

The First Americans



Content Objectives

- 1.) I will be able to explain how and why early humans migrated to what is now North and South America.
- 2.) I will be able to explain why groups of people would be motivated to migrate to a new place.

Lesson Procedures

Materials:

Map Worksheet for each student

Passage for each student

Exit Slip for each student

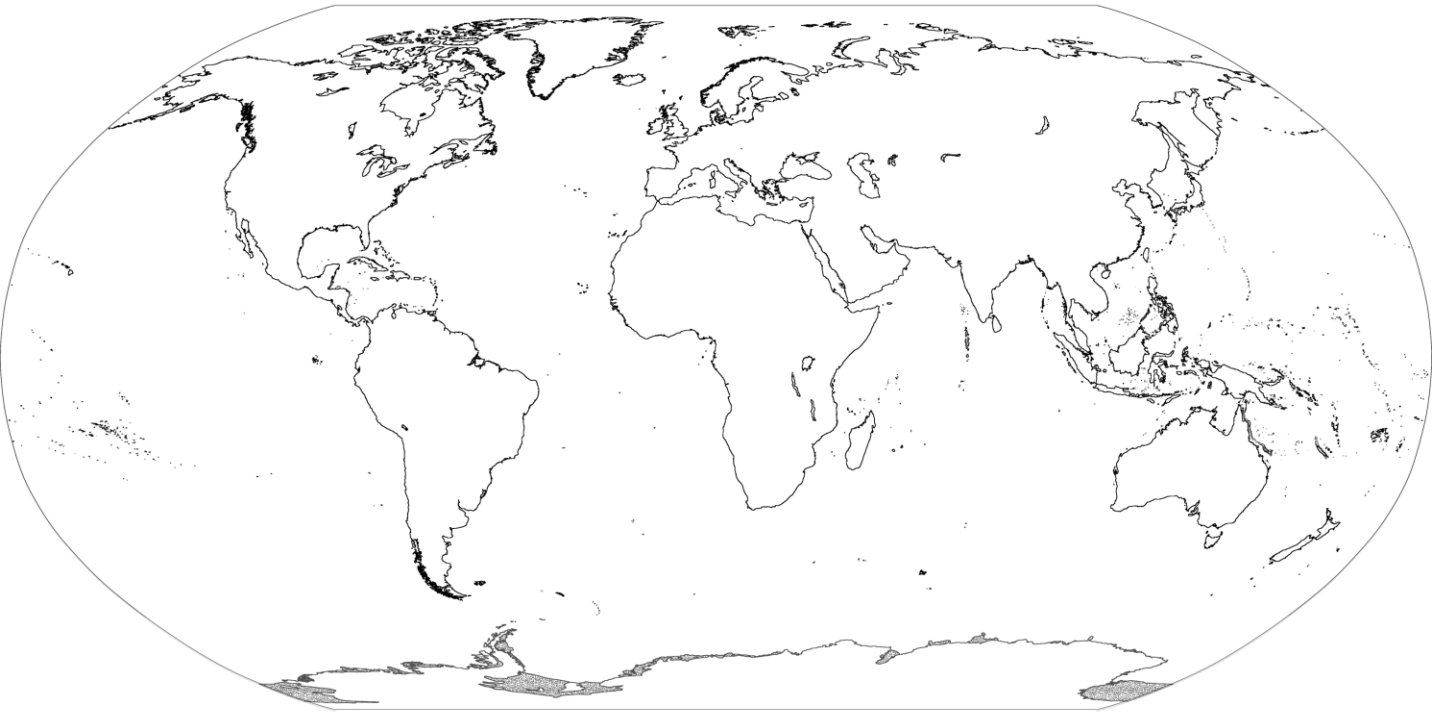
PowerPoint Presentation and Internet Access for YouTube clips

Yellow, Green, Blue and Pink Highlighters

- 1.) Begin with the PowerPoint Presentation and student Map Worksheet. Guide students through filling out their worksheets by making a prediction about how and why the first Americans migrated to the Americas. They will check their predictions through watching video clips from Incredible Human Journey: Episode 5 (**NOTE:** You can show a portion of the video until it explains Beringia and then stop if your are pressed for time. If you have a lot of time, you may want to show the entire documentary.)
- 2.) When the PowerPoint is finished, students will complete a guided reading task with a partner. Distribute a copy of the passage to each student for them to highlight. If your copy abilities are limited, consider printing a class set and placing them in plastic page protectors. This will allow students to mark on the text with dry erase markers and then erase them for the next class if needed.
- 3.) Assessment: Distribute the exit slips to students and have them fill them out as an assessment of what they have learned.

An Unbelievable Journey

How did people get to the Americas in the first place?



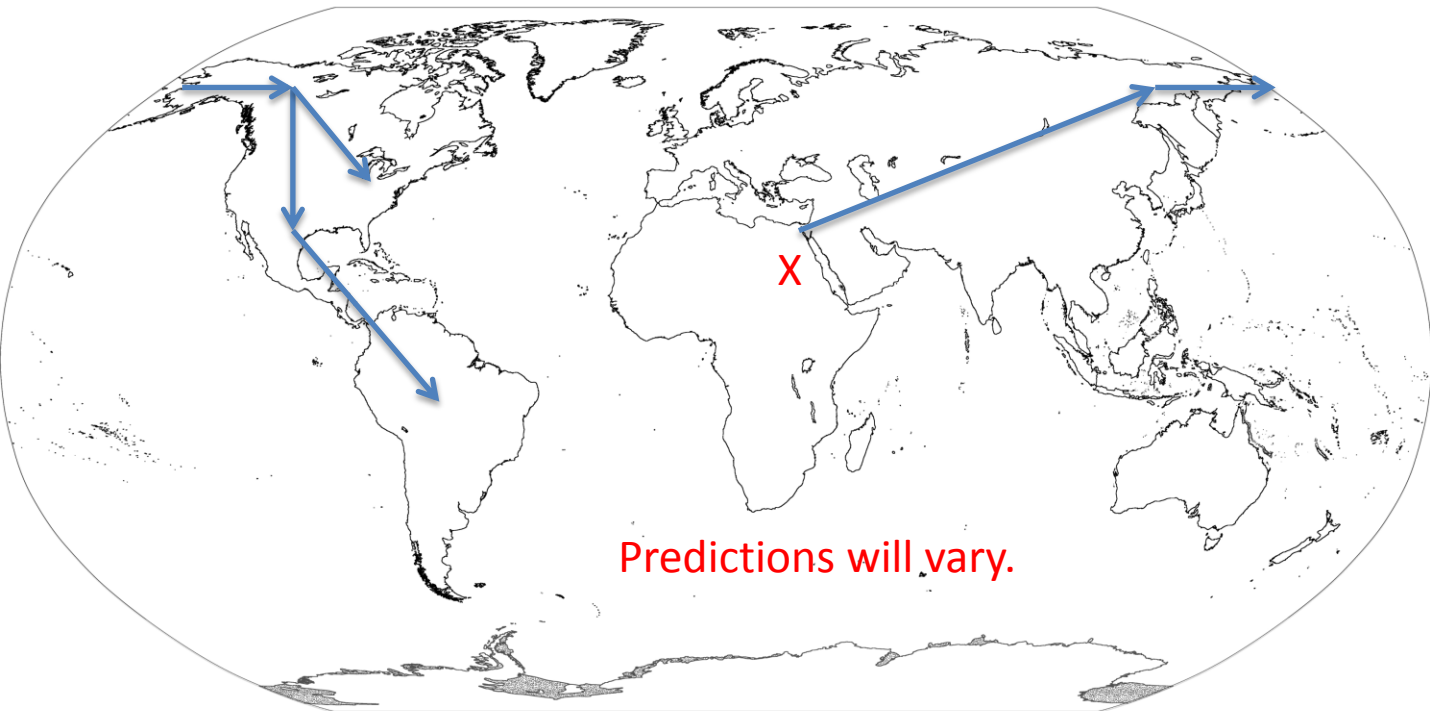
MAP KEY

----- Predicted migration route X -Earliest Known People
_____ Actual migration route

What are some possible motivations to move from one place to another? In other words, why might people have moved all the way from Africa or the Middle East to the Americas during the last Ice Age? Brainstorm some ideas below.

An Unbelievable Journey

How did people get to the Americas in the first place?



MAP KEY

- Predicted migration route X -Earliest Known People
_____ Actual migration route

What are some possible motivations to move from one place to another? In other words, why might people have moved all the way from Africa or the Middle East to the Americas during the last Ice Age? Brainstorm some ideas below. Then, after class discussion, circle the idea that is the actual reason why people moved to the Americas.

- *Scarcity of Resources*
- *Competition over Resources (war, rival groups, etc.)*
- *Environmental Conditions (drought, floods, erosion, etc.)*
- *Overpopulation in current location*
- *Chasing food sources (Nomadic people)*
- *Trading opportunities with other groups*

Who Were the First North Americans?

A lot of people credit Christopher Columbus with the discovery of America. They say that he was the *first* to reach the New World. If that were true, whenever he arrived in the Americas, he would have been greeted by sandy beaches and deep, unsettled woodlands that had never been touched by human hands, or trod under human feet. He could have waltzed in and planted the Spanish flag wherever he pleased without any conflict. But when he arrived, he was not alone. He met people who had been living in North and South America for thousands of years before he had ever dreamed of setting sail on the high seas. These tribes were the first-ever human inhabitants of the Americas and they became old pros at adapting to their environments and using the land to survive. But how did they get to the Americas in the first place?



Depicted above is Christopher Columbus' encounter with the Taino people. While the Americas may have been new to Columbus, they had already been settled by Natives.

If we want to be totally fair, it was probably thanks to a herd of thundering mammoth that the Americas were ever populated with people. Time warp back to the Ice Age, when hunter gatherers, called nomads, chased their food around the face of the earth because it was on four legs (or two). This was before farming had been invented, so it wasn't possible for people to settle down into one area. They were drifters, who really had no say in where they would spend their next night – it was up to the herd they were following. Scientists think that the first people to set foot in the Americas probably did not even realize they were standing on a “new land” or a “separate continent” when they arrived. That's because at that time, the land was different. Remember, this migration, or mass-move, happened during an Ice Age. So, how might the land at that time allow for people from Siberia, which is in Asia, to *walk* into North America?

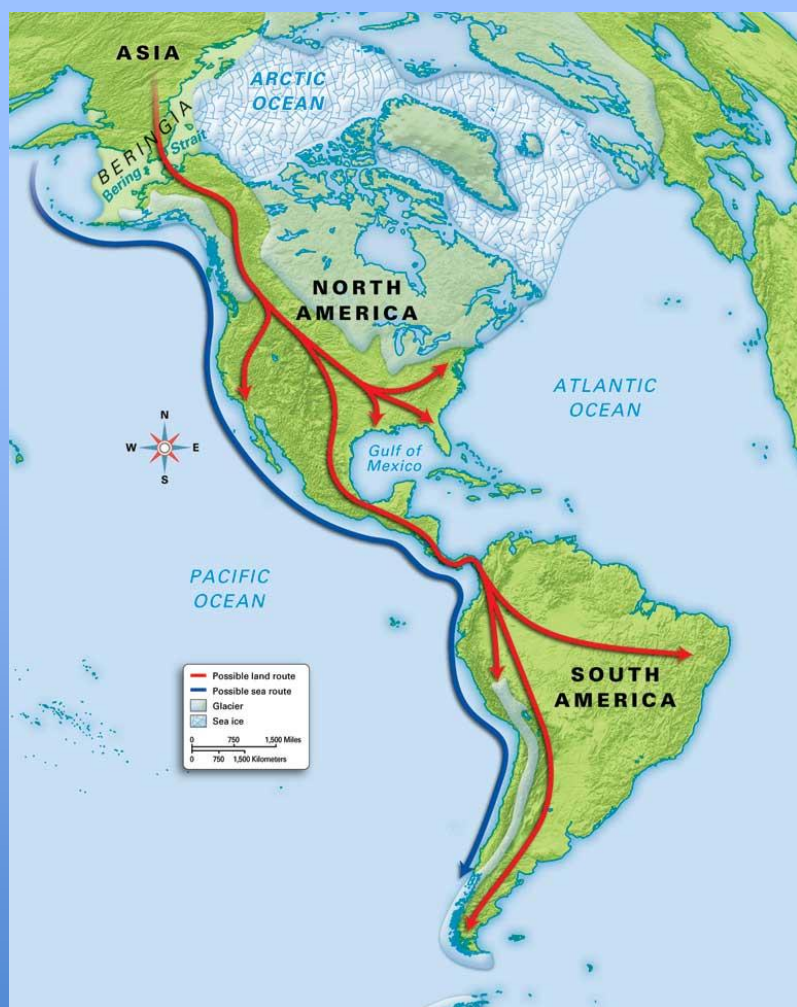


Early hunter-gatherers, called nomads, probably followed large mammals, such as the mammoth, across Beringia.

These early people crossed what is perhaps the most impressive, disappearing bridge ever known: Beringia. Of course, we know that the Pacific Ocean separates Asia from the Americas, but during the Ice Age, much of the land was covered in giant ice blankets, and even some bodies of water were sheets of ice instead of their normal, flowing, churning selves. So, with much of the world's water caught up in ice blankets and frozen into glaciers, the oceans weren't quite as deep as they are today, meaning that more land was exposed along the coastlines.

In some areas, where the water was really shallow, whole pieces of land might have been exposed. This is what happened with Beringia. Miles and miles of land that had once been at the bottom of a shallow sea, were now exposed to open air and sunshine. Over a long period of time, short grasses and shrubs began to grow on this “land bridge” that made a perfect snack for herds of hungry mammoth. Before they knew it, these mammoth, followed closely by their human predators, left Asia and were walking the “ocean floor”, on their way to a new land: the Americas.

Scientists and Archaeologists have been studying similarities between modern day Russians and Native Alaskans as proof that the Bering Land Bridge was indeed a connection between the two places thousands of years ago. As it turns out, people across the ocean on either side of what was once Beringia speak similar languages, and have similar cultural characteristics and traditions. This suggests that they came from the same group of people long ago. Today, the United States has made a national park to preserve the historic and cultural remains of the Bering Land Bridge along our coast.



The map above illustrates migration routes taken by the earliest North Americans. According to this map, they must have originated from Asia and crossed the Bering Land Bridge (shown in red), then dispersed throughout the Americas. What other route is possible according to the map?

Text Marking Guide

Read the article with a partner out loud. Trade off the responsibility of reading each paragraph.

Use highlighters to find textual evidence that answers the following questions:

- 1.) Yellow: What motivated early people to settle the Americas?
- 2.) Green: How was it possible for early people to walk to North America from Asia?
- 3.) Blue: How do we know that Columbus did not technically discover the Americas?
- 4.) Pink: What other evidence suggests that the first Americans were from Asia?

Who Were the First North Americans?

A lot of people credit Christopher Columbus with the discovery of America. They say that he was the *first* to reach the New World. If that were true, whenever he arrived in the Americas, he would have been greeted by sandy beaches and deep, unsettled woodlands that had never been touched by human hands, or trod under human feet. He could have waltzed in and planted the Spanish flag wherever he pleased without any conflict. **But when he arrived, he was not alone. He met people who had been living in North and South America for thousands of years before he had ever dreamed of setting sail on the high seas.** These tribes were the first-ever human inhabitants of the Americas and they became old pros at adapting to their environments and using the land to survive. But how did they get to the Americas in the first place?



Depicted above is Christopher Columbus' encounter with the Taino people. While the Americas may have been new to Columbus, they had already been settled by Natives.

If we want to be totally fair, **it was probably thanks to a herd of thundering mammoth that the Americas were ever populated with people.** Time warp back to the Ice Age, when hunter gatherers, called nomads, chased their food around the face of the earth because it was on **four legs (or two).** This was before farming had been invented, so it wasn't possible for people to settle down into one area. They were drifters, who really had no say in where they would spend their next night – it was up to the herd they were following. Scientists think that the first people to set foot in the Americas probably did not even realize they were standing on a “new land” or a “separate continent” when they arrived. That's because at that time, the land was different. Remember, this migration, or mass-move, happened during an Ice Age. So, how might the land at that time allow for people from Siberia, which is in Asia, to *walk* into North America?

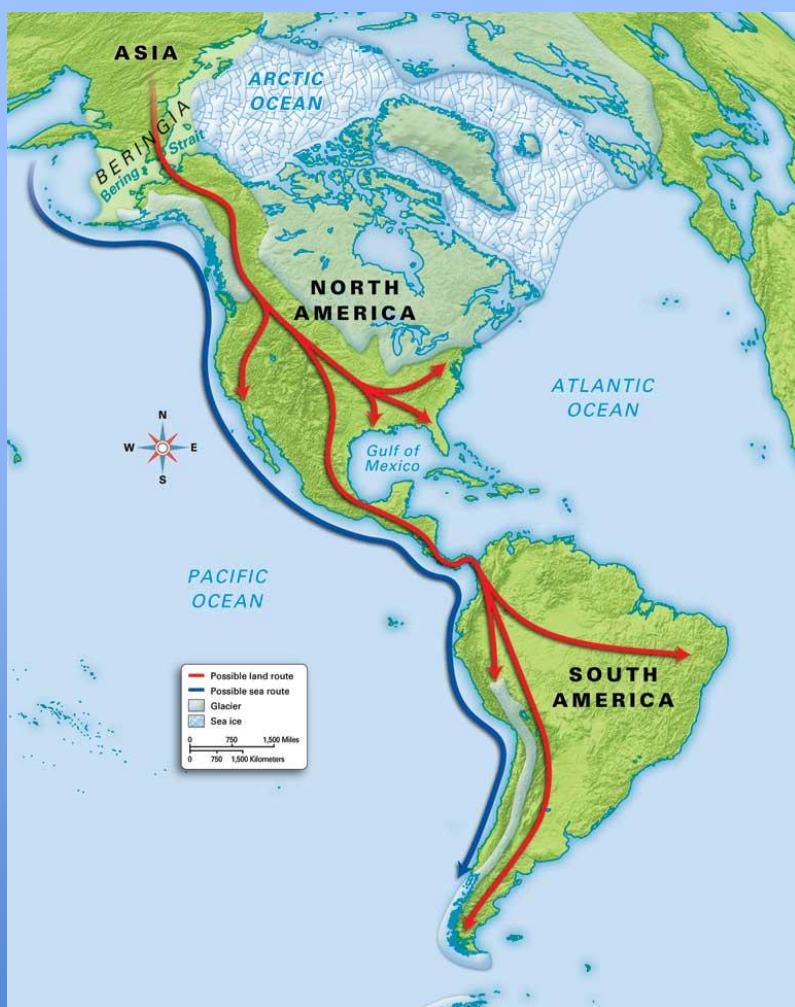


Early hunter-gatherers, called nomads, probably followed large mammals, such as the mammoth, across Beringia.

These early people crossed what is perhaps the most impressive, disappearing bridge ever known: Beringia. Of course, we know that the Pacific Ocean separates Asia from the Americas, but during the Ice Age, much of the land was covered in giant ice blankets, and even some bodies of water were sheets of ice instead of their normal, flowing, churning selves. So, with much of the world's water caught up in ice blankets and frozen into glaciers, the oceans weren't quite as deep as they are today, meaning that more land was exposed along the coastlines.

In some areas, where the water was really shallow, whole pieces of land might have been exposed. This is what happened with Beringia. Miles and miles of land that had once been at the bottom of a shallow sea, were now exposed to open air and sunshine. Over a long period of time, short grasses and shrubs began to grow on this “land bridge” that made a perfect snack for herds of hungry mammoth. Before they knew it, these mammoth, followed closely by their human predators, left Asia and were walking the “ocean floor”, on their way to a new land: the Americas.

Scientists and Archaeologists have been studying similarities between modern day Russians and Native Alaskans as proof that the Bering Land Bridge was indeed a connection between the two places thousands of years ago. **As it turns out, people across the ocean on either side of what was once Beringia speak similar languages, and have similar cultural characteristics and traditions. This suggests that they came from the same group of people long ago.** Today, the United States has made a national park to preserve the historic and cultural remains of the Bering Land Bridge along our coast.



The map above illustrates migration routes taken by the earliest North Americans. According to this map, they must have originated from Asia and crossed the Bering Land Bridge (shown in red), then dispersed throughout the Americas. What other route is possible according to the map?

Text Marking Guide

Read the article with a partner out loud. Trade off the responsibility of reading each paragraph.

Use highlighters to find textual evidence that answers the following questions:

- 1.) Yellow: What motivated early people to settle the Americas?
- 2.) Green: How was it possible for early people to walk to North America from Asia?
- 3.) Blue: How do we know that Columbus did not technically discover the Americas?
- 4.) Pink: What other evidence suggests that the first Americans were from Asia?

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

EXIT SLIP

The first humans originated in what is now _____. They _____ across a _____ called _____ because they were _____, meaning they chased their _____. Eventually, they spread throughout the Americas and became the diverse _____ that _____ encountered when he “discovered” the Americas in the 1400’s.

WORD BANK

- Nomadic
- Africa
- Columbus
- Food source
- Migrated
- Tribes
- Beringia
- Land Bridge

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

EXIT SLIP

The first humans originated in what is now _____. They _____ across a _____ called _____ because they were _____, meaning they chased their _____. Eventually, they spread throughout the Americas and became the diverse _____ that _____ encountered when he “discovered” the Americas in the 1400’s.

WORD BANK

- Nomadic
- Africa
- Columbus
- Food source
- Migrated
- Tribes
- Beringia
- Land Bridge

Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

EXIT SLIP

The first humans originated in what is now _____. They _____ across a _____ called _____ because they were _____, meaning they chased their _____. Eventually, they spread throughout the Americas and became the diverse _____ that _____ encountered when he “discovered” the Americas in the 1400’s.

WORD BANK

- Nomadic
- Africa
- Columbus
- Food source
- Migrated
- Tribes
- Beringia
- Land Bridge

Answer Key

EXIT SLIP

The first humans originated in what is now Africa. They migrated across a land bridge called Beringia because they were nomadic, meaning they chased their food source. Eventually, they spread throughout the Americas and became the diverse tribes that Columbus encountered when he “discovered” the Americas in the 1400’s.

WORD BANK

-Nomadic -Africa -Columbus -Food source -Migrated -Tribes
-Beringia -Land Bridge