



Reading #2 The Horse Changes the Utes' Way of Life

Unit 1 Lesson 3

The Horse Changes the Utes' Way of Life

The Utes built their tribal strength with the help of a Spanish resource: the horse. The tribe got its first animals around the late 1500s or early 1600s, raiding or rounding up strays that had escaped from Spanish corrals.^{*} Later, after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, the Spanish left their horse herds, which the Utes and Pueblos then traded with other tribes. This addition produced some of the most important changes in the Utes' culture, economy, and social structure.

Horses expanded the Utes' economy

Because they could hunt more successfully on horseback, the Utes obtained food, skins, and other resources more easily than ever. They stopped chasing small game (animals) and began to hunt buffalo, a useful source not only of meat but of hides, hooves, and sinew.^{*} With horses to carry their possessions, the Ute could collect and transport larger surpluses^{*} of material. They also could live in larger, more comfortable homes such as tipis,^{*} which were too heavy to carry in the pre-horse era. Horses were the cornerstone of Ute economy and, as a means of exchange, were the most valuable commodity^{*} for trade. Horse racing became important among Ute bands; the faster the horse, the greater its trade value. A man who owned fast race horses was able to provide well for his family.



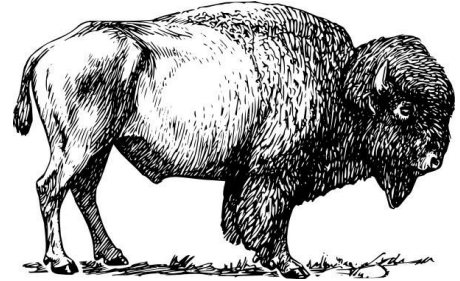


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Cultural Exchange

Horses gave Colorado's Ute bands access to wealth and power, allowing them to expand trade routes far beyond their territories in present-day Colorado, Utah, and northern New Mexico. Ute goods found their way to the Pacific Coast, the Southwest, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Plains.



Trade brought a number of other useful goods, including cotton blankets, metal tools (knives, cookware, weapons), clothing, and food—particularly corn, flour, and tobacco. In return, Spanish communities in New Mexico came to depend on the Utes for hides, deer meat, and bison* robes.

*corral: an area that is surrounded by a fence and that is used for holding animals

*sinew: strong tissue that connects muscles to bones

*surplus: an amount of something that is more than what is needed

*tipis: a portable cone shaped tent made from animal hide or cloth

*commodity: something that is bought and sold

*bison: a large, hairy wild animal that has a big head and short horns. Also called *buffalo*.

Source: This reading is adapted and excerpted, with permission, from *The Ute Indian Museum: A Capsule History and Guide* (Denver: History Colorado, 2009).

