

Guiding Question: What was daily life like for Plains Indians in the middle of the 1800s?

Document Analysis

Northern Cheyenne Life

Source 1 See-Think-Wonder

Directions: Look closely at the image and then follow the See-Think-Wonder prompts below.



SEE: Look closely at the image. Write down the people and objects you see. List as many details as possible.

THINK: Why and how do you think the Cheyenne may have made each object in the image? What needs might each object have met?

WONDER: What do you *not* understand about what you see in the image? What questions do you have about it?

Source 1 Description and Analysis

Directions: Read the description of the image you observed, and then answer the questions that follow.

Time: 30 minutes

Instructions

Goal/Intent: Students practice a close-viewing strategy with three images depicting aspects of Northern Cheyenne life in the 19th century.

Building on their game knowledge and their image analysis, students then discuss a series of questions that relate to the guiding question:

What was daily life like for Northern Cheyenne in the middle of the 1800s?

Image Analysis (15 mins)

Students will have the opportunity to analyze and learn about all three images using a jigsaw process.

First, put students into **expert groups** of 3 and provide each group copies of the “See-Think-Wonder” handout for one of the sources. After they have had about 5 minutes to complete the page together, then provide them copies of their image’s “Description and Analysis” page.

Note: We recommend passing out the “Description and Analysis” pages to expert groups only *after* students have completed the See-Think-Wonder activity so that they have the opportunity to practice close viewing of an image without jumping too quickly into interpretations and context.

(If [Image 2](#) and [Image 3](#) are too small, you may wish to show students enlargements of them using these links.)

When the groups have completed their “Description and Analysis” pages, then assign students to new **mixed groups**, in which each source image is represented by at least one student. Students will then share the image they brought with them and their analysis.

If necessary, you can shorten this activity by skipping the mixed groups and proceeding directly to the whole group discussion below.

Discussion (15 min)

Bring the whole group back together and lead a discussion about the three questions provided.

Tipis

Tribes who lived on the Great Plains like the Northern Cheyenne used tipis for shelter. Tipis were made of buffalo hides attached to wooden poles, and could be quickly assembled, dismantled, and transported. Usually, the members of one family slept in a single tipi. Tipis and outdoor cooking were the domain of women. Most of the family's work was accomplished outside the tipi, so the Cheyenne could take advantage of natural light and avoid the danger of large fires inside the tipis. Men hunted buffalo, providing hides. Women made the tipis, and were responsible for setting up, taking down, and transporting tipis and their contents.

Questions to Answer

1. Why was it so important that tipis were easy to build and transport? How are they an example of the Northern Cheyenne's adaptation to life on the Great Plains?

2. What do tipis tell you about the importance of the buffalo in Northern Cheyenne society?

3. How did women's labor support the nomadic way of life on the Great Plains?

Source 2 See-Think-Wonder

Directions: Look closely at the image and then follow the See-Think-Wonder prompts below.



Additional Discussion Questions:

- In what ways did the buffalo become central to the lives of the Plains Indians in the 19th century?
- What were some advantages and disadvantages for the Northern Cheyenne of organizing their lives around hunting buffalo?



SEE: Look closely at the image. Write down the people and objects you see. List as many details as possible.

THINK: Why and how do you think the Cheyenne may have made each object in the image? What needs might each object have met?

WONDER: What do you *not* understand about what you see in the image? What questions do you have about it?

Source 2 Description and Analysis

Directions: Read the description of the image you observed, and then answer the questions that follow.

Travois

Travois (pronounced “truh-VOY”) were wooden frames used to drag heavy items over land. The travois poles were the same poles used to assemble tipis. Originally, travois were pulled by women or by pack dogs. By the nineteenth century, travois were pulled by horses, which allowed for longer poles and therefore, larger tipis. While the main component of a travois was wood, buffalo hides were used to line the basket and to attach the pieces of wood to each other.

Photo Credits

Top: “Mrs. Black Horse, Tse-Tsehese-stahase, with dog. No. 26,” in the Walter S. Cambell Collection, *Western History collections, University of Oklahoma Library.*

Bottom: *Library of Congress, Atsina Indian on horse pulling travois; photographed by Edward S. Curtis, 1908.*

Questions to Answer

1. What were travois used for? Why were they more important to the Northern Cheyenne once they migrated to the Great Plains than they were previously?
2. What were the differences between a dog travois and a horse travois?
3. Both of these images show women handling the travois. Why do you think that might be the case?

Source 3 See-Think-Wonder

Directions: Look closely at the image and then follow the See-Think-Wonder prompts below.



SEE: Look closely at the image. Write down the people and objects you see. List as many details as possible.

THINK: Why and how do you think the Cheyenne may have made

each object in the image? What needs might each object have met?

WONDER: What do you *not* understand about what you see in the image? What questions do you have about it?

Image 3 Description and Analysis

Directions: Read the description of the image you observed, and then answer the questions that follow.

Bladder Bag

In the nineteenth century, the Northern Cheyenne and other tribes on the Great Plains used bags made from the bladders of buffalo to transport various materials, including water. After a buffalo was killed, its bladder was inflated with air and then dried. The bags were then rubbed between the hands to soften them. They held about two liters of liquid.

Source: <http://www.kshs.org/p/american-indians-and-the-buffalo/16095>

Questions to Answer

1. Which members of Northern Cheyenne society do you think made bladder bags? Why do you think so?
2. Who do you think used bladder bags and in what ways?
3. In what ways was the practice of using bladder bags an adaptation by the Northern Cheyenne to life on the arid Great Plains?

Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the main characteristics of Northern Cheyenne life on the Great Plains in the nineteenth century?

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2. What tools, technologies, and strategies did the Northern Cheyenne develop to live a nomadic lifestyle on the Great Plains?

3. What specific activities did men and women do in this nomadic, hunting-based way of life?