

Plains Indian Tipi Activity (Grades K-4) Teacher Guide

Objectives

- To teach students how human needs and concerns are addressed within cultures.
- To learn how the tipi was an important part of family history to the Plains Indians.
- To design and assemble their own tipi.

Pre-Lesson Activities

Introduce Vocabulary

Discuss the vocabulary terms below.

Buffalo hide – the pelt or skin of the buffalo; used for many different purposes by the Plains Indians

Culture – a shared pattern of learned behavior; a shared way of thinking, believing and acting that is passed from generation to generation. Examples include language, stories, folktales, music, roles of men, women, elders, and children, spiritual beliefs, and economic development

Reservation – area of public land set aside by the United States government for the use of American Indians

Tradition – custom or belief passed down from generation to generation

Tipi – the home of Plains Indian people, typically made from buffalo hide or canvas and long sticks

Earth Lodge – a Plains Indian home often built by agricultural tribes such as the Mandan and Hidatsa.

Canvas – a durable waterproof material introduced to the Plains Indians through trade with Euro-Americans

Parfleche – a folded rawhide carrying case for food, clothing, and other items

Plains Indian Homes: Yesterday and Today

Engage students in a discussion comparing the homes they live in today to the tipis Plains Indians used to live in. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Post-Lesson Activities

Build a Home

Materials: drawing or construction paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils

Have students draw or construct a model of their own home and yard. Provide time for students to show their classmates the differences between their model home and a tipi.

Using What Is Around You

Materials: pictures of woodland, beach, and plains habitats, habitat resources, drawing or construction paper, crayons, markers, colored pencils

Show students pictures of different habitats that make up the United States, such as woodlands, beaches, and plains. Think about including pictures that also represent Hawaii and Alaska. Explain that they are going to design a home that is appropriate for one of these habitats. Work with students to help them identify the resources that include information about these habitats. Have student brainstorm what they would need to build their home if they could only get materials from their environment. Ask students:

- *What would your home look like?*
- *What materials would you use to make your home?*
- *What tools would you use to make your home?*
- *What would you call your home?*

Allow students to create a drawing of their home. Finish by showing students different homes that American Indians have lived in such as wigwams, longhouses, earth lodges, igloos, etc. Explain to students that now American Indians live in homes just like they do.

Resources

Buffalo Bill Center of the West Resources

Plains Indian Art Trunk – available through our lending program

This trunk fosters an understanding and appreciation for the culture of Plains Indian people. Materials in the trunk include examples of traditional Plains Indian arts such as beadwork, quillwork, and rock art. A new teacher’s guide is included.

Powwow Trunk – available through our lending program

Music and dance have long been central to American Indian cultures, and today’s powwow is a celebration of that heritage. Learn about powwows in their present form and the history behind them with a

video, dance outfits, musical instruments, accessories, and a teacher guide.

Other Resources

National Museum of the American Indian, *Do All Indians Live in Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian*. Washington, DC.: Smithsonian, 2007.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Native American Stories*. Golden Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1991.