

# UNIT I

## THE PEOPLING OF THE AMERICAS

### CHAPTER 1 The Development of Early Cultures in North America

The year 1776 marks the birth of the United States as an independent nation. But that date does not represent the starting point of America's history. In fact, the American past is rooted in events that took place long before the United States existed.

#### HUNTERS OF THE ICE AGE

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Many thousands of years ago, the continents of North and South America had no human inhabitants. The Western Hemisphere was an immense wilderness. It was the home of mammoths, mastodons, saber-toothed tigers, and other animals that are now extinct. The Earth was experiencing an *Ice Age*, an era when a gigantic glacier covered much of North America and Europe. The last major Ice Age lasted from about 25,000 to about 10,000 years ago.

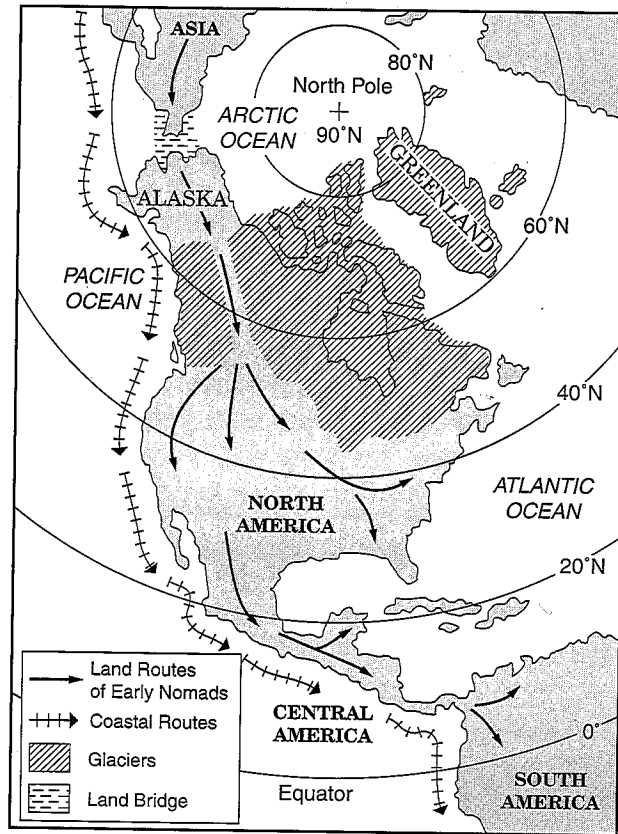
**1. Migration From Asia.** During this Ice Age, there were several major waves of people migrating in different ways from Asia to North America.

*a. By land.* The level of the oceans fell because so much water froze into ice. As ocean waters receded, they exposed a piece of land between East Asia and western Alaska that formed a kind of bridge linking Asia and North America. Bands of Asians wandered east across this land bridge. These *nomadic* Asian hunters and their families were probably tracking herds of wild animals.

**b. By sea.** Asians could have ventured around the northern rim of the Pacific Ocean to North America in small, skin-covered boats. They could have survived by fishing and hunting seals and other sea mammals.

## READING A MAP

### Routes to the Americas During the Ice Age



1. In what general direction did nomads from Asia travel after they passed through Alaska?
2. Why do you suppose that glaciers did not cover the lower part of North America?
3. The coastal routes of the Asian nomads were along which body of water?
4. According to the map, the nomads reached South America first at about what degree of latitude? (a) 80°N (b) 45°N (c) 20°N (d) 10°N.

After reaching ice-free parts of lower North America, the early migrants continued south and east. New generations of American-born *hunter-gatherers* spread out until they occupied most of North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean islands.

**2. Earliest Americans.** The early people of the Americas lived in many different groups and spoke many different languages. Each group had a name for itself—in most cases, one that meant simply “the people.”

Later settlers of the Western Hemisphere called the first Americans “Indians”—a name given them by the Italian explorer Christopher Columbus on his arrival in America in 1492. He so gave them that name because he thought he had landed in a part of Asia known as the Indies. The term continued in use even after people realized Columbus’s mistake. Today, descendants of North America’s first settlers are frequently identified as Native Americans.

In American history, the era before the arrival of Columbus is called the *Pre-Columbian Period*. It covers the huge span of years going back to the first Ice-Age hunters. Our knowledge of pre-Columbian times is limited because early Native Americans had no form of writing and thus left no written records.

The first Americans had a very simple *culture* (way of life). Since spear points have been found in various places, we know that the people used stone-tipped spears to hunt animals. They may also have *domesticated* (tamed) dogs to help them in the hunt. They wore clothing made of animal skins, and they probably knew how to make fire.

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**DEFINE OR IDENTIFY:** Ice Age, nomadic, hunter-gatherer, culture, domesticated.

**CRITICAL THINKING:** Do you think Asians could have come to America before the Ice Age?

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## AGRICULTURE AND OTHER ADVANCES

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As time passed, Native Americans slowly developed a more complex culture. They invented the bow and arrow and learned how to make a wide variety of stone tools. Some groups fished as well as hunted. Most became expert at gathering wild plants, seeds, and fruit.

Their most important advance was the discovery of agriculture. More than 5,000 years ago, some Native-American peoples discovered

that food could be grown and harvested, not simply gathered from wild plants. We do not know exactly where farming began in North America. It may have started in Mexico and spread from there. Perhaps it started in several different places in North America at roughly the same time.

One of the first important plants grown by Native Americans was *maize* (corn). This plant, native to the Western Hemisphere, was developed from wild types into several different varieties. Other important Native American crops were beans, potatoes, peppers, pumpkins, cotton, and tobacco.

**1. Changes in Native-American Life.** Farming brought about fundamental changes in the way Native Americans lived. It led to the following: (1) a more dependable food supply; (2) settlement in permanent locations instead of movement from place to place in search of food; (3) the banding together of families to form small farming villages; (4) the development of such crafts as pottery, basketry, and weaving; (5) the expansion of some villages into cities; and (6) in cities, the organization of formal government, the emergence of different social classes, and the growth of trade and commerce. Few cities developed in the lands we now call the United States.

**2. Contrasts With Other Cultures.** Unlike the peoples of other continents, pre-Columbian Native Americans had no horses, cattle, oxen, sheep, goats, or pigs. This meant that the Native Americans' supply of food was limited. More important, there were no *draft animals*, such as horses and oxen, to plow fields and carry heavy loads.

Mining and metalworking were also slower to develop in the Americas than in other parts of the world. Several Native-American peoples used gold, silver, and copper to make jewelry and small ceremonial objects. But there was no large-scale mining of iron for tools or weapons.

**3. Population.** In pre-Columbian times, North and South America were not densely populated. Scholars disagree on the total population. Many believe that there were only about 20 million people in the Americas, while other scholars say the number might be 50 million, or more. Of this number, the area that is now the United States was inhabited by some 2 to 10 million people.

**4. Varied Languages and Cultures.** The landforms, resources, and climates of the Western Hemisphere are extremely varied. Native Americans adapted to this variety as they migrated from region

to region. Gradually, they developed different cultures suited to their surroundings.

At the same time, a great number of languages developed as one group separated from another. Altogether, more than 1,500 languages were spoken in the pre-Columbian Americas. About 200 of this total were spoken in the region north of Mexico.

Scholars classify languages into large groupings called *language families*. (All the languages within a given family have similar grammar and word origins.) In North America, for example, the Algonquian language family consisted of more than 25 languages. These included Pequot and Narragansett on the Atlantic coast, Shawnee and Ojibwa in the Midwest, and Cheyenne and Blackfoot on the Great Plains.

## NATIVE CULTURES OF NORTH AMERICA

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In the part of the Americas that eventually became the United States and Canada, pre-Columbian culture was quite varied. This book discusses seven culture areas in North America. A *culture area* is a large region inhabited by people who share a similar way of life. (As used in this chapter, "North America" refers to the part of the continent north of Mexico. Locations of culture areas are given in terms of their present-day names.)

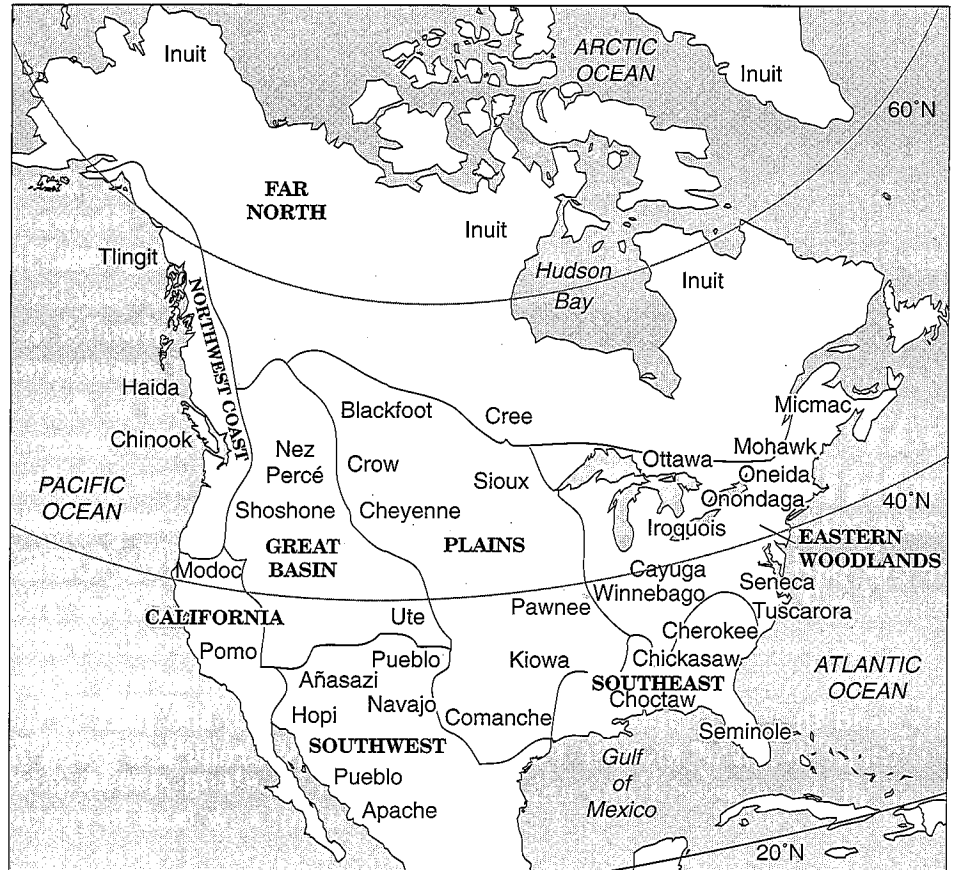
**1. The Southwest.** The Southwest culture area included most of Arizona and New Mexico, plus parts of neighboring states and northernmost Mexico. The Southwest is a warm, dry, generally flat land. There are also some mountains and valleys, and large, flat-topped rock formations. The area supported a fairly large population of Native Americans from earliest times.

**a. The Pueblo.** *Pueblo* is the Spanish word for "village." This name is applied to one group of Native Americans because they were living in villages when Spaniards arrived. They had a long history of settled community life.

Ruins of ancient settlements have been found in many parts of the Southwest. Some of the buildings were made of earth and logs, others of stone or *adobe* (sun-dried brick). Many were constructed at ground level, while some stood on ledges in steep cliffs. Several were like apartment houses, with many levels. The earliest "apartment house" ruins date back to A.D. 700. For a combination of reasons (climate

## READING A MAP

### Native-American Culture Areas of North America



1. In which culture area did the Nez Percé live?
  2. Which Native Americans were more dependent on the sea for their food, the Chinook or the Pawnee?
  3. Locate and name a Native-American culture area that includes the Great Lakes.
  4. Which culture area bordered both the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean?
  5. Name a Native-American group of the Southwest culture area.
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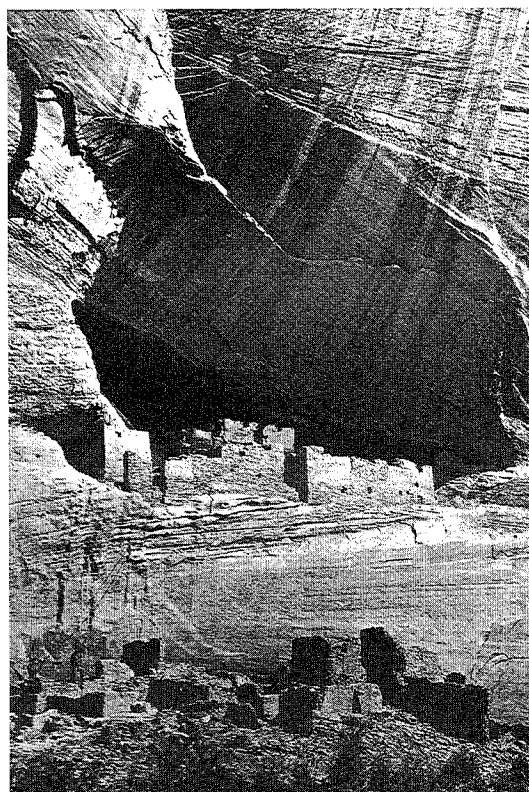
change, droughts, overpopulation, deforestation, wars), the inhabitants abandoned their cliff houses by the late 13th century.

The descendants of these people, the Pueblo, moved elsewhere and built simpler multifamily dwellings, usually at ground level. These complexes were from one to five stories high. About 30 of them still exist, mostly in northern New Mexico.

The Pueblo were excellent craftsmen and peaceful farmers. They developed special methods for growing crops on their dry land, including large *irrigation* systems. The Pueblo grew mainly corn, beans, and squash. Surpluses were stored, to be used when crops failed. After the Spaniards brought sheep to the New World, raising livestock became an important part of Pueblo life. The Pueblo made beautifully decorated pottery, baskets, blankets, and jewelry.

Pueblo life was regulated by an elaborate series of religious ceremonies. Each season had its own spirits and rituals, and every village formed organizations devoted to carrying out the proper observances. The Pueblo believed in *kachinas*, ancestral spirits that acted as messengers between gods and humans.

**b. Navajo and Apache.** Two other groups of Native Americans in the Southwest, the Navajo and Apache, were latecomers to



The Pueblo were known for multistoried structures such as these in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona.

the region. They arrived sometime after A.D. 1200, probably from the north.

The Navajo built *hogans* (eight-sided houses of earth and wood) near Pueblo settlements. From the Pueblo, the Navajo learned how to weave and make pottery. With the introduction of sheep, Navajos took up shepherding and blanket weaving. They also became fine silversmiths.

Unlike the Navajo, the Apache had little interest in settling down in permanent villages. Most of them were nomadic hunters. They were also fierce fighters who preyed on the farms and livestock of their neighbors.

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**DEFINE OR IDENTIFY:** draft animal, language family, culture area, adobe, irrigation.

**CRITICAL THINKING:** How did the Pueblo manage to grow crops on land that is now arid?

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**2. The Southeast.** The Southeastern culture area extended from the Gulf of Mexico northward to Kentucky and from eastern Texas eastward to the Atlantic Ocean. The people of the Southeast had a long history. Beginning about 700 B.C., large earth mounds were built in many parts of the Mississippi River Valley. (They were located in the Eastern Woodlands culture area as well as in the Southeast.) Some of the mounds contained burials. Others had temples on top. The most unusual mounds were built in the shape of animals, such as birds and turtles. The mounds have yielded beautiful carvings and jewelry made of copper, stone, and mica. Many of these arts and crafts are decorated with designs like those found on objects in Mexico. It seems clear that there was trade with people in Mexico.

When European settlers arrived, Native Americans in the area knew nothing about the origins of the mounds. For a long time, people thought that a mysterious race of "Mound Builders" had once existed and then died out. We now know that an earlier group of Native Americans built the mounds.

At the time Europeans came to the Southeast, Native Americans were living in simple villages surrounded by log fences. Since the climate was mild, the people preferred light, airy houses—sometimes just a roof supported by poles. Clothing was simple, too. Southeastern peoples hunted, fished, and farmed. Their main crop was corn. They also grew potatoes, melons, tobacco, and sunflowers. For travel along the many streams, rivers, and swamps of the region, Southeasterners used cane rafts and dugout canoes.



Groups of this region included the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Cherokee, and Seminole. It was common for groups and villages to form alliances. One of the most important of these alliances was the Creek Confederacy, which linked more than 50 settlements in Alabama and Georgia.

**3. The Eastern Woodlands.** Extending from Kentucky into Canada and from the Atlantic coast to beyond the Mississippi River was the Eastern Woodlands culture area. Many of its groups—from the Penobscot in the east to the Ojibwa in the west—spoke languages in the Algonquian language family. Most others spoke Iroquoian languages.

**a. Woodlands culture.** Eastern Woodlands peoples were hunters and farmers. For much of their food, they depended on deer, bear, wild fowl, and fish. They also raised corn, beans, squash, and tobacco. From the sap of maple trees, Eastern Woodlands peoples made syrup and sugar. Those in the upper Great Lakes region harvested wild rice.

Nearly all Eastern Woodlands tribes lived in villages. The most common kind of dwelling was the dome-shaped *wigwam* covered with bark. Iroquois lived in big, rectangular *longhouses*, often covered with bark. Each one could house many families.

**b. Political organization.** Most Eastern Woodlands peoples had a simple, democratic political organization. There were no hereditary rulers. People chose a good military leader or someone in close touch with the spirit world as chief. Usually a group of such chiefs made the major decisions for a tribe.

A notable political achievement was the Iroquois Confederacy, or Five Nations, formed around 1570. Its members were the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca of central New York. They were later joined by the Tuscarora of North Carolina to form the Six Nations. Although each group was independent in local affairs, a central governing body of *sachems* decided matters of common interest. Older women chose the sachems to represent their nation. (Iroquois women played an important role, for society was organized around the "fireside"—a woman and her children.) The Iroquois Confederacy dominated much of the Eastern Woodlands region for 200 years.

**c. Religion.** All Native-American groups believed in a supernatural force inhabiting all living things, human and nonhuman. The Native Americans tried to communicate with this power through visions and dreams. The Eastern Woodlands peoples, like Native Americans elsewhere, practiced many rituals and ceremonies. Some had to



Iroquois longhouses.

do with planting, growing, and harvesting crops. Others marked important events in a person's life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. There were also rituals for driving out evil spirits, for victory in war, and for a successful hunt.

**d. *The Woodlands legacy.*** Inhabitants of the Eastern Woodlands were the first Native Americans whom English settlers met. Thus, many Eastern Woodlands words for distinctively American plants and animals entered the English language. Examples are hickory, tamarack, chipmunk, moose, opossum, raccoon, and skunk. English settlers also learned about many customs common to most North American peoples. Such traditions included ceremonial smoking (passing the peace pipe) and burying a hatchet (tomahawk) to signal peace, holding councils of elders (powwows), and carrying babies (papooses) in cradleboards.

**4. The Plains.** The Native Americans that many cowboy movies have made familiar are those of the Great Plains. Their distinctive feather headdresses, their skill on horseback, and their bravery as fighters made them famous all over the world. Plains peoples inhabited a large territory between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Much of this region was dry and relatively treeless and was covered with tall grass.

Centuries ago, the Plains peoples, like those of the Southeast and Eastern Woodlands, depended on both hunting and farming. Unlike these other groups, however, Plains peoples were nomadic. Most of

the year, they lived in solid *earth lodges*, built partly underground along riverbanks in the eastern plains. Nearby, the community grew corn, beans, squash, and other crops. But in the summer, they moved westward into the area called the High Plains, where they hunted buffalo. There they lived in cone-shaped *tepees* made of animal skin.

Vast herds of buffalo once lived on the plains. (As late as 1850, there were more than 20 million of them.) From buffalo, the Plains peoples obtained meat, fur (for robes), hides (for clothing, tepees, and shields), and bones (for tools). Buffalo sinews were used as bow-strings, their hooves and horns were heated to make glue, and their droppings were burned as fuel.

**a. The coming of the horse.** Hunting buffalo on foot required special skills. One method Native Americans used was to disguise themselves in buffalo robes and sneak up on a herd. Another was to stampede the animals into pens or over a cliff. But days or weeks might go by before scouts could track down a herd.

Then about 1700, things changed. By this time, Spaniards had settled in Mexico and the Southwest, bringing horses with them. Some of the horses escaped, and others were traded. Early in the 18th century, Plains peoples started to acquire horses in large numbers. Now buffalo hunting became much easier. Many Native Americans gave up their farming life and stayed permanently on the High Plains as nomadic hunters. Those who did so include the best-known Plains tribes: the Cheyenne, Blackfoot, Crow, Comanche, and Arapaho. Other tribes, including the Mandan, Pawnee, and Omaha, kept to the old ways. The Sioux (or Dakota) split up; some lived as part-time farmers in Minnesota, while others moved westward onto the plains.

**b. Life on the plains.** Plains peoples moved about in groups of a few families, settling here and there within a large tribal territory. (Like most Native Americans, Plains people did not believe in individual land ownership. They did, however, regard certain regions as tribal homelands.) Several bands might assemble once or twice a year for a council or special celebration. As in most other culture areas, chiefs who had proved themselves as hunters, fighters, or spiritual leaders made the important decisions.

Fighting was important to Plains peoples. They often conducted raids to steal horses. But the most important reason for fighting was to gain honor. As a measure of honor, individuals *counted coup*: They received credit for certain brave deeds such as touching an enemy in combat without being hurt or downing a buffalo with one shot.

Seeking spiritual help, Plains people might go alone to a special place and fast for several days, hoping that a spirit would appear and predict the future. The spirit could also advise the vision-seeker

to get help from a special animal or sacred object. Some people were noted for their ability to get in touch with the spirit world. They were called upon to heal illnesses or cast spells on enemies. Europeans called such gifted Native Americans medicine men (although women might also perform these functions).

**5. The Great Basin.** Small nomadic bands of Ute, Paiute, and Shoshone lived in the Great Basin, the partly barren region between the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada. This area included Utah, Nevada, and Colorado. Here, large game was scarce, and the land was too dry for farming.

Great Basin peoples gathered the nuts of the piñon tree and ground them into meal. They also caught grasshoppers, hunted small animals, collected wild seeds, and dug for edible roots. Shelter was provided by caves or by brush huts called *wickiups*. Basketry developed into a distinctive art form. Women wove reeds and plant fibers so tightly together that their baskets could hold water. They cooked in the baskets by dropping in heated stones until the contents simmered.

**6. California.** Many small tribes—among them the Hupa, Modoc, and Pomo—inhabited the coastal section and interior valleys of California. California tribes lived apart from one another and spoke a variety of related languages. A mild climate, abundant food, and favorable environment enabled them to live simply and peaceably. They made brush huts or tepee-like bark shelters.

Native Americans of California made the finest baskets in America. Women wove colored grasses, fibers, and feathers to form artistic containers with intricate designs.

Since California Native Americans did not farm, they relied largely on acorns for nutrition. Acorns were shelled, ground, and soaked with water to remove the bitter, poisonous tannic acid. After being dried, roasted, and ground again, acorn meal was cooked as porridge or baked as bread. The Californians also fished, hunted deer and other game, and gathered fruits and seeds.

**7. The Northwest Coast.** Along the northern Pacific stretched a narrow region with a very special culture. Here, in western Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, the forests were full of game and the waters teemed with fish. The Northwest Coast groups, from the Tlingits in the north to the Chinooks in the south, had no need to grow their own food.

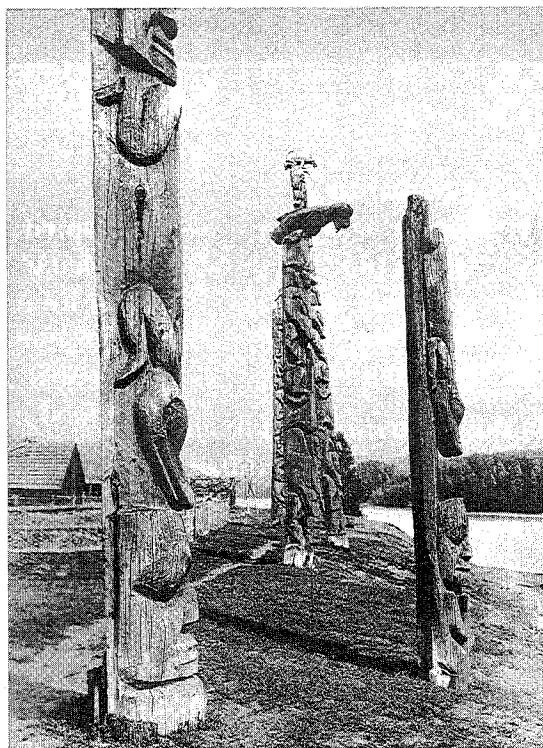
Depending on their location, Northwest Coast peoples relied on various staples. Those living along the rivers could catch enough

salmon during the spawning season to last them the rest of the year. (The fish were dried or preserved in oil.) Those close to the ocean caught halibut, cod, herring, and shellfish. Group hunts for sea lions, otters, porpoises, and whales were organized as well. Northwest Coast peoples also gathered berries and hunted game in nearby woods.

Most Native Americans of the Northwest Coast lived in villages of wooden houses with slanting roofs. Built of posts, beams, and planks, each house was generally large enough for dozens of people. In front of each house stood the family totem pole. This tall, wooden post was carved with animal, bird, and human figures sacred to the family.

Skilled woodworkers, the Northwest Coast peoples could make from one tree a boat up to 60 feet long. They carved handsome, water-tight storage boxes and richly ornamented masks. Other Northwest crafts included hammering copper into thin, shield-shaped ornaments and weaving decorative blankets from bark and animal hair.

Most of the gods of the Northwest Coast peoples were associated with animals of the region. In many of their ceremonies, these Native Americans acted out roles as animal spirits. Wearing fantastic costumes and giant masks, dancers flew through the air (suspended by



Totem poles in Kitoanga, British Columbia. They are representative of the totem poles of all Northwest Coast Native Americans.

ords) or appeared from the floor (out of trapdoors). By speaking through hidden reeds, some of the actors even made their voices seem to come from flames.

Wealth and social position were extremely important to the Northwest peoples. Society was divided into nobles, common people, and slaves. (Slaves were taken during raids on other tribes.) Nobles competed keenly to improve their social standing. This competition gave rise to the *potlatch*. The main purpose of this celebration was to show off wealth by giving away or destroying valuable possessions. Guests and rivals would then have to hold even more costly potlatches, or else be publicly disgraced.

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**DEFINE OR IDENTIFY:** wigwam, longhouse, sachem, tepee, earth lodge, wickiup.

**CRITICAL THINKING:** The first group of Europeans that the Eastern Woodlands people along the Atlantic Coast in Massachusetts saw were probably fishermen. What do you think the two groups thought of each other?

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## Chapter Review



### MATCHING TEST

#### Column A

1. maize
2. totem pole
3. counting coup
4. kachina
5. potlatch

#### Column B

- a. a spirit; a doll that represents a spirit
- b. an item that honors one's ancestors
- c. ceremony to display and give away wealth
- d. a food grown by many Native Americans
- e. an act of bravery among Plains braves

### MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST

1. The ancestors of today's Native Americans probably came from (a) East Asia (b) Europe (c) Africa (d) India.

2. A land bridge connected Asia and North America until about (a) 8000 B.C. (b) 200 B.C. (c) the time of the birth of Christ (d) A.D. 1500.
3. One of the most important crops native to the Western Hemisphere was (a) wheat (b) corn (c) barley (d) rye.
4. The "apartment house" dwellings of the ancient Southwest were built by (a) ancestors of the Pueblos (b) the Navajos (c) the Apaches (d) the Spaniards.
5. Native-American groups in the Southeast (a) lived in pueblos (b) caught salmon (c) built large ceremonial mounds (d) never farmed.
6. The culture area that contributed such Native-American words as *chipmunk*, *hickory*, *moose*, and *raccoon* to the English language was the (a) Eastern Woodlands (b) Southwest (c) Northwest Coast (d) Plains.
7. The buffalo was a mainstay of the Native Americans of the (a) Great Basin (b) Eastern Woodlands (c) Southwest (d) Plains.
8. California Native Americans were known best for making especially fine (a) baskets (b) pottery (c) boats (d) jewelry.
9. Northwest Coast peoples made (a) earth mounds (b) totem poles (c) tepees (d) hogans.
10. Native Americans of the Northwest Coast (a) were among the poorest in America (b) grew vast fields of corn (c) competed by giving away property (d) lived in tepees made of hides.



### ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Describe the culture of the earliest inhabitants of America at the time of their arrival in North America.
2. What improvements in living conditions did the introduction of agriculture in North America make possible?
3. Compare and contrast any *two* culture areas described in this chapter.
4. Describe some of the ways Native Americans made use of animal skins and fur.
5. From what you have read of Native-American cultures in North America, which aspects of the cultures might have made it

difficult for Native Americans and Europeans to live together in peace? Explain your answer.

### DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

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This question is based on the accompanying documents (1–4). It will improve your ability to work with historical documents.

#### Historical Context:

Our knowledge of prehistoric America is based on archaeological evidence and oral history.

#### Task:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of United States history, read each document and answer the question or questions that follow it. Your answers to the questions will help you write the document-based essay.

**Document 1.** Study the map on page 2. It depicts the latest scientific research on how Asians came to North America thousands of years ago.

According to the map, what routes did Asians take to come to North America?

**Document 2.** The Paiute, a Native-American people, settled in what is today the western United States. Some of their legends tell the story of how they first came to North America. When the following legend was first told is unknown, but it describes a challenge many people faced thousands of years ago as they moved through the northwestern areas of North America.

Ice had formed ahead of them, and it reached all the way to the sky. The people could not cross it. . . . A raven flew up and struck the ice and cracked it. Coyote said, "These small people can't get across the ice." Another raven flew up again and cracked the ice again. Coyote said, "Try again, try again." Raven flew up again and broke the ice. The people ran across.

Source: Parfit, Michael, "The Dawn of Humans," *National Geographic*, Vol. 198, No. 6, December 2000, p. 43.

- a. What do you think the Paiute legend meant by the description of the ice that "reached all the way to the sky"?



- b. Describe what you think the place was where “the people ran across.”

**Document 3.** A creation story from the Cheyenne, a Native-American people who once lived in the Great Lakes region but eventually settled in the Great Plains:

Now where they came in the south, the land was barren, and food and water were not plentiful. So the Great Power taught the red people to hunt and to make clothes to cover themselves against the cold, and they had a pretty good life.

Source: Parfit, *ibid.*, p. 61.

Describe one advantage and one disadvantage of hunting on “barren” land.

**Document 4.** The words of a Hopi man in the 16th century. (The Hopi are part of the Pueblo peoples. Find the Pueblo on the map on page 6.)

We perform the Snake Dance for rain to fall to water the earth, so that planted things may ripen and grow large.

Source: Maynard, Jill (ed.) *Through Indian Eyes: The Untold Story of Native American Peoples*. NY: Readers Digest Books, 1955, p. 87.

How do the Hopi man’s words show that he believed he could influence the workings of nature?

### DOCUMENT-BASED ESSAY

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Using information from the above documents and your knowledge of United States history, write an essay in which you:

- Explain how geography affected the development of early cultures in North America.
- Explain how climate affected the development of early cultures in North America.