

Note: After nearly seven years of captivity and almost two years spent walking west and south, Cabeza made first contact with “shocked” Spaniards near the Gulf of California. He was with his three fellow survivors and a following of hundreds of Indians. These Spaniards were on a slave-catching expedition and were spreading great fear among the Indian groups along the Pacific coast. In this passage, Cabeza refers to these soldiers as “the Christians.”

...(W)e suffered many annoyances and great disputes with (the Spaniards), because they wanted to enslave the Indians we brought with us.... The Christians (told the Indians) that we had been lost for a long time, and that we were people of ill fortune and no worth, and that they were the lords of the land whom the Indians were to serve and obey.... The Indians were ... not at all convinced.... Some talked ... among themselves, saying that the Christians were lying, because we came from where the sun rose, and (the Spaniards) from where it set; and that we cured the sick, and that (the Spaniards) killed those who were well; and that we came naked and barefoot, and they went about dressed and on horses and with lances; and that we did not covet anything but rather, everything (the Indians) gave us we later returned..., and that (the Spaniards) had no other objective but to steal everything they found and did not give anything to anyone.

Document Analysis

1. Who were the Christians that Cabeza met near the Gulf of California?
2. What were the Spaniards doing when Cabeza met up with them?
3. How did the Spaniards describe Cabeza and his three friends to the Indians?
4. According to Cabeza, how did the Indians regard him and his friends compared to the Spaniards?
5. How does this document help answer the question, “How did Cabeza de Vaca survive?”