

ACTIVITY 1

SAENOMEHSAEH FINDS A WAY

In Chapter 1 of Wisconsin Forest Tales, students learn about connections the Menominee have to forests. In this activity they explore these connections further and write a legend that describes how one of the connections came to be.

BACKGROUND

Before there were supermarkets and department stores, the Menominee gathered what they needed for daily living from the forest. From food and water to shelter, tools, clothing, and medicines, the Menominee looked no further than their natural surroundings to find or make the things they needed.

The Menominee collected food from plants growing in the forest. They also hunted forest animals and fished in nearby streams to provide food for their families. Not ones to waste, the Menominee found ways to use parts of the

animals they hunted to make clothing and tools. From the same streams they fished in, the Menominee collected drinking water. Coupled with a canoe made from tree materials, these streams also served as modes of transportation. Shelters such as wigwams were built by bending saplings into a framework. The joints were bound together with green basswood fiber and the framework was then covered with large sheets of bark. Forest resources were also used for medicines to help with everything from rashes to dental problems.

The Menominee have cultural connections to the forest as well. Some named their clans after forest animals. In addition, traditional legends are strongly connected to the natural world and frequently include plants and animals from the forest.



LESSON OBJECTIVE

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe ways that the Menominee are connected to the forest.

TIME

Introduction.....5 minutes
Activity.....45 minutes
Conclusion.....30 minutes

MATERIALS

- Writing paper and pencils
- Drawing paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- One worksheet per student

SUBJECT AREAS ADDRESSED

Language Arts
Social Studies
Visual Arts

INTRODUCTION

Help your students brainstorm ways that the Menominee were connected to or used forests in Chapter 1 of Wisconsin Forest Tales. Begin by giving a worksheet to each student and explain that the class will work together to fill out the top portion.

- Have your students look through the story for things that the Menominee ate. (*The Menominee in the story ate maple syrup made from maple sap, mushrooms, fish, deer, rabbits, and turkey.*)

Indicate to your students that most of these things came from the forest.

- Have students look through the story for tools that were made from forest materials. (*In the story, trays for collecting maple sap were made from birch bark, fire sticks were made from cedar bark and wood shavings, and bows and arrows were made from copper, hickory, cedar, rawhide, and feathers.*)
- Ask if your students remember the names of any of the the Menominee clans from the story. (*The clans mentioned in the story were Golden Eagle, Coot, and Wolf.*) Point out that clan names were related to the forest.
- Ask your students if they can think of any other ways that the Menominee were connected to the forest, even ways that may not be mentioned in the story. (*Legends, like the one told in the beginning of the chapter, were connected to the forest in many ways. In addition, forest resources provided the Menominee with water, shelter, clothing, medicines, and transportation.*)



ACTIVITY

1) Tell your students that they will have a chance to make up their own legend about the ways the Menominee were connected to forests. Remind your students that at the beginning of the chapter, Grandmother tells the old story of Maeqnapos and the white birch. Lead a discussion to help your class review the story.

- Why did Maeqnapos want feathers from the Thunderers? (*Maeqnapos wanted feathers to put on his arrow to help him catch the greatest fish in the lake.*)
- How did Maeqnapos get into the Thunderers' nest? (*He changed himself into a rabbit and one of the Thunderers snatched him up.*)
- How did Maeqnapos get the feathers? (*He waited until the old Thunderers went hunting, then he changed back into a man, pulled feathers from the young Thunderers and jumped out of the nest.*)
- What did the Thunderers do to Maeqnapos? (*They chased him and threw lightning bolts at him.*)

- How did Maeqnapos stay safe? (*Maeqnapos hid from the Thunderers in a hollow birch log. The birch protected Maeqnapos.*)
- How does this story explain the way birch trees look? (*To this day you'll see black marks on the bark of birch trees from the lightning bolts.*)

Tell your students that legends and stories are important aspects to the Menominee culture. Besides having a lesson to communicate, many stories are also related to observable characteristics of things in nature. The legend we just discussed tells about how a birch log protected Maeqnapos from lightning and explains why birch bark looks the way it does. Interestingly enough, many people throughout history have observed that birch trees are struck by lightning much less frequently than other trees.

2) Give your students instructions for writing their own legend. By now the top of their worksheet should be filled in. Explain that they will be filling in the bottom portion on their own. First they will choose at least one natural item from the forest that is somehow connected to Menominee life. Remind them to look at the top of their worksheet for ideas. Then they will need to figure out what kind of connection that item has to Menominee life. For example, does the item help the Menominee because it is food? Is it used in making tools, shelter, clothing, or medicine? Is it a name that represents a certain characteristic, like the name of a clan? Those observations will become the material for their story. Their legend will need to explain how the connection between the Menominee and the natural object came to be. For example, a student may choose to write a legend that explains why cedar is the best bark to use for making fire sticks, or a legend that explains how a particular clan got its name. Each story should be at least one page long. As an optional challenge, you may consider asking your students to include a lesson in their story, like some Menominee legends do.



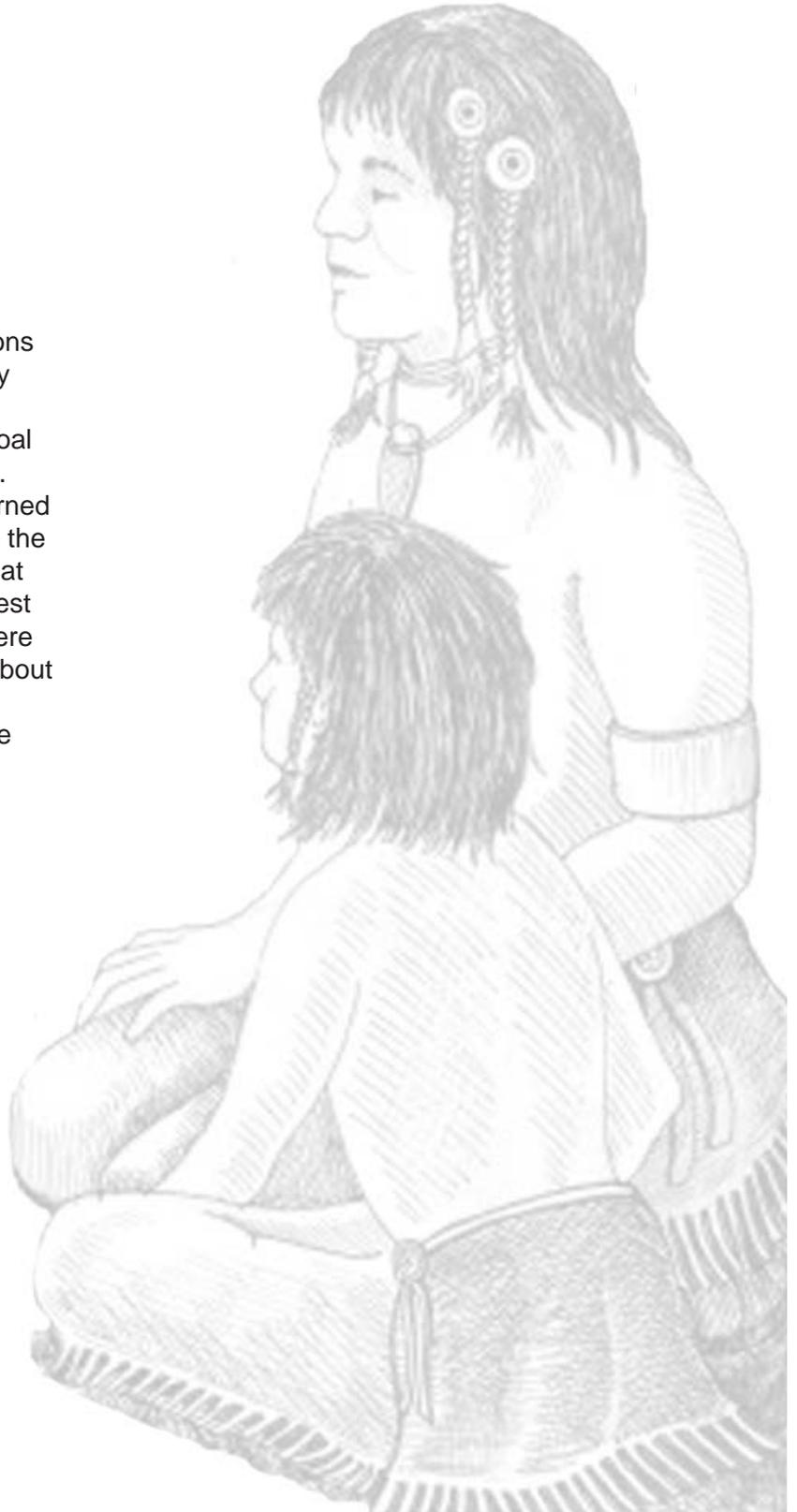
CONCLUSION

When everyone is done writing, ask your students to draw a picture to illustrate the legend they wrote. When the drawings are complete, ask several students to show their drawing and read their legend to the rest of the class.



ASSESSMENT

Have each student do a survey of family members to learn about their connections to forests. Speaking to grandparents or elderly neighbors might be especially interesting for students. Students should explain that their goal is to learn how different people use the forest. Encourage them to share what they have learned about the connection the Menominee have to the forest. Have them ask questions such as: What tools have you used that were made from forest products? What foods have you eaten that were gathered from forests? Do you have stories about your relationship with forests? Have students take notes during the interviews and share the information they gather with the rest of class or write a paragraph about the information they learned.



PART 1 - As a class, fill out the top of the worksheet.

1. List things from the story that the Menominee ate.

2. List tools from the story that were made from forest materials.

3. List names of the Menominee clans from the story.

4. What other ways were the Menominee connected to forests, even ways that may not have been mentioned in the story?

PART 2 - These questions will help you write a legend.

5. What item from the forest connected to Menominee life do you want to write about? Look at the top of the worksheet for ideas.

6. What is the connection that exists between your item and Menominee life? Does the item help the Menominee because it is food? Is it used in making tools, shelter, or medicine? Does the name represent a certain characteristic, like the name of a clan?

7. On a separate sheet of paper, make up a legend about how the connection from Question 6 came to be. For example, write a legend that explains why cedar is the best bark to use for making fire sticks, or write a legend about how a particular clan got its name. Your legend should be at least one page long.

Optional challenge: you may consider including a lesson in your story, like some Menominee legends do.