

Compare and Contrast

POTAWATOMI PRAIRIE

8th Grade Historical Fiction

Center for Urban Education at DePaul University © 2005

The Potawatomi tribe came to this area several hundred years ago and established a home here for many decades. In summer, the families all relocated to one large village, while, in winter, they set up separate, smaller camps. The following paragraphs describe a typical year for a Potawatomi family in this area a couple hundred years ago. Can you imagine their homes as you read about their routines in the different seasons?

In the summer, we live in a big village where we use large poles to build our new house. Even though we cook outside, we build the roof so that it is a shelter over the cooking area as well. Therefore, the roof covers more than just the floor space, where we sleep. In the big village, my mother and I use a shoulder bone from a deer to plow our fields and plant our seeds. It is very difficult work; though, because of our hard work, we will have an abundant amount of food in the fall and can even share with other families if they do not have enough. We get to see our friends and the entire extended family, and there are so many exciting things to see and do in the summer. All of that makes summer my sister's favorite season, and it really is a fun time for all of us. My siblings and I get to roam and explore and go swimming. My mother also likes it because being with our big family means there are people to assist with the work and other people to talk with; she also gets to see her own brothers and sisters. My father gets to sit with the other men and he doesn't have to worry about us having enough food for a while. There is plenty of work to do, but everyone helps and there is company.

In the fall, we have a great amount of food: big squashes and pumpkins and corn, as well. Every day, I am able to harvest even more beans. We dry the big gourds to eat in the winter, when we will have less food and when it will be too cold to want to search for more. My father found salt from a salt spring, which we are using to dry the meat. This is so exciting because we sometimes run out of meat before the winter ends, or often times it spoils before we have a chance to eat it. I search for nuts and berries from the forest. Occasionally, I eat them when I find them, but I try to bring most of them home and we dry those too. Soon we will move to our winter site.

It is now winter and when we started looking for a place for our winter camp, we saw deer and raccoons. Therefore, we knew this would be a good place for hunting, and that we will even be able to have fresh meat this year. We set up a wigwam, which will be our house for the winter months. We stuck one end of tree branches in the ground and then tied them together in the middle. In the winter, we cook inside and we had to remember to leave a gap for the smoke from the fire to get out. In order for the wigwam to stay warm on the inside, we had to paste bark on the outside to insulate it and to help trap the heat inside. Today, it is cold and it just snowed. My father says that he will be able to see the tracks of elk in the snow and can more easily hunt them now. He will soon go to hunt and my mother says that afterwards we will have plenty of food, but also plenty of work as well; we will have to cut the meat from the animal and separate the skin to make blankets and rugs. If we don't have enough food in this place, we may move our camp to another location, with more animals. We will look for a place with even more animal tracks.

It is starting to get warmer, which means the spring is coming! In the spring, we can always find my favorite food: maple syrup. We make a hole in a tree and then the sweet juice comes out of the tree. My father made a fishing net from deer sinew and will go out to fish soon. He tied shells to the bottom of the net and when they fill with water, it sinks to the bottom of the stream. This summer, my brother will get to fish, as well. He has a line and a hook, which he uses to fish in the lake. Since we get fish in the winter only when we go out and cut through the ice, fishing is primarily a spring and summer job. I like fish and like to watch my father and my brother standing by the lake or the stream. My father likes the spring best. He says it is a time of hope because we start to see all the things that went to sleep in the winter waking up again. He hears the birds sing and sees the plants start to grow again. I like spring, too because soon we will see the flowers.

Directions: Choose the best answer for each question.

1. How were the Potawatomi's lives different in winter from the rest of the year?
- a. It was the time of greatest challenge.
 - b. It was the time for family to work together.
 - c. It was the time they shared what they made.
 - d. It was the time they looked forward to.

2. How was the Potawatomi's life in summer different from the rest of the year?
- a. There was less work to do.
 - b. There was more work to do.
 - c. There were more opportunities for community.
 - d. There was more food.

3. Which is the biggest difference between the Potawatomi life and life in Chicago today?
- a. The harsh winters were a bigger problem.
 - b. The hot summers were a bigger problem.
 - c. Getting food was always a challenge.
 - d. Children had more time for fun.

4. What is the way in which the Potawatomi and Chicagoans today are like?
- a. They moved with the seasons.
 - b. They built homes that fit the environment.
 - c. They solved problems every season.
 - d. They chose leaders who made changes.

5. Write your own answer to this question.

What are two important ways in which the Potawatomi are like people who live in Chicago today?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	a	c	a	c

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.

5. Students should identify parallels such as having extended families, working together, solving problems.