

CABEZA DE VACA



BIOGRAPHY

CABEZA DE VACA

In 1528, the Spanish landed a major colonizing expedition at Tampa Bay. It was led by Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca. He was a Spanish nobleman born in 1490, who had been a soldier before an explorer.

The Native Americans successfully destroyed de Vaca's expedition by refusing to trade with the Spanish, and most of the would-be colonizers starved because they did not know how to grow crops in land that was unfamiliar to them.

De Vaca and a few other survivors made their way to Galveston Island, where de Vaca spent the next five years living with the Native Americans, first as a slave, and then as a trader in coral and seashells. Then de Vaca heard of four other survivors of the expedition living nearby. He joined up with the survivors, and the five men spent the next two years walking to the Spanish colonies in northern Mexico, traveling across the dry plains of Texas and the deserts of New Mexico.

Almost alone among conquistadors, de Vaca gained a great respect for the Native American peoples. He wrote a book about his experiences that remains a bestseller today.

De Vaca also spent time as a governor in Mexican territory, but he was thought of as corrupt. So he returned to Spain, where he was a judge in the years leading up to his death in 1556 or 1557.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'refusing'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'refusing' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'refusing'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'refusing'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'refusing' means.

Try this for other words, too. 2

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: unfamiliar	unknown

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

Then de Vaca joined up with another expedition heading for Spanish colonies in Mexico.

The expedition was a failure because the Native Americans refused to trade with the Spanish.

De Vaca and others then traveled to Galveston Island and spent time with the Native Americans there.

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was a Spanish nobleman born in 1490.

De Vaca wrote about his experiences, partly to tell people that he thought Native Americans were being mistreated.

The Spanish also starved because they could not grow crops.

In 1528, de Vaca was part of a Spanish expedition to colonize North America.

Get to the facts

1 When did the Spanish land at Tampa Bay?

2 When was de Vaca born?

3 Who destroyed de Vaca's expedition?

4 What did de Vaca trade?

5 Who did de Vaca have respect for?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Walking in the desert

We had been walking through the desert for weeks now. I was hot and thirsty, and I thought I could not go on any longer. But then, through the heat haze, I saw something on the horizon...
(now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

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- b From that sentence, suggest what 'refusing' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'refusing'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'refusing'.
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Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – unfamiliar Synonym – unknown

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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Get to the facts:

- 1 When did the Spanish land at Tampa Bay?
- 2 When was Cabeza de Vaca born?
- 3 Who destroyed de Vaca's expedition?
- 4 What did de Vaca trade?
- 5 Who did de Vaca have respect for?

Make a story...

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Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca

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