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Lesson 1: Maine's Fiber Beginnings Ideas for Alignment: Grades 3-5

Developed by Grace Morgan



Lesson Summary: Native Americans in Maine used many kinds of fibers throughout their history. They are presently most well-known for using sweetgrass as a fiber for baskets and decoration. In this lesson students will discuss the effect of climate and geography on fiber choices of Native Americans in Maine and experience gathering and using sweetgrass (if available) or any tall grass and plaiting the grass to make useful objects. Students will braid grasses as early people did.

Teacher Note: This activity could be done in class or as homework. If done as homework, be sure that all students are able to braid or supply directions/diagrams of how to do a 3 strand braid.

Learning Objectives:

The student will:

- Discuss how the use of fiber changed as the climate changed.
- Discuss how the geography of Maine could have affected the use of fiber in the Native American culture in Maine.
- Explain how seasonal (cyclical) changes would affect the lives of Native Americans and their use of fiber.
- Construct an item made by the same process and materials the Maine Native Americans used.

Process:

- Share background information from *Maine's Fiber Beginnings*, ask open ended questions and involve students in discussion.
- Introduce braiding/plaiting of grasses as one of the earliest ways to utilize a natural substance.
- Provide *Maine's Fiber Beginnings Activity: Braiding Grasses* and have students bring their tall grasses to class.

Maine Learning Results

ELA

E1b, c. Listening and Speaking

SS

D2. b Individual, Cultural, International and Global Connections in Geography

Common Core

ELA

Speaking and Listening: Grade 3: 3.



- Be sure to have extra grass on hand for those who are unable to provide their own.
- Follow directions on activity sheet. For those students who do not know how to braid, give directions orally.
- For a challenge, have class follow directions for a 4 strand braid. Diagrams and directions are included. Appendix.
- Use the activity rubric to evaluate grass braids. Sample rubrics are available in the Appendix.

Assessment: Use sample rubrics or class-developed rubric.

