The First People in North America

The continent of North America has been inhabited by humans for at least 16,500 years. As early as the 1500s, early settlers and European thinkers were interested in discovering how humans had come to populated North and South America. You will be given two sources about the arrival of the first people in North America. Take notes on each of the sources in the two columns below. Notes should be in bullet form and should help you address the issue:

**How did the first people arrive in North America?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source #1 Notes:</th>
<th>Source #2 Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Study: The First Americans Didn't Arrive by the Bering Land Bridge” (By Megan Gannon, August 2016)</td>
<td>“The Bering Land Bridge Theory: Not Dead Yet” (By Alan MacEachern, September, 2016)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Identify and explain one similarity between the documents: ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

2. Identify and explain one difference between the documents: ____________________________________________________________

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   ____________________________________________________________

**Conclusion:** Based on the documents, how do you think the first people arrived in North America?

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Source #1:

“Study: The First Americans Didn't Arrive by the Bering Land Bridge”
(By Megan Gannon, August 2016)

For much of the 20th century, scientists believed that the first settlers of the Americas could only have arrived one way: an ice-free super highway opened up across the Bering Land Bridge toward the end of the last ice age, allowing people from Europe and Asia to follow animals like bison and mammoths down through the interior of North America.

New archaeological discoveries have challenged that theory in recent years. A study published in the journal *Nature* offers further evidence that this northerly passage wasn’t the first route to the continent. Researchers found that this harsh route only became possible for human migration 12,600 years ago—when the first plants and animals showed up in the region. Meanwhile, archaeologists have plenty of evidence that people were living in the Americas long before then.

“We know convincingly that human groups were in the interior before that date—perhaps as early as 15,000—so it is highly unlikely that they came south through the passage,” said Michael O’Brien, an anthropologist. “A more likely scenario is that they came south along the Pacific coast.”

Source #2:

“The Bering Land Bridge Theory: Not Dead Yet”
(By Alan MacEachern, September, 2016)

Maybe you read some of the recent news articles or social media posts that question how the first people arrived in the Americas. Maybe not.

Despite a lot of discussion and debate, the new findings published in the journal *Nature* by a team of scientists do not actually overturn much of the scientific agreements on how the first people arrived in the Americas. It is still accepted that during the last ice age, ocean water fed glaciers, which meant there was less water in the oceans, which meant sea levels were lower, which meant that the land between Siberia and North America became exposed, creating what has become known as the Bering land bridge, or Beringia. It is still accepted that the first people used the Bering land bridge to reach the western hemisphere. The only thing the article overturns is how exactly they did so. We should absolutely be open-minded to new theories, but be careful about being too quick to accept them as fact.