

Lesson 3: Northeast Native Americans (2 Days)

Getting Started

? Questions to Explore

- In what ways did the Native Americans depend upon and respect the environment?
- How did the Native Americans affect the environment?
- How were people in the past dependent on plants and animals?
- How do resources from the environment help meet people's needs?



Facts and Definitions

- Iroquois tribes lived near the Great Lakes.
- Many words in the English language came from Native American tribal languages.

⦿ Skills

- Compare how people in different communities adapt to or modify the physical environment to meet their needs. (SS)
- Analyze similarities and differences among people in different times and in different places. (SS)
- Explain cultural traditions in Native American communities. (SS)
- Describe and compare cultural characteristics of regional tribes and evaluate their significance. (SS)

✂ Materials

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|---|-------------------|
| • <i>The Very First Americans</i> by Cara Ashrose | • journal |
| • colored pencils | • map of the U.S. |
| • colored pencils* (Activity 5 - Option 2) | • plain paper |
| • dictionary | |

Introduction

Ask your child to reread the pages about the Woodland Indians in the book *The Very First Americans*. Ask him how the lives of the Native Americans in the Northeast would have been different from those in the Southwest. Discuss the differences in the environment, most notably forest vs. desert and a cold climate vs. a warmer climate.

Tell your child that the Iroquois Confederacy was made up of a number of small tribes that banded together to ensure peace and to act as a united force against other tribes. Help your child find information about the Iroquois online.

Activities

Activity 1: Environment of the Northeast

Ask your child what he thinks winter might have been like for the Iroquois who lived in the Northeast. On the sheet "Environment of the Northeast," he will find some of the plants and animals that lived in the land of the Iroquois. Ask him how the Native Americans may have used these natural resources. His answers can be based on what he has read about the Iroquois or can be creative ways to use the resources to meet

the needs of the people. For example, the turtle's shell can be used for digging, pearls from shellfish could be used for jewelry, and cattail reeds could be used to make baskets.

Ask your child to think about ways the Iroquois people may have prepared for the cold winter weather (drying meats and fruit, storing nuts, cutting wood for fires, etc.). Explain that each clan of the Iroquois nation had an animal that represented it. At the bottom of the page, your child will find a list of animals. Ask him to think of a positive trait associated with each animal. Then, ask him to draw a symbol for the animal he would choose for his clan (family) and to explain why he chose the animal.

Answer Key:

Answers will vary but may include:

- bears (food, clothing, blankets, bones and teeth for tools)
- evergreens (longhouse, canoes, bows and arrows, tea, balms, firewood)
- turtles (food, shells for tools, utensils, and containers, medicine)
- acorns (flour, small containers, crafts, medicine)
- fish (food, bones to create tools, jewelry, fertilizer)
- shellfish (food, tools, jewelry, wampum for trade)
- cattail (food, weaving, roofing, bedding, medicine)
- wolf (loyalty, adaptability)
- turtle (longevity, resilience)
- bear (strength, intelligence)
- beaver (engineering skills, industrious)
- fish (adaptability, diversity)

Reading and Questions

Read aloud the Iroquois legend of "The Three Sisters" found on the following activity pages. After you have read the legend, ask your child to read it through again. Then ask the following questions and let him locate answers in the text.

1. Who was the eldest sister?

Corn Spirit

2. Who was the youngest sister, clad in green?

Guardian of the Bean

3. Who was the yellow sister, brimming over with blossoms like the golden sun?

Squash Spirit

4. Why were the boy's parents upset with him?

He was spending his time watching the three sisters instead of hunting.

5. What does this story tell you about how Native Americans felt about the natural world?

They respected it and saw it as a gift that should be protected.

Activity 2: Journal Entry

Look for pictures of growing beans, corn, and squash. Read the descriptions for each one in the "Legend of the Three Sisters" so your child can compare them to the actual vegetables. Ask him to illustrate the three sisters (beans, corn, and squash) in his journal and to record the words used to describe each sister beneath the pictures.

Activity 3: Northeast and Southwest Tribes

For this activity, your child will compare the tribes of the Northeast with those of the Southwest. Let him select one of the following options.

Option 1

For this option, your child will use what he has learned about Northeast and Southwest tribes to fill in the double-bubble map found on the page "Northeast and Southwest Indians." The two ovals in the center are for things the groups have in common.

Option 2

For this option, your child has to think of a way to compare the Southeast and Northwest tribes based on what he has learned about each group. Let him write the comparisons in his journal.

Answer Key:

Similarities

- **Respect for Nature:** Both the Northeast and Southwest Indians had a deep respect for nature. They used natural resources wisely and believed in living in harmony with the environment.
- **Tribal Leadership:** Both groups had leaders or chiefs who guided their communities and made important decisions.
- **Cultural Traditions:** They both had rich cultural traditions, including storytelling, dances, and ceremonies that were passed down through generations.
- **Craftsmanship:** Both Northeast and Southwest Indians were skilled craftsmen. The Northeast Indians were known for their beadwork and woven baskets, while the Southwest Indians were famous for their pottery and woven textiles.

Differences

- **Homes:**
 - **Northeast Indians:** They lived in longhouses or wigwams made from wood and bark. Longhouses could house multiple families and were well-suited for the forested environment.
 - **Southwest Indians:** They lived in adobe houses or pueblos made from clay and stone. These homes were perfect for the dry, desert climate of the Southwest.
- **Clothing:**
 - **Northeast Indians:** Their clothing was often made from animal hides and decorated with beads and feathers. In the colder months, they wore fur-lined clothing to stay warm.
 - **Southwest Indians:** They wore clothing made from cotton, which they wove themselves. Their clothing was lighter to suit the hot, dry climate.
- **Food:**

- Northeast Indians: They hunted deer, fished, and grew crops like corn, beans, and squash. They also gathered nuts and berries.
- Southwest Indians: They farmed crops like corn, beans, and squash but also relied heavily on foods that could be stored, such as dried meats and fruits, due to the arid environment.
- Environment:
 - Northeast Indians: Lived in forested areas with plenty of rivers and lakes, which provided abundant food and materials.
 - Southwest Indians: Lived in desert and mountainous areas, which required them to develop irrigation techniques to farm in the dry climate.

Day 2

Activity 4: The Great Lakes

Explain that the Iroquois lived near the Great Lakes. Let your child locate the Great Lakes on a map of the U.S. Ask your child why living near a lake might be desirable for Native Americans. First, your child can find pictures and read descriptions online of the Iroquois people and their villages. Then, ask him to draw in his journal an Iroquois village near the lake in the summer and then the same village in the winter.

Activity 5: Words of the Iroquois Language

Discuss the fact that many words in the English language originated from native tribes. Many of the names given to geographical locations were originally Native American words.

Tell your child that many words of the Iroquois language are still used today. Choose one of the options for the page "Words of the Iroquois Language." On each page, your child will find a list of such words. He can use each word in a sentence. If he is not familiar with the word, then he can look it up in a dictionary. In Option 1, the words are illustrated, while in Option 2, your child will draw an illustration for each word.

Activity 6: Iroquois Game — Guessing Dreams and Wishes

Explain to your child that, in the Iroquois tribe, wishes and dreams were very important. For fun, one person would make up a riddle about his dream while the others tried to guess what the dream meant. Ask your child to think about a recent dream he has had. If he can't think of a dream, he can think of a wish. Give him a piece of paper and colored pencils. Encourage him to draw a picture of his dream, make up a riddle about the dream, and record it at the bottom of the page.

Try to guess what his dream was about based on the picture and the riddle. You can also create a picture and riddle for one of your own dreams for your child to guess.

Wrapping Up

Ask your child what he learned about Iroquois people. Ask him if he would rather be a member of an Iroquois clan or of one of the Southwest tribes. Ask him how and why he made his choice.

Environment of the Northeast

Directions: Write about how the Iroquois might have used each of these natural resources in their environment.

<i>natural resources</i>	<i>possible uses</i>
bears	
evergreens	
turtles	
acorns	
fish	
shellfish	
cattail	

Directions: Think of a positive trait that could be associated with an animal and then draw a symbol for your clan’s animal.

<i>animals</i>	<i>traits of animals</i>	Which animal would you choose for your clan? Why? _____ _____ _____ <i>symbol</i>
fox	cunning, sly	
wolf		
turtle		
bear		
beaver		
fish		

THE THREE SISTERS

An Iroquois Legend

— • • • —
As retold by Miriam Johnston, Ontario Indian (1981)

The sun, heralding the dawn, caressed Mother Earth into wakefulness and cradled her in loving arms. Crimson melted into grey, diffusing a rose hue into the sky. A young Indian boy, distracted from his hunting, failed to notice the unfolding light and instead stood transfixed as he gazed at three of the most beautiful girls he had ever seen. Stretching their arms above them, they gracefully rose from the ground, gathering the plants about them.

The smallest of the three was clad in the greenest of greens, fresh and new because her body had been kissed by the morning dew. The next maiden was attired in the brightest of yellows, brimming over with blossoms like golden sunshine. The last and eldest was a tall willowy woman whose movements were slow and serene. Her slender body bent with the wind. Looking down at her younger, smaller sisters, she gave them a loving smile. Her green hair waved in the wind and she, like her youngest sister, was clothed in green.

The boy continued to gaze at the three sisters because never had he seen such a lovely sight. Watching them play, he completely forgot his hunt. Since the smallest was too young to walk, she crawled among the flowers and other plants. The girl in yellow ran far beyond the field, returning to play with her sisters for a short while before running away again. The eldest quietly walked among the plants bestowing kisses and smiles upon them and her sisters. She danced with the sunbeams, her hair gleaming green in the sunlight.

That night the boy returned to his village. Although his parents scolded him for failing to bring home some game, he went back the next day to watch the sisters again. Every morning throughout the summer, he returned to his hiding place to secretly admire them, departing afterwards to hunt for food. As the summer wore on, he grew to love all three sisters from a distance.

As the youngest sister was crawling among the plants, she spotted the young boy. Since she was small, she could observe him without being detected. She was intrigued by this new creature and returned to watch him day after day.

One day she did not rejoin her sisters. The boy had discovered her and taken her home to his family. Because she liked this Indian who seemed so kind and gentle, she agreed to go with him, forgetting about her sisters.

As the days became shorter, the eldest's hair faded until it was bleached by the sun. She continued to smile until she realized that her youngest sister had disappeared. Then her smile faded also and she no longer danced with the rays of the sun. Instead she bent her head in loneliness and grief and wept because the sisters had never before been separated. The golden sister wept also.

It happened that the sister in yellow also met the boy. She came to love him, and joined her youngest sister in his longhouse.

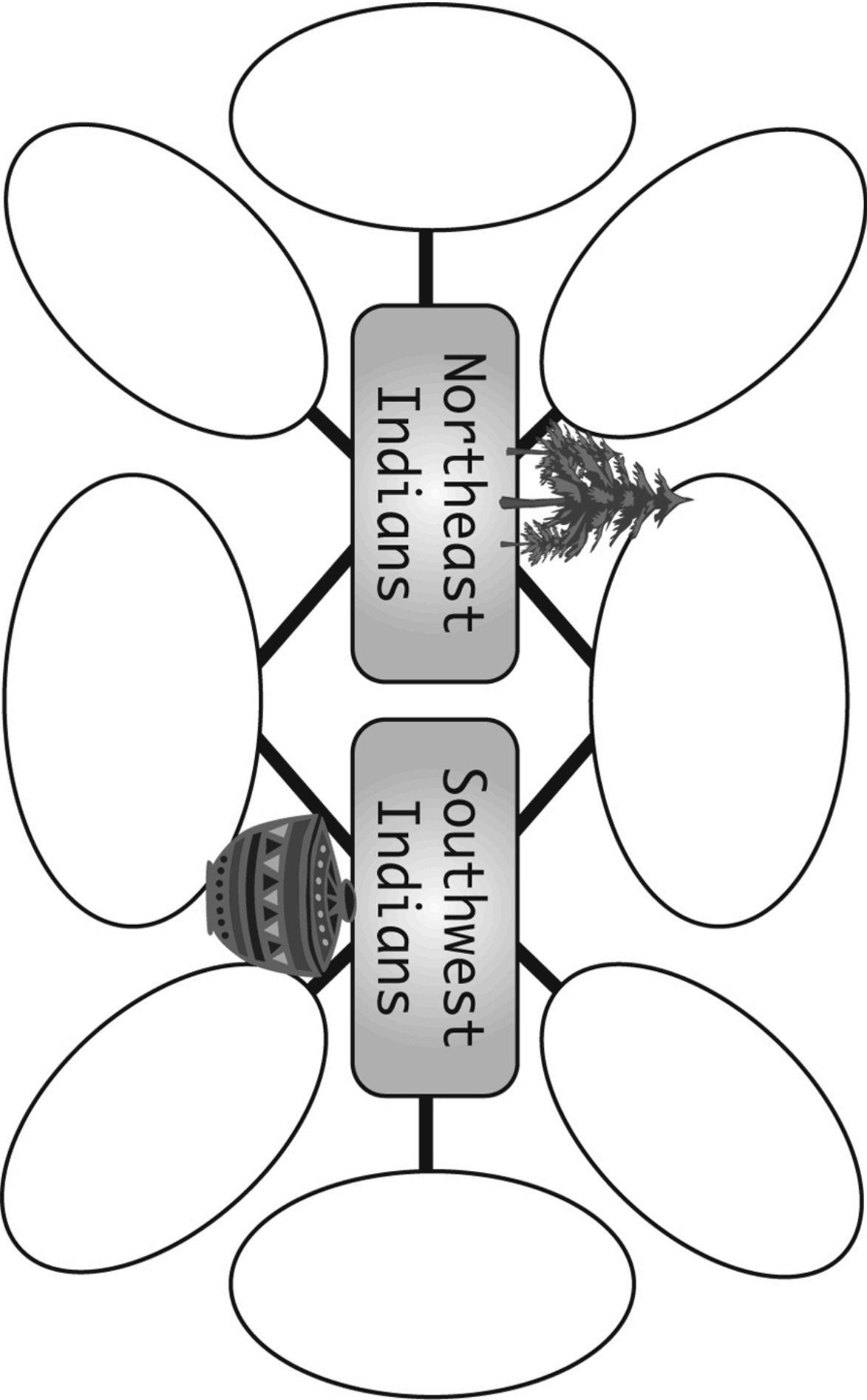
The eldest was now alone. She did not leave because she had to nurture the plants in her field. She called out daily, hoping the others would hear her. Only at the end of the summer did the boy reveal to her the whereabouts of her sisters. Since harvest was complete, she joyfully followed the boy home and the three were reunited. The young boy provided warmth and shelter for them during the cold days and in gratitude, the youngest decided to reciprocate his kindness. She jumped into their cooking pot and kept their stomachs full and their bodies warm for a long while. The sister in yellow sat on the shelf drying herself, preparing to help fill the dinner pot later in the winter. Seeing the boy's kindness, the eldest then joined her middle sister on the shelf so that she too might repay him.

Each year the Iroquois give thanks to the Three Sisters for providing nourishment for their families. The eldest of the Three Sisters is the protector of the corn, the Corn Spirit. The sister in yellow is the Squash Spirit, while the sister clad in green is the Guardian of the Bean.



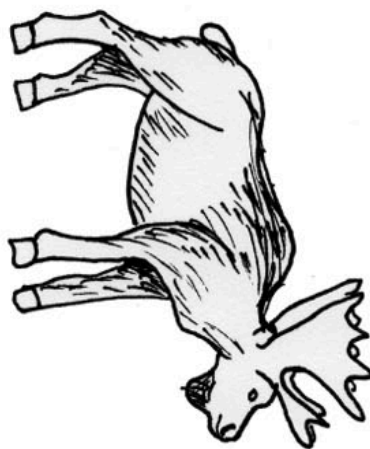
Northeast and Southwest Indians

Directions: Fill in the double-bubble map that compares the Indians of the Southwest to those of the Northeast based on what you have learned about each group.

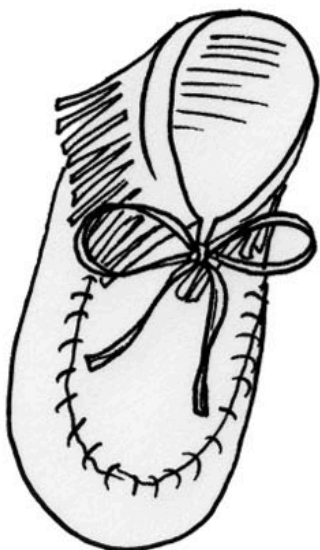


Words of the Iroquois Language

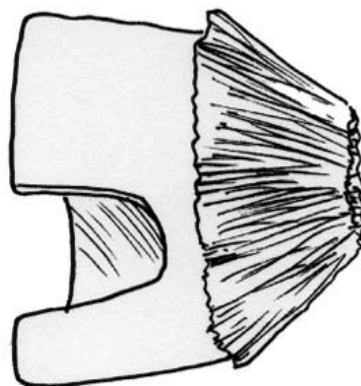
Directions: Use each word in a sentence. Use the dictionary to look up words you are not familiar with.



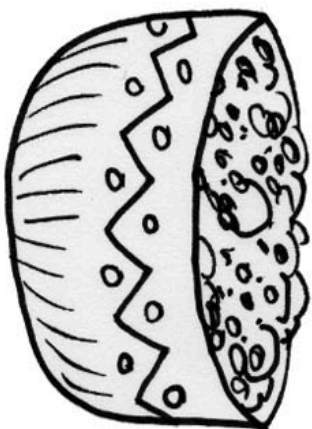
moose



moccasin



wigwam

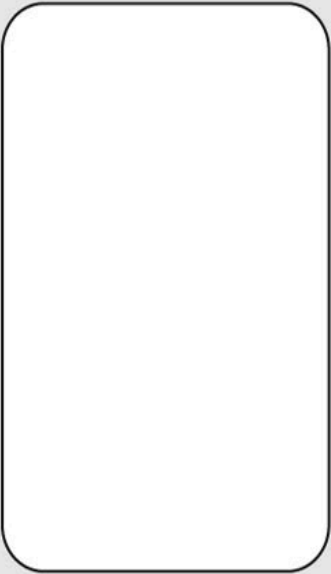


succotash

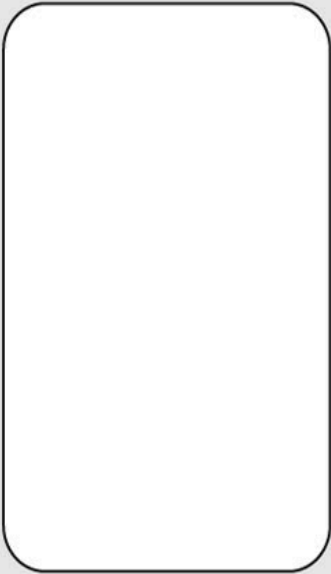
Words of the Iroquois Language

Directions: Illustrate each word. Then use it in a sentence. Use the dictionary if you need to.

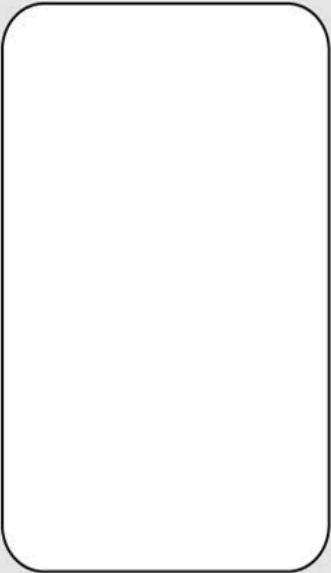
moose



moccasin



wigwam



succotash

