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Answers

About the Author

Steven Greif has been named a “Distinguished Alumnus” of Southwestern Oregon Community College where he earned his Associate of Arts degree. His Bachelor of Arts degree in history came from Oregon State University where he won several awards for student writing. He also studied colonial history at the College of William and Mary and obtained his Interdisciplinary Master’s degree in history and geography at the University of Oregon. For 32 years, Greif taught leadership and civics classes, Advanced Placement American history, and Pacific Northwest history at North Bend (Oregon) High School, and coached track and field as well. He was honored with the Oregon Education Association’s “Excellence in Education Award” in 1996 and was named “Citizen of the Year” in North Bend in 2005. Greif has been a volunteer member of the Coos County Historical Society Board of Directors since 1999. Since retiring in 2010, he has taught night classes at the local community college.
North American Peoples on the Eve of European Contact

A. First Americans
   1 Historians don’t know exactly how and when North America was first settled. 2 Historians also debate about the density (number of inhabitants) of the native population in North America when Europeans arrived on the continent. 3 Common population estimates usually range from three to ten million people. 4 One of the first European explorers, Christopher Columbus, was looking for a sea route to the Spice Islands in the Indies off of Southeast Asia. 5 When he landed on the Caribbean Islands in 1492, Columbus mistakenly labeled the native peoples he encountered “Indians.” 6 The native peoples did not have a system of writing, so most of what we know today about these early peoples is not based on written history. 7 Instead, those who research Native Americans must piece together their history by using tribal stories and traditions, language patterns, genetic evidence, and archaeological evidence (physical artifacts).

B. Migration Theories
   8 Most historians today suggest that ancestors of Native Americans arrived in North America during the last ice age (about 33,000 to 13,000 years ago). 9 Several different theories have been put forth about their migration path. 10 Most scientific findings point to the arrival of the first humans in North America traveling from northeastern Asia across a land bridge called “Beringia” that existed between Siberia and Alaska. 11 As Earth warmed and these ice age glaciers retreated, the ancestors of Native Americans traveled by two main land routes south and settled in different areas throughout the hemisphere.
   12 Two smaller groups of researchers believe in different migration theories. 13 One group of scientists suggests that people from Southeast Asia, Australia, and islands in the East Pacific may have sailed east across the ocean to settle in South America. 14 Yet another group of historians say that people from southern Europe, a group called the Solutreans who lived in an area of today’s southern Spain, France, and Portugal sailed west across the Atlantic Ocean at the edge of an ice cap during the end of the last ice age.
   15 However native peoples migrated, this much is clear. 16 Over thousands of years small, widely scattered groups of people settled in diverse (different) areas throughout North America. 17 The geography of the regions they settled dictated unique ways to create shelters, produce food, dress, and worship. 18 Rich and diverse cultures developed. 19 The Native Americans often interacted with each other through trade and travel and created a way of life that had much in common, despite their differences.
   20 Many Native Americans believe their ancestors originated in the Americas. 21 Most tribes have creation stories that tell of their tribal beginnings. 22 Some historians say these creation stories may well reflect the experiences of native ancestors as they journeyed from Asia, across water, ice, and unknown lands, encountering new animals they had never seen before.

C. Northeast Tribes
   23 By the time of the arrival of Europeans around 1500, there were several distinct regions of Native American culture in North America. 24 One of those regions was the home of the Northeast tribes. 25 They lived along the Atlantic shore, into the Great Lakes region, and in the forests of the Appalachian Mountains. 26 Tribes in this area were mainly hunters and gatherers. 27 They built permanent longhouses made of bark attached to wooden pole frames. 28 Often described as fierce fighters, tribes in this region often fought one another. 29 By the time of the arrival of the first English colonists in the early 1600s, Native Americans had formed an organization called the Iroquois League to help keep peace among the warring tribes.
D. Southeast and Plains Tribes

30 In the Southeast, tribes relied heavily on farming for much of their food. 31 They grew maize (corn), beans, and tobacco but also supplemented their diet by fishing and hunting. 32 Their climate was milder so their homes were simple log frames with a roof covered in leaves or grasses. 33 Plains Tribes who lived in the middle of the continent depended on buffalo for tools, meat, and clothing. 34 Buffalo skins also covered their teepees (tent-like housing). 35 Plains tribes were nomadic, moving from season to season, hunting buffalo on foot. 36 After Spaniards brought horses to the Americas in the 1500s, many tribes migrated to the plains and thrived on the grasslands there. 37 Plains tribesmen quickly adapted the horse to their culture.

E. Southwestern and Basin Tribes

38 Between the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California and the Rocky Mountains was a region where the Great Basin tribes lived. 39 Much of the area was desert and not suitable for farming. 40 Simple tools like bows and arrows, stone knives, digging sticks, and fishing nets allowed these tribes to move about as they hunted and gathered food. 41 The Southwestern Region has a dry, hot climate. 42 Natives here were often called Pueblos because they built permanent villages ("pueblo" is the Spanish word for town). 43 Their homes were made out of thick adobe (sun-dried bricks made of clay and straw) to keep out summer heat and winter cold. 44 Some pueblos were three or four stories high and built under the overhangs of cliffs.

F. Northwest Coast Tribes

45 The Northwest Coast tribes relied heavily on salmon, shellfish, berries, and camas root to provide their foods. 46 Tribes were made up of villages built along the ocean shore or the edge of a bay or river. 47 Native homes along the coast were planked (long, flat timbers) longhouses. 48 They also used local forests to gather materials for woven mats, baskets, canoes, and other wood products. 49 Inland from the coast, east of the Cascade Mountains, were the Plateau tribes. 50 Like the Great Basin and Plains tribes, Plateau tribes were nomadic, moving with the seasons. 51 Annual salmon runs up the Columbia River into the interior plateau region provided a major source of food. 52 Plateau tribes traded widely with the Northwest Coast tribes and the Plains tribes.

Native American Regions in North America

Mesa Verde in Colorado is an example of Pueblo architecture.

Fun Fact Feature

- Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Illinois, Arkansas, North Dakota, Utah … these are some modern-day names of states in the United States. What do these names have in common?
1. When European explorers came to North America around 1500, how many Native Americans were probably living on the continent?
   a. only a few thousand
   b. 1 million
   c. 3 to 10 million
   d. about 45 million

Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

2. Explain why the name “Indians” is really a mistaken label given the natives by Christopher Columbus.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. Many Native American tribes believe this about their existence in North America:
   a. creation stories show their ancestors originated here.
   b. Solutreans from southern Spain, France, and Portugal became the first Americans.
   c. Native peoples migrated from northeastern Asia during the ice age.
   d. Australians and southeastern Asians sailed east across the Pacific Ocean.

Which sentences best support the answer? _____ _____

4. “Beringia” is the name given to:
   a. the first Native Americans.
   b. the ancestral language group of Native Americans.
   c. the people who may have sailed across the Atlantic Ocean from southern Spain.
   d. the land bridge between North East Asia and Alaska during the most recent ice age.

Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

5. Historians have been able to piece together Native American history mainly because of the vast amount of written records kept by Native Americans over the centuries.

Is this statement true or false? _____

Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

6. Name two Native American regions in North America where the natives used “longhouses.”
   a. _____________________________
   b. _____________________________

7. Which theory of Native American migration is most popular among scientists today?
   a. Solutrean ocean crossing
   b. Beringia migration
   c. Native American creation stories
   d. Australian, South East Asian, Pacific Island Ocean crossing

Which sentence best supports the answer? _____

8. In which region of North America were the natives often referred to as “Pueblos” as a result of the housing structures they created?
   a. Northwest Coast
   b. Southwest Region
   c. Plains Region
   d. Southeast Region

Which sentences best support the answer? _____ _____

9. In which region of North America was the Iroquois League located?
   a. Northwest Coast
   b. Southwest Region
   c. Plains Region
   d. Northeast Region

Which sentence best supports the answer? _____
Written Response Question

10. “Although Native Americans in North America had many things in common, there were also many differences between the tribes.” Use complete sentences that provide evidence from the lesson to explain this statement to be true.

________________________________________________________________________________________
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Fun Fact Finale

Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, Kansas, Illinois, Arkansas, North Dakota, Utah … these are some modern-day names of states in the United States. These state names, like many rivers, towns, and other geographic features labeled on American maps, originate from Native American tribes.