The appearance of the bow-and-arrow in Texas around 700 AD marks the start of the Late Prehistoric period. This period lasted until the arrival of Spaniards, whose ships began skirting Texas shores in 1519. Other hallmarks of the Late Prehistoric period are village life and pottery, with distinct regional variations. In small hamlets in the far corners of Texas, inhabitants planted corn and beans to supplement their supply of wild foods. They traded for obsidian and other goods as far away as the Northern Rockies and Central Mexico.

The Caddo of East Texas
In the East Texas woodlands near the Red River, Caddo peoples were farming and building ceremonial earthen mounds by 800 AD. By 1400 AD they were living in villages of round grass houses and producing some of the finest pottery in North America. The Caddo traded with similar cultures to the east in the Mississippi River valley. Their society was stratified. Some individuals (including women) held power and influence over others.

Beginning around 1200 AD, people in the El Paso area began building rectangular adobe houses very similar to those in New Mexico and Arizona. They grew corn, made pottery, and hunted small desert animals. They traded widely both with pueblo peoples to the west and with the sophisticated Casas Grandes culture in northern Mexico. During the years between 1400 and 1450 AD, for reasons still unknown, these farming villages near El Paso were abandoned.

At Hueco Tanks near El Paso, large painted masks and figures adorn sheer rocks. The style is suggestive of Mogollon culture. Some archaeologists believe this image represents the Mesoamerican rain god Tlaloc.

In vast interior stretches of Texas, people continued hunting and gathering as they always had. This family group set up camp after finding water beneath the dunes of Monahans Sandhills. They collected acorns and mesquite beans and pounded them into a paste for food.

Beginning around 1300 AD, ancestors of Karankawa Indians set up winter camp by the mouth of the Guadalupe River at the Gulf of Mexico. These Indians traveled the shoreline by dugout canoe, produced their own style of pottery, and made tools out of shell, bone and stone. Shipwreck survivor Cabeza de Vaca would encounter Karankawas when he washed up on Texas shores in 1528.

Returning from a successful hunt near the Pecos River. Rituals and ceremonies helped bring people together and build a sense of community. The bow-and-arrow was an effective hunting tool, but Late Prehistoric peoples sometimes turned the new weapon upon one another. Archaeologists have arrow marks in bones of deer, bison, and humans.