

Penobscot Nation

By ReadWorks

PLATE 88



BIRCHBARK WIGWAMS OF PENOBSCOT INDIANS.

Maine has a varied landscape, which includes hills, forests, rivers, streams, mountains, and coastline. The Penobscot Indians, a tribe native to a large portion of what is now the state of Maine, adapted to and used many parts of the land.

For centuries before the state of Maine was created, Penobscot Indians lived mainly in the region now known as the Penobscot River Basin. A river basin is the name for the land around a river and its smaller tributaries; river basins can be very small, or, in the case of the Penobscot River, very large. The Penobscot River Basin accounts for one-third of the state's area!

Rivers are known to be fundamental for civilizations. They provide a resource of utmost importance: water! The Penobscot Indians built their lives around the river and all that it supported. The river was a source of food, for example, as it provided fish for the Penobscot Indians to eat.

Both the main river and its smaller branches provided a means of transportation, and the Penobscot were extremely skilled at making canoes from the bark of birch trees, using branches and roots from ash, spruce, and cedar trees for other parts of the boats.

Besides its rivers, one of Maine's most distinct features has been its tree cover. Today, forestry and logging are important industries in Maine. Trucks stacked high with tree trunks rattle down roads in central Maine all day long, making loud noises and leaving behind the sticky smell of pine. Penobscot Indians used trees to their advantage long before modern loggers, however. In addition to making canoes, the Penobscot Indians built homes from the bark of birch trees. Bigger dwellings were made of larger branches and logs.

Within the forest, Penobscot Indians were able to hunt bears, moose, caribou, beavers, and otters for pelts (used for a variety of purposes, including warmth—it gets cold during Maine winters!) and food. They also gathered much of their food, collecting nuts, berries, and birds' eggs to augment their diet.

The Penobscot people crafted their own tools, including arrowheads, baskets, boats, and snowshoes. Today, Penobscot Indians have access to the same modern amenities that all Americans do, but many still make their own tools. This is in part because craftspeople can make money selling their work, but also for cultural reasons.

Penobscot Indians, like American Indians all over the United States, suffered a great deal when European settlers arrived. Disease killed thousands of American Indians, and settlers stole much of their land. Now, many American Indians live on reservations dedicated specifically to their population. Many Penobscot Indians today live near the land of their ancestors, in Maine.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which geographic feature did the Penobscot Indians build their lives around?

- A the forest
- B the river
- C the sea
- D the plains

2. What does the author describe throughout the text?

- A how Penobscot Indians adapted to Maine's landscape
- B how the Penobscot River Basin has impacted the populations that live near it
- C how Penobscot Indians are similar to and different from other American Indian tribes
- D different industries that have developed throughout Maine

3. The Penobscot Indians adapted to Maine's landscape. What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A "The Penobscot people crafted their own tools, including arrowheads, baskets, boats, and snowshoes."
- B "Penobscot Indians, like American Indians all over the United States, suffered a great deal when European settlers arrived."
- C "Both the main river and its smaller branches provided a means of transportation, and the Penobscot were extremely skilled at making canoes from the bark of birch trees..."
- D "For centuries before the state of Maine was created, Penobscot Indians lived mainly in the region now known as the Penobscot River Basin."

4. Why might Penobscot Indians continue to make their own tools?

- A because modern tools are of a lower quality
- B because they do not have access to modern amenities
- C because they cannot afford to buy mass-produced tools
- D to preserve their unique cultural traditions

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A how the Penobscot Indians suffered after European settlement
- B why the Penobscot Indians continue to make their own tools
- C how the Penobscot Indians used Maine's resources
- D how the Penobscot Indians preserve their cultural traditions

6. Read the following sentences: "Rivers are known to be **fundamental** for civilizations. They provide a resource of utmost importance: water! The Penobscot Indians built their lives around the river and all that it supported."

What does "**fundamental**" mean as used in this sentence?

- A destructive
- B essential
- C unimportant
- D ideal

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The Penobscot Indians hunted a variety of animals for their pelts, _____ bears, otters, and beavers.

- A especially
- B therefore
- C ultimately
- D such as

8. What two things did Penobscot Indians build from the bark of birch trees?

9. Explain why rivers are important to civilization.

10. Explain how the Penobscot Indians utilized the resources of their geographic surroundings.
