

**UIL LISTENING CONTEST – GRADES 5-6  
SPRING MEET 2013-2014**

**Contest Script- “Caddo Mounds”**

The Caddo lived in several tribal groups in southwest Arkansas and nearby areas of Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma from 1000 A.D. to about 1800 A.D. When visited by Spanish and French explorers around 1700, they were organized into three allied confederacies, the Kadohadacho (Kä'do ha dä'cho) on the great bend of the Red River, the Natchitoches ( NAK ə təsh ) in west Louisiana, and the Hasinai (Hä sə nī ) in east Texas. The name Caddo comes from the French abbreviation of *Kadohadacho*, a word meaning "real chief" or "real Caddo" in the Kadohadacho dialect.

1:00

The Caddo who lived in Texas were the Hasinai, who moved into the region from the Red River area to the northeast. Scholars believe that this area was chosen because it had many of the resources needed for the establishment of a village: good soil, abundant food, and a permanent water source that flowed into the Neches River. From here, the Caddo dominated life in the region for approximately 500 years. They drew local native groups into economic and social dependence through trade and a sophisticated ceremonial/political system. They traded with other native groups in Central Texas and as far away as present-day Illinois and Florida. The Spanish described several of the Caddo groups as having dense populations living in scattered settlements and having abundant food reserves of corn.

2:00

The Caddo were part of a large religious culture that was found all across the south and Midwest. It is called the mound building religion or culture. These people are called mound builders because they built earth mounds - very big ones. Not all of the villages had mounds, just the important ones. The Davis mound site is believed to be the most important mound site for the Hasinia. Mound building for temples and important buildings was a widespread practice in the southern and Midwestern United States. Many other tribes built the same kind of mounds. One of these mounds, Monk's Mound, outside St. Louis is larger than the biggest pyramid in Egypt.

Caddo Mounds State Historic Site, one of the best known and intensively investigated Indian sites in Texas, is on State Highway 21 about six miles southwest of Alto in southern Cherokee County. It comprises much of what is known to archeologists as the George C. Davis Site. The large mounds have long been recognized as an ancient Indian settlement. One of the principal routes of the Old San Antonio Road, which extended diagonally across southern Cherokee County, ran along one edge of the mound site.

3:00

Scholars now believe that Early Caddos, probably from the Red River area to the northeast, founded a permanent settlement at the site sometime between A.D. 850 and 900. The life of these people was extremely different from the typical hunters and gatherers that had previously used the site. The Caddos who lived on and near the Davis site cultivated large quantities of corn, which they supplemented with wild plants and game. They used the bow and arrow and made a decorated pottery that was different from the simpler vessels of earlier people who had camped there. Artifacts suggest that they participated in trade networks that stretched to the Gulf Coast, Central Texas, the Ouachita Mountains of western Arkansas and southeastern Oklahoma, and the Appalachians. Their houses were beehive-shaped structures of pole and thatch construction, about twenty-five feet in diameter, possibly occupied by extended families.

4:00

All of the mound building tribes were known to celebrate seasonal rites called busks. The fall busk was the most important as it celebrated the harvesting of crops and preparing for the winter. In many places, the crops would be brought to a central location where the important mound and temple was. At this time, the food would be shared so that everyone would have enough food to survive the winter. Included in this ceremony was the new fire ritual. At this time, people would bring things they no longer needed or could no longer use. All of those items would be burned in a large fire. When all items were burned, the high priest would put out the fire. He would then light a new fire and share it with everyone. People would transport the new fire to their own villages to light a fire there that would last throughout the next year.

5:00

Scientists who have studied the Caddo mounds have discovered that for hundreds of years, the ancient Caddo people built earthen mounds in the special places where their leaders and priests lived. Some mounds were platforms for grass-thatched temples on top, where priests lived and held special rituals like the fall busk. In other mounds, the Caddo people buried their leaders inside elaborate tombs. Each mound was made from soil dug from large holes called "quarry pits." Workers carried the heavy baskets filled with soil and built the mounds basket by basket. Unlike the burial mounds that held graves inside, archeologists have discovered that the temple mounds contain layer after layer of the charred remains of large wooden buildings that were once temples or the house of important leaders. These buildings were burned when they needed replacing. After the buildings were burned down, they were carefully covered with a fresh, thick layer of earth. This is how temple mounds formed—layer by layer over long periods of time. New temples were built on the exact same spot, a foot or two above the charred remains of the old one.

As community leaders died, they were buried in the burial mounds. As a way of remembering the dead, special ceremonies lasted for days. Archeologists who have excavated burial mounds have discovered that some of the Caddo tombs contain the

6:00

remains of more than one person. It is believed that perhaps servants and even family members were sacrificed and buried with the leader as a way to honor his or her death. When the bodies were placed in the tomb, it is believed that the Caddo people added special items as offerings within the leader's grave. Archeologists have found items such as jewelry made of bone and shell, intricately decorated pots and tools made of stone. Each of these things symbolized the importance of the person who was buried there. Some of the graves contained a framework of poles and long grass perhaps used as a covering over the bodies. Layers of soil were then brought in to make a fresh surface for the mound.

7:00

The Davis site Caddo Mounds consists of three large earthen mounds, as well as a large portion of a prehistoric village. At the Davis site, the largest mound, Mound A, is assumed to have begun between 850 and 900 AD and was used for a residence or a temple. It is at the southern edge of the site, and was surrounded by about 40 houses. In 1100 AD a new mound was begun near the center of the site. It is now known as Mound B. Mound B measures roughly 175 feet north-south and 115 feet east-west. Mound C, the northernmost mound of the three, was used as a burial mound, not for elite residences or temples like the other two. It is believed that the Davis site was the southwestern-most ceremonial mound center of all the great mound building cultures of North America.

8:00

Scientists now know that the Davis Site served as the regional center for this area for almost 500 years. As the villages began to be more self-sufficient, the site was abandoned about A.D. 1300. Caddoan people used it during the years following, but the site never regained its former importance in their culture. When Europeans arrived in the area in the eighteenth century, the Caddoan groups they encountered lived in small villages that were spread throughout the area. Their social and political organization had become less hierarchical, and they had ceased to build mounds.

The first professional archeologist to examine the mounds was James Edwin Pearce. He recorded the site for the Bureau of Ethnology in 1919. E.B. Sayles, an archeologist from Arizona collected surface artifacts in 1933. He concluded that the mounds had been built by the prehistoric Southern Caddos.

The first systematic excavations at the Davis site were conducted by the Work Projects Administration and the University of Texas archeologist H. Perry Newell from 1939 to 1941. After Newell's death, Alex D. Krieger, another UT archeologist, examined Newell's findings and concluded that the site had been a major Caddo community inhabited for several centuries, possibly as early as A.D. 500. Evidence collected in further excavations conducted by a team led by Dee Ann Story in the late 1960s and

**9:00** early 1970s suggested that the mounds had been occupied by the Early Caddos between A.D. 780 and 1260.

In 1974 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department acquired seventy acres at the site and established the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the department sponsored a series of excavations by archeologists from the University of Texas at Austin, Texas A&M University, and private contractor Elton R. Prewitt. The digs revealed large concentrations of artifacts and surface features that indicated the village had been significantly larger than previously thought. As a result, the Parks and Wildlife Department acquired an additional twenty-three acres of adjacent land in 1981. The Caddo Mounds State Historic Site now contains a visitors' center with interpretive exhibits as well as a three-quarter-mile self-guided trail tour that leads visitors through the mounds and village.