



A Lesson on Potawatomi Prairie by Stephanie Trzesniowski

Grade Level: Grade 8

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: More than 3 hours

Lesson Keywords: creative writing, critical thinking

Lesson Description: Students read a brief passage about the Potawatomi tribe and gain insight into the lives of the people. Students learn and define vocabulary terms from the passage. Students use information from the passage, along with their own creativity, to answer questions and fill in details about the author, the setting, and the dangers of living with this tribe. Finally, students put themselves in the place of a Potawatomi tribe member and write a short essay on how they would fit in with the community.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.1: Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.3: Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using : Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4a: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

Potawatomi Prairie

by

Content: 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 sisters 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.

Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: insulate **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in the story states: "In order for the wigwam to stay warm on the inside, we had to paste bark on the outside to insulate it." Based on the rest of the information in the paragraph, which of the materials below could best replace bark and still insulate the wigwam appropriately?

- A: hard-packed snow
- B: overripe berries
- C: flaming branches
- D: layers of deer hide

Question: Which sentence below correctly uses the word "insulate"?

- A: We stuffed our boots with leaves and fur to insulate them in the winter.
- B: In the summer, it gets very warm, so we like to swim in the river to insulate ourselves.
- C: It is important that we insulate the meat thoroughly before we eat it, so no one gets sick.
- D: My father gets very creative with his fishing nets at times, in order to insulate the most fish possible.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: abundant **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in our story mentions that because of this Potawatomi family's hard work in the summer, they will have an abundant amount of food in the fall. Choose the option that best describes the meaning of the word "abundant," based on context clues in the sentence.

- A: scant; meager
- B: plentiful; ample
- C: average; mediocre
- D: unsatisfactory; disappointing

Question: Which sentence below uses the word "abundant" correctly?

- A: At the end of the day, we went to bed hungry because we had an abundant food supply.
- B: When my sister and I wanted to take the quickest route home, we chose the path that had an abundant amount of obstacles.
- C: My family always makes me laugh with the abundant quantity of jokes they have at the ready.
- D: She tried to hide it, but I could tell my mother was embarrassed at the abundant amount of berries she collected after a whole day harvesting.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: dry **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author mentions that in the fall they will "dry" the gourds and meat. Think about the rest of the information in the paragraph, then choose the option below that best explains why the families do this to their food, based on the meaning of the word "dry" in this specific context.

- A: The pumpkins and meat are too wet from the rain for them to be tasty.
- B: The families are planning ahead and preserving the food for later.
- C: There will be a big feast tomorrow night, so they want the food to be ready by then.
- D: It is the easiest way to hunt and search for food.

Question: Which sentence or phrase below uses the word "dry" in the same context in which it is used in our story?

- A: My sister is a great hunter, but can't cook very well. Her meat always turns out bland and dry.
- B: It was a very hard winter this year. Luckily, we had thought to dry the extra meat we had from the summer, so no one went hungry.
- C: We can't wait for the rainy season to end; it is much easier to hunt when the terrain is dry.
- D: We built our shelter with a roof over the cooking area so we can stay dry and protected from the elements.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: tracks **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author's father says that after it snows, he can hunt elk more easily because of their tracks. What does the word "tracks" mean in this sentence?

- A: defense techniques
- B: mating rituals
- C: scents
- D: footprints

Question: Which sentence below uses the word "tracks" in the same context in which it is used in our story?

- A: We were happy to find that salt from the spring tracks food very well.
- B: When my extended family comes to visit, they are eager to help with our tracks and chores.

C: My mother tracks how much food we consume so we don't run low.

D: My brother always loses at hide-and-seek in the winter because he doesn't cover his tracks to his hiding spot.

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Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - What are the dangers of winter for the Potawatomi?

Based on what you know from the passage, list two to three possible dangers or worst-case scenarios the Potawatomi could experience in the winter season. Do not just list the items -- expand on your thoughts in a paragraph of five or more sentences, using information from the story to back up your ideas.

2 - Who is telling this story?

Specific details about the author of this story are not given in this passage. Write a well-developed response (one paragraph or more) on who YOU think the author is (ex: male or female, approximate age, personality traits, etc). There is no right or wrong answer. Creativity is encouraged, but be sure to support your theory with information from the story.

3 - Why do the Potawatomi live here?

Why do you think the Potawatomi tribe came to this area and stayed for as long as they did? Write a well-developed response (one paragraph or more) on why you think the Potawatomi settled where they did, using information from the passage to back up your thoughts.

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Based on your own personality (your likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses, etc), how do you think you would fit in with the Potawatomi people? Write one 500-word essay on your life as a member of the Potawatomi tribe. Use ideas and themes from the story to support your thoughts. Some suggestions: How could you contribute to the community? How might you be a hinderance in the daily routine? What ideas might you have for the Potawatomi that weren't already mentioned in the passage?

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