

1. How did European explorers respond to the language, clothing, customs, dwellings, and food of the Native American peoples?

The Europeans responded in many different ways. Some, like the Spanish conquistadors, assumed that because of their less advanced technology, the native South Americans were simple people, even savages. They saw them as people to be conquered, robbed, and converted to Christianity. Elsewhere, the Pilgrims at Plymouth learned to admire and work with their Native American neighbors. In conclusion, though, the two groups clashed quite a bit, and the Europeans usually ended up coming out on top.

2. How did the Native Americans respond to the language, clothing, and customs of the explorers?

The Native Americans saw them, in some cases, as in the Aztec society, as their gods. They thought the Spanish conquistadors were a part of their pantheon. Then they found out that they were just men, and violent, gold-hungry men at that. Elsewhere, the Europeans were regarded just as different people, although their conflicting ideas about ownership led to many disputes with the settlers.

3. What are some of the difficulties in trying to understand someone from a different culture?

You might have different beliefs, which may or may not be conflicting, which set you apart. You might look different, and wear different clothes. You might have different ideas about ownership, and the structure of your society might be different. You will probably speak a different language, although this is not as big a barrier as there being differences in your culture. Learning to understand other cultures is the first step to forming a peaceful relationship with that culture.

4. Why was it difficult for European explorers of the 15th and 16th centuries to understand the diversity of the native peoples who lived in the Americas?

There are so many different tribes in the Americas, and they each have a distinct culture, language and customs. The members of a tribe in the north would have great difficulty understanding the members of a tribe in the south. The settlers would slowly learn the language of the Native American tribe in their area, and then find out that this only applied to their specific area and not the whole continent.

5. How do historians and archaeologists know what the explorers experienced? How do they know what the Native American peoples experienced?

We know about what the settlers experienced by the records they kept. Books, logs, journals and pictures from that era all paint a picture of the struggles of the colonists. We can find out about the Native American cultures in two ways, by reading what the colonists wrote about them (which may not be entirely truthful), and by talking to the descendants of the Native Americans.

6. What do you want to know about the Americas prior to the era of European exploration? How can you find out?

I have found out a lot about this period, and what I would really like to find out is who really was the true discoverer of America. But since nobody knows who that was for sure, I can't really find out!

Sources:

Websites:

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/1.asp>

<http://college.cengage.com/history/lecturepoints/>

Books:

A History of the American People by Paul Johnson

American History Made Simple by Jack C. Estrin

American History: The Easy Way by William O. Kellogg

People:

Andy Drysdale, Curator of Shippen Manor, Oxford, NJ