The Comanche’s call themselves “NUMUNU” which means “The People.” The Comanche’s were part of the Shoshone Tribe of Wyoming, but separated in the 1700’s and moved to the Southern Plains. The Comanche language and the Shoshone language are very similar, and some of the words have the same meaning in both languages.

When the Europeans came to America, the Comanche’s were forced to learn the white man’s way and disregard their language traditions. Their children were forced to leave their families and were placed in boarding schools. They were forbidden to speak their language and were severely punished if they were caught speaking Comanche.

Today, there is a very small percentage (less than 1%) of fluent speakers in the Comanche tribe. Most of the fluent speakers are the elders of the tribe. Efforts are being made by the tribe to preserve their language for its younger generation. The Comanche Nation has a college, located in Lawton, OK, which offers Comanche Language classes.

Here are some commonly used everyday words:

Hello = maruawe
Thank You = wa
Mother = pia
Father = ahpu
House = kahni
Car = nabukwuwa’a

Numbers 1-5:
One 1 = sumu
Two 2 = wahatu
Three 3 = pahitiu
Four 4 = hayarokweetu
Five 5 = mo?obet

Reflection Questions:
1. What do the Comanche people call themselves and what does it mean?
2. What tribe were the Comanche’s part of?
3. What part of the country did the Comanche’s move to?
4. When the Europeans came to America, what were the Comanche’s forced to do?
5. What percentage of fluent speakers are left in the tribe?
6. What is the Comanche word for Mother and Father?