



Daily Life in the Ancient Times of the Nez Perce

The National Park Service [NPS] *Teaching with Museum Collections* provides lesson plans for teachers to use NPS museum collections in student-centered educational activities. Collections tell the story of America; its peoples, cultures, varied habitats, significant events, and ideas that continue to inspire the world. *Teaching with Museum Collections [TMC]* emphasizes the links between the 'real things,' the collections, and the sites where those collections were found, collected, or used. NPS collections include cultural objects, natural history specimens, archival documents and photographs. Lesson plans link to national education standards.

A. Header

- ❑ **Lesson Unit Plan Title:** Daily Life in the Ancient Times of the Nez Perce
- ❑ **Lesson developer:** Debra Heaton, Centennial Elementary, Lewiston, ID
- ❑ **Grade Level:** Middle grades
- ❑ **Length of Lessons/Lesson Unit:** Each activity is approximately three days to one week in length

B. Overview of this Collection-Based Lesson Plan

- ❑ **Park name.** Nez Perce National Historical Park
- ❑ **Description:** This lesson will focus on how natural material, such as stone, was used to manufacture tools and weapons. By examining similar objects, we can see how tools and weapons have evolved over time but still maintain their similar uses. This lesson unit also demonstrates how these objects can serve as primary sources for learning about an individual, their society, and their cultural values over time.
- ❑ **Theme:** Stone tools were not only used for subsistence activities (hunting & gathering) but played a role in Nez Perce storytelling and communication. *Prior Knowledge and Relevance:* Compare the use of rocks in contemporary children's play activities to the rocks used to make tools. Ask for and give examples of play as a precursor to adult work, both now and in the past, computer games, etc. A variety of stone was used in many facets of Nez Perce life.
- ❑ **Essential question.** How did the Nez Perce make or acquire the tools they needed?

C. Museum Collections Used in this Lesson Plan

- ❑ **Objects, specimens, documents, photographs** from the park museum collection:

Ax Head – Catalog # NEPE 6387
Basalt Knife – Catalog # NEPE 6386
Igneous Chopper – Catalog # NEPE 6390
Scraper Quartz – Catalog # NEPE 3000
Photograph of Heart of the Monster
Photograph of Buffalo Eddy 2 Petroglyphs NEPE III-4a

D. National Educational Standards

Curriculum and Content Area Standards: Social Studies Standards
Section 2: Time Continuity and Change
Middle Grades

- a. Demonstrate an understanding that different scholars may describe the same event or situation in different ways but must provide reasons or evidence for their views.

Section 3: People, Places and Environments



Middle Grades

- f. Use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with methods of historical inquiry, to inform decision making about and action-taking on public issues.

Section 4: Individual Development and Identity

Middle Grades

- a. Relate personal changes to social, cultural and historical contexts: describe personal connections to place- as associated with community, nation and world.
- b. Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.

E. Student Learning Objectives

After these lessons, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze objects from Nez Perce National Historical Park's museum collections.
- Use the analysis to develop an understanding of the function of tools used by ancient people and the natural resources used to make them.
- Communicate their analysis in writing and orally.

F. Background and Historical Context

The Nez Perce people developed a distinct culture through more than 11,000 years of interaction with the environment and landscape of their traditional homeland. Their oral tradition and the archeological record indicate a well established family structure; oral history tradition; an economy based on homeland resources; spiritual beliefs; their own value system; economy; art, literature, music, and dance.

The tribes of the Plateau region, which includes the Nez Perce, used the seasons of the year as a means to keep track of time and to guide the major activities & celebrations in their culture. This is often referred to as "the seasonal cycle" or the "seasonal round", see chart at end of lesson – "Seasonal Cycle of Plateau tribes...". They did not use a 12 month calendar or clocks like we use today. The seasons would vary from year to year depending on when the weather actually changed; when plants matured, when fish ran, when cold or warm weather arrived etc. Having lived on dried foods all winter spring was a time to gather the early greens and roots growing in the low river valleys that also made good winter home sites. The men began fishing as soon as the run of spring Chinook started up the river. As snow began to melt out of the mountains and the run of salmon ended the bands would begin moving to higher elevations. The woman and younger children concentrated on harvesting whatever plants were in season and ripe. Woman cooked the foods and preserved extra by drying it. Nez Perce woman also were in charge of the home. They gathered the materials, made it, put the home up, took it down and moved it as needed. Large game would become more accessible for hunting by the men as the snow retreated through the spring and summer.

Once bands began to move toward the end of spring and through the summer they would often meet other Nez Perce bands and it was a good time for socializing with friends and relatives you might not have seen for a year. Through the summer as some of the band stayed in the mountains to continue gathering and



hunting others would go back to the rivers to fish the summer run of Chinook. As fall approached gathering foods and supplies for winter became the primary concern. Everything needed to make winter clothes, new tools, and other items would be collected during the fall. Winter brought with it a return to the deep, warmer river valleys. Where the rivers and streams provided needed water and wood for fuel. Winter was a quieter time; a time to stay at home, travel being difficult, to make tools and other items, pass on the ancient stories and conduct ceremonies.

For additional information, see www.nps.gov/nepe

G. Materials Used in this Lesson Plan

- a. Chart for Listing Attributes of Rock
 - b. How to Read an Object chart at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/museum/tmc/index.htm>
 - c. Pen and Paper
 - d. Ruler
 - e. Scale
 - f. Medium Point felt markers
 - g. Brown Paper grocery bags
 - h. Kitchen utensils (list of possible similar items)
 - i. Vegetable Peeler
 - ii. Knife
 - iii. Meat tenderizing tool for pounding
 - iv. Garlic press
 - v. Cheese/vegetable Grater
 - vi. Sieve with mortar and/or pestle
- *Similar items [objects].*
- A rock of student's choice the size of a fist.
 - Kitchen utensils such as a vegetable peeler, knife, meat tenderizing tool for pounding, garlic press, cheese/vegetable grater, sieve with mortar and/or pestle.

H. Vocabulary

Aesthetic: relating to beauty rather than use
Ancestral: of or belonging to an ancestor(s)
Basalt: a dark gray to black dense to fine grained extruded igneous rock.
Chert: an impure flint like rock made up of quartz or chalcedony usually dark in color.
Context: the conditions in which an item exists or is found
Flint: a type of quartz that breaks and makes sharp edges/ makes sparks when hits metal.
Function: useful
Gatherers: one that collects and brings together.
Hunters: a person who hunts game.
Infer: derive by reason or implication
Mended: fixed
Observe: to look at critically and from all possible angles and ways.



Practical: things with a function in everyday life.

Spiritual: things of a religious nature.

Technical: things used in professional work

Pictograph: painted on to a rock or cloth in basic shapes and colors

Petroglyphs: figures etched on to a rock

I. Teacher Tips

- Download and laminate color prints of museum stone tool objects, photographs of legend sites, and photographs of petroglyphs listed in this plan.
- Use online collections to further student inquiry and to address student learning objectives.
- Make copies of the “Reading a Museum Object”
- Check Nez Perce National Historical Park website (www.nps.gov/nepe) for information and/or brochure.

J. Lesson Implementation Procedures

□ Activity 1: Tools, Their Uses and History of Changes

Introduction and Warm Up

Teacher will bring kitchen items for examination such as kitchen utensils such as a vegetable peeler, knife, a meat tenderizing tool for pounding, garlic press, cheese/vegetable grater, and sieve with mortar and/or pestle.

Tell students they will be viewing pictures of objects from a National Park Service site as a source of learning and information. Explain that they will learn to look very closely at an object or set of objects to deduce historical, cultural and social information and to draw inferences about people, events, and life then and now. Ask questions that draw on observational skills, and develop activities that exercise powers of deduction, inference, and creativity based on this introductory lesson.

Procedure:

- Distribute students into groups of four or less.
- Distribute the template “How to Read an Object” to each group.
- Each group selects a recorder and a presenter.
- Give one group a picture of a vegetable peeler, another group, the object and another group a written description of the object (Letter to Madge) without naming the object.



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Date: Modern Times

Dear Madge,

As you know, I have moved in a hurry and am missing an item from my residence that is extremely useful and important to my everyday life. I would so appreciate it if you would search that item out for me and return it to me. My vegetables are much easier to process with the item, it gives a certain, more pleasant appearance to the vegetable and the item makes the vegetables easier for my family to chew.

The item is about six inches in length. The handle is probably made from a petroleum derivative while the working side of the implement is stainless steel. The stainless side is two pieces drawn together at each end, shaped like a row boat . . . a row boat whose bottom side has been torn away. The opening in the bottom has been sharpened to a razor edge in the tearing away process.

I gave the previous information to give you a visual picture of the shape and look of the implement because the sharp opening really has not been torn away, but was machined at a manufacturing company specializing in the making of this tool.

The handle fits nicely in your hand and was designed specifically for your comfort when you work in the kitchen.

Thank you, Madge, for your time and attention to locating this item for me. I am struggling to work without it.

Sincerely,

Deb

- Have students, within their groups, discuss, brainstorm and record answers to each of the questions on the “How to Read an Object” chart.
- Have groups compare their responses by having the presenter share with the large group their results.
- Display each groups “How to Read an Object” with particular prop, whether piece, picture or written description.
- Teacher will display pictures of the following stone implements named and numbered by catalog numbers from the Nez Perce National Historical Park museum collection:

Ax Head - NEPE 6387 Basalt Knife – NEPE 6386 Igneous Chopper – NEPE 6390 Scraper Quartz – NEPE 3000



- Discuss, contrast and compare the archived objects and the modern implements used in everyday life. Ask the following questions:
 - >What is similar between the scrapers of today and prehistorically?
 - >What is different between the scraper and of the archived (and modern) knife?
 - >What other uses might the sharp edge of the knife been used for?

□ **Activity 2: Legends and Petroglyphs**

Introduction and Warm Up

Explain, discuss, brain storm with students about different uses of sharp, cutting instruments, such as the scraper and more specifically, the knife (catalog number NEPE 6386)

Tell students they will be using objects from a National Park Service site as source of learning and information. Explain that they will learn to look very closely at pictures to deduce historical, cultural and social information and to draw inferences about people, events, and life then and now. Ask questions that draw on observational skills, and develop activities that exercise powers of deduction, inference, and creativity based on this lesson.

Do the following with the students:

Project the photograph of “Heart of the Monster” on the screen. Teacher tells the Legend, “Heart of the Monster” to the class.

The Legend of Coyote and the Swallowing Monster

Educator’s Guide, National Park Service, Nez Perce National Historical Park, Spalding, Idaho

Coyote was building a fish – ladder, by tearing down the waterfall at Celilo, so that salmon could go upstream for the people to catch. He was busily engaged at this when someone shouted to him, Why are you bothering with that? All the people are gone; the monster has done for them.”—“Well,” said Coyote to himself, “then I’ll stop doing this, because I was doing it for the people, and now I’ll go along too.”

From there he went along upstream, by the way of the Salmon River country. Going along he stepped on the leg of a meadow – lark and broke it. The meadow-lark in a temper shouted, “lima’, lima’, lima’, what a chance of finding people you have, going along!” Coyote then asked, “My aunt! Please inform me; afterwards I will make you a ledge of brush-wood.” So the meadow-lark told him, “Already all the people have been swallowed by the monster.” Coyote then replied, “Yes, that is where I, too, am going.”

From there he traveled on. Along the way he took a good bath, saying to himself, “Lest I make myself repulsive to his taste,” and then he dressed himself all up, “Lest he will vomit me up or spit me out.” There he tied himself with rope to three mountains. From there he came along upland over ridges. Suddenly, behold, he saw a great head. He quickly hid himself in the grass and gazed at it. Never before in his life had he seen anything like it, never



such a large thing away off somewhere melting into the horizon was its gigantic body.

Now then that Coyote shouted to him, “Oh Monster, we are going to inhale each other!” The big eyes of the monster roved around looking all over for Coyote but did not find him; because Coyote’s body was painted with clay to achieve a perfect protective coloring in the grass. Coyote had on his back a pack consisting of five stone knives, some pure pitch, and a flint fire-making set.

Presently Coyote shook the grass to and for and shouted again, “Monster! We are going to inhale each other!” Suddenly the monster saw the swaying grass and replied, “Oh you Coyote, you swallow me first, then you inhale first.” Now Coyote tried. Powerfully and noisily he drew in his breath and the great monster just swayed and quivered. The Coyote said, “Now you inhale me, for already you have swallowed all the people, so swallow me too lest I become lonely.”

Now the Monster inhaled like a mighty wind. He carried Coyote along just like that, but as Coyote went he left along the way great camas roots and great service berries, saying, “Here the people will find them and will be glad, for only a short time away is the coming of the human race.” There he almost got caught on one of the ropes, but he quickly cut it with his knife. Thus he dashed right into the monster’s mouth. From there he walked along down the throat of the Monster. Along the way he saw bones scattered about and he thought to himself, “It is to be seen that many people have been dying.” As he went along he saw some boys and he said to them, “Where is his heart? Come along and show me!” Then, as they were all going along, the bear rushed out furiously at him. “So!” Coyote said to him, “You make yourself ferocious only to me,” and he kicked the bear on the nose. As they were going along the rattlesnake bristled at him in fury. “So! Only towards me you are vicious—we are nothing but dung.” Then he kicked the rattlesnake on the head and flattened it out for him. Going on he met the brown bear, who greeted him, “I see he (the Monster) selected you for the last.”—“So! I’d like to see you save your people.....”

Thus all along the people hailed him and stopped him. He told the boys, “Pick up some wood.” Here his friend fox hailed him from the side, “He’s such a dangerous fellow, the Monster, what are you going to do to him? -- “So!” replied Coyote. “You two hurry along and look for wood.”

Presently Coyote arrived at the heart, and he cut slabs of fat and threw them to the people. “Imagine you being hungry under such conditions – grease your mouths with this.” And now Coyote started a fire with his flint, and shortly smoke drifted up through the Monster’s nose, ears, eyes, and anus. Now the Monster said, “Oh you coyote, that’s why I was afraid of you. Oh you Coyote, let me cast you out.”

And Coyote replied, “Yes, and later let it be said, ‘He who was cast out is officiating in the distribution of salmon.’”—“Well, then, go out through the nose.” Coyote replied, “And will not they say the same?” And the Monster said, “Well then, go out through the ears,” to which Coyote replied, “And let it be said, ‘Here is ear-wax officiating in the distribution of food.’” – “Hn, hn, hn, oh you Coyote! This is why I feared you; then go out through the anus,” and



Coyote replied, “And let people say, ‘Feces are officiating in the distribution of food.’”

There was his fire still bearing near the heart and now the Monster began to writhe in pain and coyote began cutting away on the heart, whereupon very shortly he broke the stone knife. Immediately he took another and in a short time this one broke, also, and Coyote said to all the people, “Gather up all the bones and carry them to the eyes, ears, mouth, and anus; pile them up and when he falls dead, kick all the bones outside.” Then again with another knife, he began cutting away at the heart. The third knife he broke and the fourth, leaving only one more. He told the people, “All right, get yourselves ready because soon as he falls dead each one will go out of the opening most convenient. Take the old women and old men close to the openings so that they may get out easily.”

Now the heart hung by only a very small piece of muscle and Coyote was cutting away on it with his last stone knife. The Monster’s heart was still barely hanging when his last knife broke, whereupon Coyote threw himself on the heart and hung on, just barely tearing it loose with his hands. In his death convulsions the Monster opened all the openings of his body and now the people kicked the bones outside and went on out. Coyote, too, went on out. Here now the Monster fell dead and now the anus began to close. But there was the muskrat still now the Monster fell dead and now on out. Coyote, too, went on out. Here now the Monster fell dead and now the anus began to close. But there was the muskrat still inside. Just as the anus closed he squeezed out, barely getting his body through, but alas his tail was caught; he pulled, and it was bare when he pulled it out; all the tail-hair peeled right off.

Coyote scolded him, “Now what were you doing; you had to think up something to do at the last moment. You’re always behind in everything.” Then he told the people, “Gather up all the bones and arrange them well.” They did this, whereupon Coyote added; “Now we are going to carve the Monster.”

Coyote then smeared blood on his hands sprinkled this blood on the bones, and suddenly there came to life again all those who had died while inside the Monster. They carved the great Monster and now Coyote began dealing out portions of the body to various parts of the country all over the land; toward the sunrise, toward the sunset, toward the warmth, toward the cold, and by that act destined the fore naming of the various peoples; Coeur d’Alene, Cayuse, Pend Oreilles, Flathead, Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, et al. He consumed the entire body of the Monster in this distribution to various lands far and wide.

And now Fox came up and said to Coyote, “What is the meaning of this, Coyote? You have distributed all of the body to faraway lands but have given yourself nothing for this immediate territory” – “Well,” snorted Coyote, “and did you tell me that before? Why didn’t you tell me that a while ago before it was too late? I was engrossed to the exclusion of thinking. You should have told me that in the first place.”

And he turned to the people and said, “Bring me water with which to wash my hands.” They brought him water and he washed his hands and now with the bloody wash water he sprinkled the local regions, saying, “You (Nez Perce) may be little people but you will be powerful. Even though you will be little people because I have deprived you, nevertheless



you will be very, very manly. Only a short time away is the coming of the human race.”

- Discuss meaning and significance of the legend. Talk about the knives breaking and Coyote having several on hand.
- Compare and Contrast today’s utility implements with the knives in the legend and the different types of material to construct a knife in the past and now.
- Discuss why the students think coyote had five knives.

Activity 3: Write a Legend:

- Project the picture of “Heart of the Monster on the screen.
- Have the student discuss with a partner what the picture signifies as a legend (Five minutes).
- Each student will then return to individual status and using the format of “Heart of the Monster”, write their own Legend.
- In groups of four students will share their legends with their.
- Compare and contrast the original legend and the legends written by students.

Activity 4: Culminating: Legends to Pictographs – the rock itself becomes a canvas

Rock Art is the term commonly used for the pictures made on non-portable rock by Native Peoples. This is done in two forms; pictographs and petroglyphs. Pictographs are figures painted on rocks. Colorful minerals, soft rocks, are ground into a fine powder and mixed with a liquid fixative. This is then painted on rock with fingers brushes. Petroglyphs are chiseled onto a rock face with a small handheld stone. Rock Art sites are considered sacred sites, are fragile, and in the Pacific Northwest used by shaman and for a vision quest.

After students have been given the basic background on Rock Art they will individually compile at least ten pictographic symbols to use to tell your legend with pictographs. He/she will choose color and design for each symbol.

Students will transfer their pictograph by developing an imitation rawhide of brown paper bag. That process is as follows:

- a. Each student will bring a full size brown grocery bag to class. The student will examine the bag and choose the side of the bag that does **not** have seam down the middle.
- b. He/she will tear around the edge of that side (with no seam) of the bag in two finger segments causing a jagged edge similar to that you might see on the edge of the hide of a skinned-out animal.
- c. To process the paper bag, get the paper DAMP by use of spray bottle or swish under faucet (if you have to wring it, it is too wet to work with). Brush it softly with a toothbrush, fingernail brush or vegetable brush. Wad it up and smooth it out several times. Rub it along the edge of a table or desk as you would with a towel along your back.
- d. Let dry overnight. Repeat this procedure three consecutive times (at least) or until the paper feels soft and supple with extended fibers as you might see on tanned leather.
- e. After the leather has been processed, transfer the pictographic symbols to tell the legend on the paper leather.



K. Evaluation/Assessment for Measurable Results

Outstanding	Proficient	Basic	Below
Analysis complete of the “How to Read an Object”. All questions were answered in a technical fashion.	Eighty percent of “How to Read an Object” questions were answered.	Seventy percent of “How to Read an Object” questions were answered.	Less than half of the questions to “How to Read an Object” were answered.
Pictograph shows story in its entirety, creativity is exemplary, placement of symbols show a pattern of authenticity having used the Petroglyphs as a pattern.	Pictograph shows most of the story. Creativity shows thoughtful preplanning, Placement of symbols show a pattern of legible glyphs having used the Petroglyphs as a pattern.	Pictograph shows more than half of the story. Creativity shows some preplanning. Placement of symbols show a legible glyphs.	Pictograph shows less than half of the story. Creativity shows no preplanning. Placement of symbols do not show a legible glyphs.

L. Extension and Enrichment Activities

M. Resources

□ **Bibliography**

- Ackerman, Lillian. *A Necessary Balance: Gender and Power Among Indians of the Columbia Plateau*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003.
- Ramsey, Jared. *Coyote Was Going There Indian Literature of the Oregon Country*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1977.
- Raymer, Dottie. *Welcome to Kaya’s World 1764: Growing Up in a Native American Homeland*. Middleton, Wisconsin: Pleasant Company Publications [American Girls Collection], 2003.

Annotated related web sites with url addresses:

- Nez Perce National Historical Park : <http://www.nps.gov/nepe>
- Nez Perce Tribe: <http://www.nezperce.org>
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation: <http://www.colvilletribes.com/>
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation: <http://www.umatilla.nsn.us/>
www.cr.nps.gov/museum/

Site Visit

- **Pre-visit:** Before the visit, have the students visit the virtual museum web site and look at the online exhibit and complete activity one, how to read and object. After completing activity one, choose two more objects and analyze those. Also, have the children come prepared to analyze one or two objects of their choice on display in the museum.



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- ❑ **Site visit:** Call the park to make arrangements to visit. The staff can be reached at 208-843-2261, ext, 199. Have the students pick an object in the museum and analyze it using the knowledge gained in how to read an object.
- ❑ **Post-visit:** Pick one of the extension activities for students to complete. Have the students write down their reactions to what they learned about how museum objects can tell stories.



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How to Read an Object (See attachments)



Seasonal Cycle Diagram

Seasonal Cycle of Plateau Tribes Activities, Social Group & Food Supply

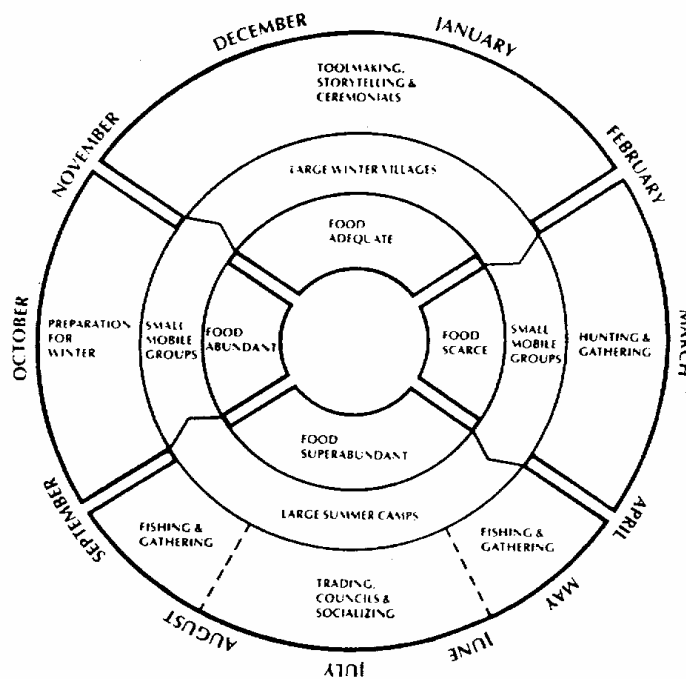


CHART: SEASONAL CYCLE OF PLATEAU TRIBES

The times on this chart are approximate. In any given year at any given locale, transition times depended on when the seasons actually changed; when plants matured, when fish ran, when cold weather arrived, et cetera.

From: Oregon Indians: Culture, History and Current Affairs, by Jeff Zucker, Kay Hummel and Bob Hogfoss, Western Imprints, 1983