

Name:

Date:

How Native Americans Lived Before European Contact

Native American Reading Comprehension Passage

Long before European explorers arrived in North America, **Native American peoples** had built thriving communities across the continent. There was no single Native American culture because hundreds of different Nations and Tribes lived in forests, deserts, mountains, grasslands, and along rivers and coastlines. Each community adapted to its environment and developed its own traditions, languages, and ways of life.

Native American families built homes using materials that were easy to find nearby. Some people living on the Great Plains made **tipis** from wooden poles and buffalo hides because they moved often to follow buffalo herds. In the Northeast, many Nations built **longhouses** from wood and bark. In the Southwest, families constructed **pueblos** using stone and adobe, a type of sun-dried clay.

Food also depended on where people lived. Many Native American communities grew crops such as **corn, beans, and squash**, often called the **Three Sisters** because the plants grow well together. Others hunted deer, buffalo, or smaller animals, fished in lakes and rivers, or gathered berries, nuts, and wild plants. These different food sources helped families stay healthy throughout the year.

Children learned important skills by watching and helping older family members. They practiced farming, fishing, hunting, cooking, weaving, pottery, and storytelling. Elders shared history, traditions, and lessons through stories passed from one generation to the next. These stories helped children understand their culture and respect their community.

Nature played an important role in daily life. Many Native American peoples believed that people should care for the land, water, plants, and animals. They used natural resources carefully and avoided wasting what they gathered or hunted.

Today, Native American Nations continue to preserve their languages, traditions, and cultures while also contributing to modern communities across the United States. Their history is an important part of America's past and present.

Vocabulary

Write the meaning of each word using clues from the passage.

1. Thriving: _____

2. Environment: _____

3. Traditions: _____

4. Resources: _____

5. Elders: _____

Multiple-Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. What are the "Three Sisters"?

- A. Three Native American leaders
- B. Corn, beans, and squash
- C. Three rivers
- D. Three mountains

2. How did many children learn important skills?

- A. By reading textbooks
- B. By watching and helping adults
- C. By attending college
- D. By traveling to Europe

3. What does the passage suggest about Native American communities?

- A. They all spoke the same language.
- B. They all lived in the same region.
- C. They had many different cultures and traditions.
- D. They only hunted for food.

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why did Native American homes look different in different regions?

2. Name three foods mentioned in the passage.

3. How did storytelling help Native American children?

4. Why was nature important to many Native American peoples?

Main Idea

What is the main idea of the passage?

- A. Native Americans all lived in the same way.
- B. Native American peoples developed different ways of life based on where they lived and continue to preserve their cultures today.
- C. Farming was the only important activity.
- D. European explorers taught Native Americans how to live.

Supporting Details

Write two details that support the main idea.

Text Evidence

Find one sentence or fact from the passage that shows Native Americans respected nature.

Critical Thinking

Why is it important to learn about Native American cultures from respectful and accurate sources?

Answer Key

Vocabulary (Sample Answers)

- 1. Thriving** – growing, successful, and healthy.
- 2. Environment** – the natural area where people live.
- 3. Traditions** – customs and beliefs passed through generations.
- 4. Resources** – useful materials found in nature.
- 5. Elders** – older, respected members of a community.

Multiple Choice

- 1.B
- 2.B
- 3.C

Main Idea

B

Supporting Details (Sample)

- Different regions had different types of homes.
- Native American Nations continue to preserve their cultures today.

Short Answers (Sample)

1. Because each community used materials available in its environment.
2. Corn, beans, squash (also acceptable: deer, buffalo, berries, fish, nuts).
3. Storytelling passed on history, traditions, and life lessons.
4. Many believed people should care for the land and use natural resources wisely.

Inference (Sample)

Life required cooperation, practical skills, and careful use of natural resources because modern technology did not exist.

Text Evidence (Sample)

"They used natural resources carefully and avoided wasting what they gathered or hunted."

Critical Thinking (Sample)

Respectful and accurate information helps us understand the diversity of Native American cultures and avoids stereotypes.