

6.6 Lenni Lenape Discover Europeans

Source: Galloway, C. (2009) "Native Americans First View Whites from the Shore," *American Heritage.com*.

Background: In 1765, John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckwelder transcribed an oral account of the 1609 meeting on Manhattan island between the Lenni Lenape and Henry Hudson, an English explorer who was sailing for the Dutch. As you read the passages, identify evidence of "cultural confusion" that would place the Lenni Lenape at a disadvantage in future dealings with the Europeans.

Questions

1. Where did the Lenni Lenape live?
2. What did the Lenni Lenape think when they first saw a European ship?
3. What did the Lenni Lenape discover when the ship drew closer?
4. How did the Lenni Lenape treat the first Europeans that they met?
5. In your opinion, what should the Lenni Lenape have done?



A. A long time ago, when there was no such thing known to the Indians as people with a white skin, some Indians who had been out a-fishing, and where the sea widens, espied [saw] at a great distance something remarkably large swimming, or floating on the water, and such as they had never seen before . . . They concluded it to be a large canoe or house, in which the great Mannitto [Supreme Being] himself was, and that he probably was coming to visit them. By this time the chiefs of the different tribes were assembled on York Island, and were deliberating on the manner they should receive their Mannitto on his arrival. Every step had been taken to be well provided with a plenty of meat for a sacrifice; the women were required to prepare the best of victuals; idols or images were examined and put in order; and a grand dance was supposed not only to be an agreeable entertainment for the Mannitto, but might, with the addition of a sacrifice, contribute towards appeasing him, in case he was angry with them.

B. Runners soon after arriving, declare it a large house of various colors, full of people, yet of quite a different color than they are of; that they were also dressed in a different manner from them, and that one in particular appeared altogether red, which must be the Mannitto himself. They are soon hailed from the vessel, though in a language they do not understand; yet they shout in their way. Many are for running off to the woods, but are pressed by others to stay, in order not to give offence to their visitors, who could find them out, and might destroy them . . . The man with the red clothes . . . distributed presents among them, to wit, beads, axes, hoes, and stockings. They . . . were made to understand by signs; that they now would return home, but would visit them next year again, when they would bring them more presents, and stay with them awhile; but that, as they could not live without eating, they should then want a little land of them to sow some seeds in order to raise herbs to put in their broth.