

**Introduction to Caddo Mounds** (from *Caddo Mounds Teaching with Historic Places Master Lesson Plan*)

A Regional Center of the Mississippian Culture (800-1300 A.D.)

Alongside Highway 21 in northeast Texas, three earthen mounds stand on the prairie as a testament to the once bustling village and ceremonial center that occupied this region. The 397-acre Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, which sits on a high alluvial terrace, about one mile north northeast of the Neches River, was at one time a large civic and ceremonial center of the Caddo. The Caddo were the westernmost peoples of the Mississippian culture, which stretched eastward to Georgia and northern Florida and as far north as Illinois and Wisconsin (refer to Map 1). The Caddo shared many cultural affiliations with the Mississippian tradition including; intensive agriculture, large, well-organized villages, flat-topped earthen mounds, and numerous material objects of distinctive, skilled manufacture.

During the sites peak of occupation (800-1300 A.D.), Caddo Mounds consisted of a large village of beehive-like thatch houses, flat-topped temple mounds and a burial mound set apart from the village. Today, the site consists of two temple mounds, known as the High and Low Temple Mounds, a Burial Mound, a large portion of the village area, as well as a quarry (or borrow pit) and several natural springs.

As a result of its geographic location, Caddo Mounds developed into a thriving regional trade center within the Mississippian culture sphere. Archeological evidence recovered from the mounds including marine shell from the Gulf Coast and copper from the northern Plains region demonstrate its significance in facilitating trade with both local and distant groups. When Europeans arrived in Caddo territory, the well-traversed trade routes leading to and from the Caddo Mounds site evolved into what today is known as the historic *El Camino Real de los Tejas*. This roadway system supported European settlements and economic and political growth in the State of Texas for over 300 years.

The Caddo and their culture are an important part of Texas' heritage. These mounds serve as an example of a Caddo civic, economic and ceremonial site as well as an entry point for learning more about these people and their role in Texas and American history. At their peak, ca. 1100 A.D., the Caddo were the most highly developed prehistoric culture known within the present state of Texas. Students can see the Caddo's importance in early Texas reflected in the state's name. *Tejas* is the Spanish spelling of a Caddo word *taysha*, which means "friend" or "ally". In the seventeenth century the Spanish knew the westernmost Caddo peoples as "the great kingdom of *Tejas*" and the name lived on to become what is now the 28th state of the United States—Texas.

**About the Lesson**

This lesson was written by Amy Simmons, an education consultant, and is based in part on information received at a teachers' workshop given at Caddo Mounds State Historic Site in 2015. This lesson provides material about the Caddo storytelling practice and how the stories themselves can be related to modern day stories and experiences.

**Where it fits into the curriculum**

TEK: 113.13

15A- identify select stories, poems and other examples of local cultural heritage.

16A- recognize different purposes of text and media.

18E- interpret oral material by comparing and contrasting.

19A- express ideas orally based on knowledge and experiences.

19B- create written stories to express ideas.

**Objectives for students**

1. Students will be able to tell why storytelling is an important aspect of the Caddo culture.
2. Students will be able to make connections with the Caddo story and other texts, self and their world.

**Setting the Stage**

[www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/)

This site has some wonderful images and information to give students a general understanding of the Caddo Indians before beginning the lesson.

**Locating the Site**

Share the following picture with students.



Compare the size of the Caddo homeland to where the students live. Also, if you live in Texas, talk about the distance from where you live to where the Caddo lived.

**Getting Started**

1. Ask your students about their family stories, e.g. "Does your family have a story that they tell over and over? Maybe it is about your mom or dad when they were little or maybe it's about something funny that a pet has done."
2. Allow for students to respond.
3. Write down each student's main idea of their personal story on chart paper or the board. It needs to be somewhere the students can refer to it at a later time.
4. You can tell a personal story about yourself at this point if you wish to do so. Students

love to hear about teachers when they were little.

Begin the lesson by telling the students that they will hear a story from long ago. A story that has been told over and over by a group of people called the Caddo Indians.

### Activities

1. Because of the age of the students we concentrate on “entertain and inform”. Label two areas of the room, one with “Inform” and one with “Entertain”. Give each student a book in one of these categories. Have students make a prediction about what category the book belongs in based only on the cover of the book. Go around the room and read the title of each book and see if they want to change their category. Discuss why they chose the category and confirm their decision or guide them to the correct category.
2. Bring students back together and discuss what it looks like when we share stories. Have them refer back to the list of their personal family stories. For example, we sit in a circle or stand around the storyteller, we look at the storyteller, sometimes props are used, and sometimes we are outside. Accept all reasonable comments.
3. If possible take class outside for the actual storytelling. Have the students sit in a circle around you, the storyteller. Because of the age of the students using tree stumps as seats and a paper fire in the middle would be a good way to give the students an idea of what it could have been like in a Caddo village. Begin with introducing the Caddo by saying the following:

*A long, long time ago there were some people who lived in East Texas called the Caddo. The Caddo were Native Americans. One of the special things about the Caddo is they were storytellers. They told stories all the time to explain why things in their world were the way they were. The first Caddo people could not read or write so storytelling was important to their people because that is how they learned about the world. There are many Caddo stories, some to inform and some to entertain but we are going to only hear one today.*

Have a “fire” that you put in the middle of the circle and begin to tell *Why Coyote Stopped Imitating his Friends*. I have attached a copy of the story or you can find it at [www.indians.org](http://www.indians.org)

4. After hearing the story, have students participate in a “Think, Pair, Share” activity. Instruct the students to **THINK** about the story they just heard and decide if they think it was a story to entertain or inform. **PAIR** the students with partners. Have them turn to their partner and **SHARE** what they **THINK** and why they think the way they do.
5. As a class, refer to the list of personal family stories that students told at the beginning of the lesson and make connections with those and the Caddo story students just heard. This is called TEXT to SELF.

Extension activities:

1. As a class make a mural of a Caddo village where the people are engaged in storytelling.
2. Each day look at one section of the [www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/). Have students draw a representation of what they learned that day. After each section of the website has been explored and students have added their artwork to the mural hang it up in classroom and have students sit in front of it for reading class as they read.

### **Putting It All Together (Evaluation)**

Use the Text to Self and Text to Text graphic organizer and have students complete it using the *Why Coyote Stopped Imitating his Friends*. In the Text to Self-section students draw a picture of a scene from the Caddo story and a picture of a personal experience they have had that reminds them of the scene they chose from the Caddo story. They do the same in the Text to Text section using another story they have heard that reminds them of the Caddo story. The graphic organizer is included. I used one from [www.teacherspayteachers.com](http://www.teacherspayteachers.com)

### **Visiting the site** (information provided by Caddo Mounds)

#### **Pre visit activity**

Hand each student a sheet of Manila paper. Say this statement to them; "I want you to draw an Indian and an Indian house." Of course you will probably get a man with feathers and a teepee. Display these in the classroom so they can easily be seen especially when you arrive back from your trip to the Caddo Mounds in Alto, Texas.

#### **Post visit activity**

Draw student's attention to their drawings that they did before their visit to the Caddo Mounds. Ask them what they think about them. Ask students what they would change. Have them draw another drawing about the Caddo Indian and their house. Compare and contrast the first drawing with the second drawing guiding the students to make the connection that not all Native Americans were the same, just like not all of us are the same.

### **Supplementary Resources**

[www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/](http://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/caddo/)

[www.indians.org](http://www.indians.org)

Why Coyote Stopped Imitating His Friends - <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-HTML-Legends/WhyCoyoteStoppedImitatingHisFriends-Caddo.html>

Graphic organizer used in "Putting It All Together" [www.teacherspayteachers.com](http://www.teacherspayteachers.com)