

GASPAR PÉREZ DE VILLAGRÁ



BIOGRAPHY

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Gaspar Pérez de Villagrá was born near Mexico City in New Spain, in 1555. He was educated in Europe, before returning to New Spain, where he became second-in-command to the explorer Juan de Oñate.

It was Juan de Oñate who organized a Spanish expedition north from Mexico to explore and conquer what is now New Mexico. The expedition set out in 1598. After months of trekking through mountains and deserts, the explorers met the Rio Grande River in the area that is now Texas.

After setting up a temporary base at San Juan, Villagrá set out in search of resources and riches in the area. In 1607, the Spanish explorers moved their base to Santa Fe. Villagrá and the other explorers found little of interest or use in their search, which led to some rebellion and violent clashes.

At one point, Villagrá found himself alone in the desert. He wandered in search of Oñate, and was found close to death after several days without food or water.

Villagrá and the other Spanish also encountered Native Americans, including the Pueblo people. The Spanish took their food and land, which caused them to fight back against the Spanish. In 1599, there was a bloody battle that resulted in the Spanish defeating the Pueblo peoples and forcing them from their lands.

Villagrá later wrote about this battle, and other key events of the Oñate colonizing expedition, in his epic poem 'History of New Mexico'. He wrote the poem in 1610, partly with the aim of justifying the Spanish colonization of New Mexico.

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 'trekking'.

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

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

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

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'trekking' 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: defeating	conquering

Sequencing

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

During the expedition, the explorers saw the Rio Grande River.

Villagr  later wrote about the battle and the expedition in an epic poem.

In 1598, O ate and Villagr  led an expedition into New Mexico.

Gaspar P rez de Villagr  was born in New Spain in 1555.

In the end, the Spanish defeated the Native American peoples in a battle.

Villagr  was second-in-command to the explorer Juan de O ate.

The Spanish explorers fought with the Native American peoples.

Get to the facts

1 Where was Villagr  born?

2 Who was Villagr  second-in-command to?

3 When did the expedition set off?

4 Where did the explorers have their base in 1607?

5 What was the name of Villagr 's poem?

Make a story...

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

In the desert

I was alone in the desert. All my friends had been captured or got lost. I was running out of water, and the sun was beating down on me... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

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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 – defeating Synonym – conquering

Sequencing:

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