



[usbr.gov](http://usbr.gov)

## **The Ahamacave**

*The information below is taken from The Ahamacave (commonly pronounced as Mohave) Traveling Suitcase exhibit for Museum Education Outreach, Grade Levels 3-4, 5-6 Teacher Manual, the Heard Museum.*

### **The Ahamacave continue to live in their river valley homelands.**

The descendants of the Ahamacave or “people along the water” live in the lush valleys fed by the waters of the great Colorado River. These valleys are protected on both sides from the heat of the rocky deserts by the rugged mountains of purple and blue. They have lived in the river valleys for at least a thousand years.

### **The Mohave eat many different types of food.**

The Ahamacave used the resources in the rich river valleys to survive and flourish in the harsh desert environment. Before the Colorado River was dammed in the 1930s, the Colorado River carried tremendous amounts of minerals and other nutrients in the water (silt). The river annually flooded the valleys, depositing silt on the land as the floodwaters gradually receded. This rich deposit of topsoil, in combination with the heat, provided for the growing of crops such as corn, wheat, squash, beans, melons, and seed grasses within a very short time (60 to 90 days).

In addition to farming, the Ahamacave women gathered plant foods. The primary and most prized of these plant foods was the mesquite bean. The mesquite pods, prepared and ground into meal, provide both carbohydrates and sugars. Other types of gathered plant foods included various tubers, roots, grass seeds, and greens.

The men of the Ahamacave contributed to the diet by hunting and fishing. Most hunting was done by the use of bow and arrow or snare. Deer, antelope, mountain sheep, rabbits, quail, and other small game were hunted. The Ahamacave also traded agricultural products for game hunted by other tribes. Fishing was done year-round. The men used lines, traps, scoops, and nets to fish in the river, ponds, and lakes.

The successful adaptation to this extreme environment allowed the Ahamacave plenty of time to enjoy themselves. People traveled from all over the country to visit and trade. For centuries, the Ahamacave were the important middlemen in the trade of shell and shell products from the Pacific Ocean to the Rio Grande River. They also traveled as far north as Alaska and as far south as the Valley of Mexico.

The Ahamacave civilization changed and evolved over a period of thousands of years but perhaps its greatest changes have occurred in the last one hundred and fifty years when the Ahamacave people began their encounters with Anglo-Americans.

### **The Mohave now eat other kinds of food because of Hoover Dam.**

The natural environment of the Colorado River was dramatically changed when the wild river was tamed with the completion of Hoover Dam in 1931. The reddish-brown water was now controlled behind the walls of the dam. The annual floods that deposited silt in the valleys to enrich the earth for agriculture ceased.

The changes in the flow of water changed farming practices and thus changed the lives of the Mohave people. Many Mohave people in the Parker area began to grow cash crops like alfalfa and cotton on their expanded acreage and had use of irrigation water on a regular basis. In order to earn the money to pay the water fees for irrigation, many Mohave people began to seek jobs that paid them a salary.

In addition, the natural vegetation along the river died out or was greatly reduced. Mohave women were not able to gather foods as they had in the past. Fish could not migrate. Without these food sources, Mohave people began to use other food sources and developed a very different diet. New foods like potatoes, rice, canned meat, canned fruits and vegetables began to appear in their diet. This new diet had an impact on the people, possibly causing an outbreak of diabetes among Mohave people.

Diabetes is one of the primary killers of Mohave people today. The Indian Health Service helps the Mohave people in treating the problems associated with diabetes. Hopefully by understanding these changes in environment, diet, and health, future generations will learn to prevent this deadly disease.

***From the article above, list at least 3 things you learned about how the Mohave lived before the dam was built and 3 things you learned about how the Mohave lived differently after the dam was built.***

**Before**

**After**



7. \_\_\_\_\_ What is the main idea for this selection?

- a. Dams cause diabetes.
- b. The Mohave people live in Arizona.
- c. The Mohave people were good farmers.
- d. The damming of the Colorado River changed the lifestyle of the Mohave people.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Which of the following statements would be an opinion?

- a. The Mohave people grew alfalfa and cotton.
- b. Canned meat is better than hunted game.
- c. The mesquite bean was a prized plant food.
- d. Diabetes is one of the primary killers of Mohave people today.



## **The Ahamacave** **Answer Key**

1. Where do the Ahamacave or Mohave people live? *The Mohave people live along the Colorado River, between Arizona and California.*
2. When was Hoover Dam built? *Hoover Dam was completed in 1931.*
3. What foods did the Mohave people eat before the Colorado River was dammed? *The Mohave people ate corn, wheat, squash, beans, melons, seed grasses, mesquite beans, tubers, roots, grass seeds, deer, antelope, mountain sheep, rabbits, quail, and fish.*
4. Where did the Mohave people trade? *The Mohave people traded as far north as Alaska and as far south as the Valley of Mexico and from the Pacific Ocean to the Rio Grande River.*
5. How did the annual floods improve the soil? *The river deposited topsoil as the floodwaters receded.*
6. What is the author's purpose in writing this selection? *b to inform people about the changes the Mohave Indians have had*
7. What is the main idea for this selection? *c The damming of the Colorado River changed the lifestyle of the Mohave people.*
8. Which of the following statements would be an opinion? *c canned meat is better than hunted game*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Vocabulary Practice

Definition

Picture

silt		
deposit		
mesquite		
trade		
dam		
irrigated		
diet		
diabetes		