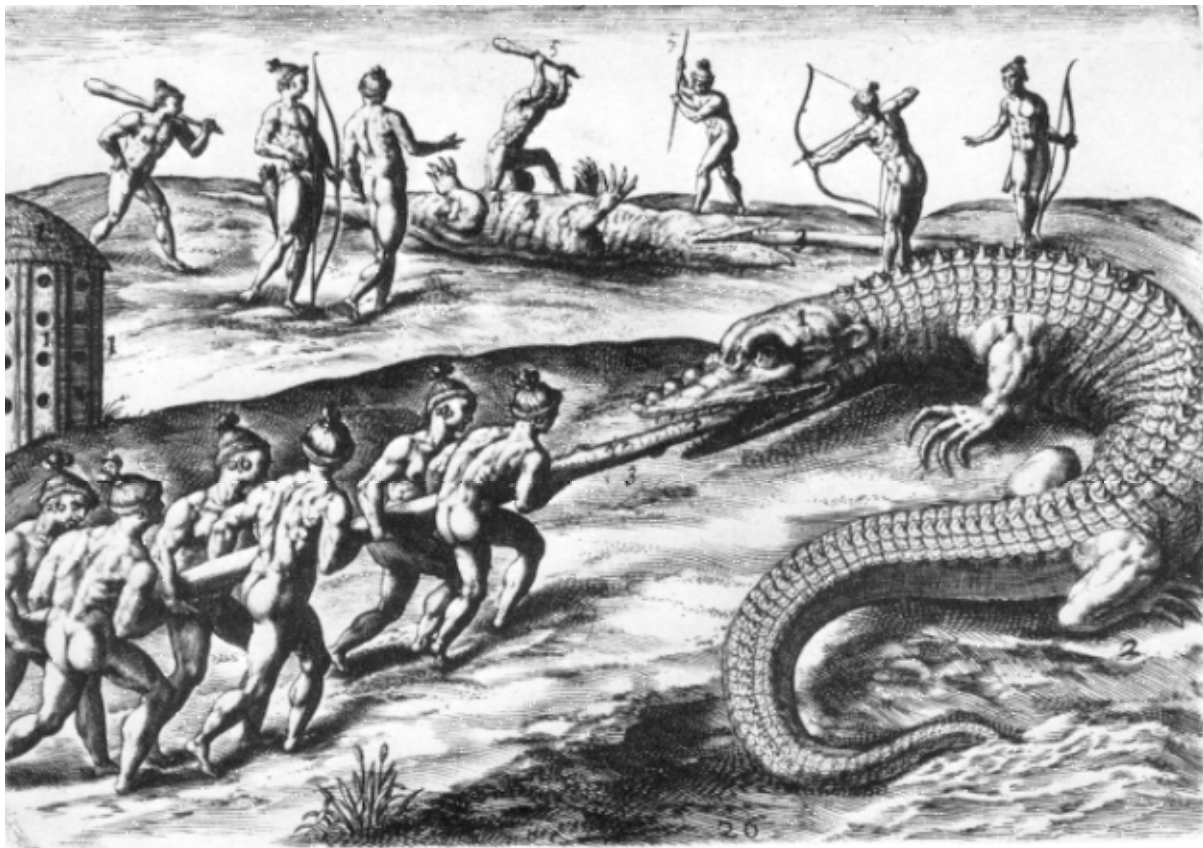


French Drawings Activity

Below, a French explorer, named Rene de Laudonniere, describes how the Timucua hunted alligators. Look at the Alligator Hunt picture. Then use clues in the picture, the French description, and common sense to decide what seems true and what seems false about the Alligator Hunt picture. Write your answers on a separate sheet.

Laudonniere's Descriptions: "When the creatures are hungry they come out of the water onto the islands to hunt but if they could not find anything they made a terrible noise that could be heard for half a mile. Then the guard called ten or twelve others who approached the large and terrifying creature with a long tree trunk. As it crawled towards them with its jaws open they rammed the pointed end down its throat. Because of the roughness of the bark it could not get free so they were able to twist it over and shoot arrows into its soft belly, club and spear it, then cut it open. The hard scales made its back impossible to penetrate, especially if the creature was old..."



Alligator Hunt Engraving by Theodore de Bry

French Drawings Activity - ANSWERS

WHAT'S TRUE IN THE PICTURE: This probably is how the Timucua hunted alligators, even if the alligators didn't look much like the one in the picture. Alligators do have hard scales (called scutes) under the skin on their backs. Arrows and spears would not go through these scales. Flipping an alligator over to hunt it on its softer belly was a good idea. If the Timucua could ram a tree trunk in the alligator's mouth, the pole would get stuck in the animal's mouth and throat. Then it couldn't bite anyone. Then the hunters grabbed the pole and turned it – and the alligator – over. Now they could hunt the alligator on its softer belly. It probably did take many men to complete this task. Women and children would not have hunted alligators.

WHAT'S FALSE IN THE PICTURE: Timucua bows were not curved on the ends like the ones in the picture, and the plants drawn in the background are not the kind of plants that grow in Florida. In addition, the men should not be naked. They should be wearing some kind of protective clothing, probably a loin cloth, which looked like a bikini bathing suit.

The alligator in the front would have been about 80 feet long. That's way too big, even for 400 years ago. 25 feet long is believable, but not 80. Also, alligator don't have eyebrows, big external ears, or long wiggly fingers. Perhaps de Bry had never seen a real alligator and used his imagination when he engraved the pictures for his book.

Last, the Timucua probably wouldn't have hunted more than one of these dangerous animals at a time. Putting two in the same picture may have been le Moyne's way of getting the whole hunting process onto a single page.