

Name _____

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle

René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle was born in France in 1643. He grew up in a wealthy family with a lot of opportunities. In 1667 he set out for the new world. His older brother was already in New France and upon his arrival, La Salle was given a land grant.

La Salle became obsessed with the idea of finding a passage through North America to Asia. This passion led him to explore the many river systems of the continent. In 1669, La Salle formed a team of men and set off in canoes. Among the men with him was the cartographer, or map maker, Abbé René de Bréhan de Galinée. Soon after beginning their journey the men lost faith in La Salle. He did not seem to have a plan, but was instead just following his gut.

La Salle reported to his men that he was headed back to New France because he was very ill, but instead of returning to the French colony he disappeared for many months. When he did finally arrive back he reported finding the Mississippi River.

Later, La Salle was sent to build a fort for the French government on Lake Ontario that would allow them to control the fur trade in the region. After building Fort Frontenac he returned to France. While back in Europe, La Salle told fantastical stories about his discoveries, stretching the truth to get what he wanted: more money to explore and permission to build forts throughout North America.

After returning to the colony La Salle set out to explore the Great Lakes further. Along the way he built many forts, but his biggest adventure was about to begin.

In 1682, La Salle and a group of Frenchmen and Native Americans set out on a system of rivers until they found the Mississippi. Along the river La Salle ordered another fort built around modern day Memphis. Still the crew continued on down the Mississippi until they came to the mouth of the river. Here, La Salle held a ceremony naming the surrounding land Louisiana after King Louis XIV and claiming it for France. The king, however, was not impressed.

Nonetheless, La Salle was ordered to form a colony on the Mississippi. He set off with about three hundred French colonists, but instead of returning to Louisiana they accidentally landed in what is now Texas. Here they built Fort St. Louis. This settlement was considered a failure and most colonists either died or left. La Salle died in 1687 from a gunshot.

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What text feature could the author have included to help the reader understand the places La Salle built forts?

Why was it important to La Salle to find a passage to Asia through North America?

What detail supports the idea that his men lost faith in La Salle?

What was La Salle's most important discovery?

What transition word is used in the last paragraph?

What can you infer about life at Fort St. Louis?



Choose two European explorers you have learned about and make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting them.

Name _____

The First African in Texas

The first African to step foot in Texas went by many names including Estevanico, Black Stephen, and Stephen the Moor, but he was best known as simply Esteban. Esteban was born in Morocco and practiced the religion of Islam. While still very young, he was kidnapped and enslaved by Portuguese colonizers who brought him with them back to Spain.

When he was in his twenties Esteban was sold to a new enslaver, Andres Dorantes de Carranza, who had dreams of traveling to the new world. In 1528, they both set out on ships barely seaworthy with the expedition of Cabeza de Vaca. The group barely survived the trip across the Atlantic and became shipwrecked off the coast of Florida. Determined to press on, they built crude ships and continued to travel west in the Gulf of Mexico. Eventually the surviving men found what is now Galveston Island where they waded to shore. They were the first Europeans to reach Texas.

Esteban, and the rest of the survivors, began an eight year trek through Texas and the southwest region of North America. While other explorers and their crews had mapped the Texas coastline, this venture made Esteban the undoubted first African in Texas.

The men on this expedition nearly died many times. The climate was tough and they often did not have enough food or water. They walked many miles every day barefoot.

There are very few details known about Esteban's role in the expedition. The explorers who kept journals did not mention him more than as a servant. They instead wrote about their own bravery and adventure.

What is known about Esteban is that he was the first black man to travel throughout the North American southwest. While treated poorly by those who enslaved him, he was still a trusted member of the group who helped to communicate with Native Americans.

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Esteban. (2019, December 15). Retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://www.pvamu.edu/tiphc/research-projects/the-diaspora-coming-to-texas/esteban/>

What text feature could the author have included to help the reader better understand the events of Esteban's life?

How did Esteban become the first African in Texas?

How would you summarize this passage?

Why do you think Esteban's story isn't well known?

What can you infer about how Esteban felt when he waded ashore at Galveston Island?



All points in history have stories that aren't known widely. Write a passage about a current event you think may not be remembered in the future.