been seen. Others differ as to the location of the provinces, and even as to the matter of customs and dress, attributing to one people what pertains to others. All of this has been the chief cause that moved me, most noble Sir, although late, to the desire of writing a brief general account for all those who are by nature inquisitive, and also to save myself the time of which I am deprived through inquiries. In it will be found things difficult to believe, indeed. All of which, or most of them, I have seen with my own eyes; others I have learned through reliable information, obtained from the natives themselves.

Realizing as I do that this little work of mine would be valueless in itself or lack acceptance unless it were favored and protected by a person whose authority would check the boldness of those who, without any consideration, give free rein to their wagging tongues, and knowing, as I do, under what great obligation I have always been and am to your Lordship, I humbly beg, as a true vassal and servant, that this little work be received under your protection.

The book is divided into three parts so that it may be better understood. The first will tell of the discovery of the new land and the force or army that was organized, of the entire expedition, and the captains who went with it. The second will describe the locations of the pueblos and provinces that were found, their ceremonies and customs, and the animals, fruits, and vegetation, and in what parts of the land they are found. The third will narrate the return of the army and the reasons for the abandonment of the land, although they were not valid, since this is the best place from which to explore the interior of the land in these western regions, as will be seen, and as has been made clear since that time. Finally there will be related some of the remarkable things that were observed and the route by which one may return more easily to discover what we did not see, which was the best.

⁶Since Coronado returned in 1542, Castañeda's two decades "and more" suggests he wrote his narrative around 1563 or 1564 at Culiacán.

May the Lord grant me His grace so that, with my limited understanding and small ability, I may, while telling the truth, please the learned and discriminating reader with this, my little work, if it be accepted by your Lordship. For my aim is not to gain fame as a good writer or rhetorician, but simply to strive to give a truthful account and to render your Lordship this small service. You will, I hope, receive this as from a faithful servant and soldier who was present there. Although not in polished style, I write what took place, what was heard, experience, seen, and discussed.

I have always noticed, and it is a fact, that often when we have something valuable in our possession and handle it freely, we do not esteem or appreciate it in all its worth, as we would if we could realize how much we would miss it if we were to lose it. Thus we gradually belittle its value, but once we have lost it and we miss its benefits, we feel it in our heart and are forever moody, thinking of ways and means to retrieve it. This, it seems to me, happened to all or most of those who went on that expedition, which Francisco Vázquez Coronado led in search of the Seven Cities, in the year of our Savior, Jesus Christ, 1540. For although they did not obtain the riches of which they had been told, they found the means to discover them and the beginning of a good land to settle in and from which to proceed onward. And since, after they returned here from the land which they had conquered and abandoned, time has made clear to them the location and nature of the region they reached, and the beginning of a fine land they had in their grasp, their hearts bemoan the fact that they lost such an opportune occasion. Since it is a fact that men see more at a bullfight when they climb on top of the fence than when they walk around in the bullring, now that they are outside and realize and appreciate the localities and resources amid which they had been, and seeing now that they can no longer enjoy or recover them, their time wasted, they rejoice in telling what they saw, even realizing how much they lost, especially those who today are as poor as when they first went there, and who have worked constantly, spending their time to no benefit. I say this because I believe that some of those who came from there would today be glad if they could go back and try to recover what they lost. Other would no enjoy knowing the reason why the land was discovered. And since I offered to narrate the story, I shall start at the beginning, which is as follows.

⁷ Hernan Cortés, the marquis of the valley of Oaxaca, spent vast sums in the 1530s exploring the Pacific and attempting to settle Baja California, the "Island of Pearls," From shipyards in Zihuatanejo and Acapulco, his fleets sailed west and north on voyages of discovery. The woeful Diego Hurtado de Mendoza fleet, which sailed for the distant Spice Islands in 1532, was completely lost. In 1539, Cortés's sea captain Francisco de Ulloa sailed the entire Gulf of California and discovered the Colorado River delta at its head. Officials surmised that an overland expedition northward might rendezvous with a fleet near this large river for supply purposes.

IV

How the people of Tiguex live, as well as those of the province of Tiguex and its environs.

Tiguex is a province of twelve pueblos, on the banks of a large and mighty river. Some pueblos are on one bank, some on the other. It is a spacious valley two leagues wide. To the east there is a snow-covered sierra, very high and rough.⁸ At its foot, on the other side, there are seven pueblos, four in the plain and three sheltered on the slope of the sierra.

Seven leagues to the north there is Quirix, with seven pueblos.⁹ Forty leagues to the northeast there is the province of Hemes, with seven pueblos.¹⁰ To the north or east, four leagues away, is found Acha.¹¹ To the southeast there is Tutahaco,¹² a province comprising eight pueblos. All these pueblos have, in general, the same ceremonies and customs, although some have practices among them not observed elsewhere. They are governed by the counsel of their elders. They build their pueblo houses in common. The women mix the plaster and erect the walls; the men bring the timbers and set them in place. They have no lime, but they mix a mortar made with charcoal ash and dirt, which is almost as good as if it were made with lime. For although the houses are four stories high, their walls are built only half a yard thick. The people gather large amounts of brush and reeds, set fire to it, and when it is between charcoal and ash, they throw in a large amount of water and dirt and mix it, then make round balls with it, which they use as stones when dry. They set them with this same mixture, so that it becomes like a mortar.¹³

The unmarried young men serve the pueblo in general. They bring the firewood that is needed and stack it up in the patios of the pueblos from where the women take it to their homes. These young men live in the estufas,¹⁴ which are located in the patios of the pueblo. They are built underground, either square or round, with pine columns. Some have been seen having twelve pillars, four to the cell, two fathoms thick; the common ones had three or four columns. The floors are paved with large smooth slabs like the baths in Europe. In the interior there is a fireplace like the binnacle of a boat where they burn a handful of brush with which they keep up the heat. They can remain inside the estufa as in a bath. The top is even with the ground. We saw some so large that they could be used for a game of ball.

When someone wishes to marry, he must have the permission of the rulers. The man must spin and weave a blanket and place it before the woman. She covers herself with it and becomes his wife. The houses are for the women; the estufas for the men. If a man repudiates his wife he must come to the estufa. It is punishable for the women to sleep in the estufas or to enter them for any other purpose than to bring food to their husbands or sons. The men spin and weave; the women take care of the children and prepare the

⁸ The Sandia and Manzano Mountains rise east of Tiguex, now overlooking the modern Isleta-Albuquerque-Bernalillo area.

⁹ The eastern Keresan-speaking pueblos, clustered along the Rio Grande north of Tiguex.

¹⁰ Jemez pueblos such as Zia and Jemez, located not where Casteñeda directed, but northwest along the Jemez River.

¹¹ Perhaps the Tiwa-speaking Picuris Pueblo to the south of Taos, again with a confused distance by the narrator.

¹² The Piro-Tompiro settlements along the lower Rio Grande.

¹³ Spanish colonists later introduced the adobe method, which used wooden molds to prepare uniform sun-dried bricks.

¹⁴ Kivas.

food. The land is so fertile that they need to cultivate only once a year, just for planting, for the snow falls and covers the fields, and the maize grows under the snow.¹⁵ In one year they harvest enough for seven years.¹⁶ There are numerous cranes, geese, crows, and thrushes which feed on the planted fields. With all this, when, in the following year, they proceed to plant again, they find the fields covered with maize, which they had not been able to gather fully.

There were in these provinces large numbers of native hens and cocks with gills.¹⁷ These, if not dressed or cut open, could be kept for sixty days after death without giving any smell. This was true also of human beings. And they could be kept even longer during the winter. The towns are free from filth because the inhabitants go outside to discharge excrement, and they urinate in earthen jars, which they empty outside the pueblo.

Their houses are well separated and extremely clean in the places where they cook and where they grind flour. They do this in a separate place or room in which there is a grinding place with three stones set in mortar. Three women come in, each going to her stone. One crushes the maize, the next grinds it, and the third grinds it finer. Before they come inside the door, they remove their shoes, tie up their hair and cover it, and shake their clothes. While they are grinding, a man sits at the door playing a flageolet,¹⁸ and the women move their stones, keeping time with the music, and all three sing together. They grind a large amount at one time. All their bread is made with flour, mixed with hot water, in the shape of wafers. They gather large quantities of herbs, which they dry and keep for their cooking throughout the year. There are no edible fruits in this land, except pine nuts. The natives have their own preachers. No sodomy was observed among them nor the sacrificing or eating of human flesh. They are not a cruel people, as was shown at Tiguex, where Francisco de Ovando remained dead for some forty days. When the pueblo was at last taken, the Spaniards found his body whole, among the native dead, without any other injury than the wound from which he died. He was as white as snow, without any bad smell.

From one of our Indians who had been a captive among these people for a year, I learned some details of their customs. In particular I asked him why the young women went about naked in that province when it was so cold; he answered that the maidens had to go about that way until they took a husband and that as soon as they had relations with a man, they covered themselves. In that region the men wore jackets of dressed deerskin and over them their robes. Throughout these provinces one finds pottery glazed with alcohol, and jugs of such elaborated designs and shapes that it was surprising.

¹⁵ High elevations and a short growing season (especially in the "Little Ice Age" of that time) may have led Puebloan farmers to select a cold-hardy maize and to plant as early as possible. As the ground warmed with spring, late snowfalls melted and even watered fields.

¹⁶ A good maize crop might yield three projected years of food, but perhaps a third was set aside for planting, another third for eating, and the last third for contingency storage or trade.

¹⁷ Turkeys.

¹⁸ A native bone flute.