

Make a Plains Indian Tipi

Materials:

- Tipi template (included on next page)
- String
- Crayons, colored pencils, or paint
- Canvas or construction paper
- Scissors
- 3 sticks (approximately 10-inches long)
- Glue
- Stories and Culture of Plains Indians and Buffalo Supplemental Presentation

Time: 20-30 minutes

Grade Level: K-5

Background:

Many Plains Indian tribes lived in tipis made of buffalo hides. Women made the tipis by sewing the hides together. The tipi was designed with painted figures, patterns, and pictures on the outside. Each tipi design was special to the family that lived in the tipi.

Engage:

Engage students in a discussion comparing their home to a Plains Indians tipi. Refer to the first slide of Stories and Culture of Plains Indians and Buffalo Supplemental Presentation in the lesson resources to aid in discussion.

Preparation:

Prior to beginning this activity, prepare tipi tripods for each student. Take 3 sticks and tie together at the top (leaving about 1-inch from the top) with strong string. You may want to trace and cut out the tipi template onto canvas or construction paper for younger students. Draw dots on the flaps of the tipi as shown on the template. This will be the front of their tipi.

Assembly directions:

1. Give each student a tipi tripod (already tied) and canvas or construction paper cover.
Note: Older students can trace and cut out their own tipi cover.
2. Have students place their canvas or construction paper tipi cover with the circle side facing them. The flaps should be facing away from them.
3. Invite students to decorate their tipi with the symbols and images depicting what it is important to them or their family. Provide examples such as pets, hobbies, friends, etc.
4. Put glue on the three dots on the cover's flaps on the decorated side.
5. Bring both sides of the tipi towards its center to attach the flaps.
6. Have students hold the two places together where the glue was applied.
7. Place the tripod in the canvas tipi and adjust sticks to stand like a tripod.

