

Example by StudyDriver

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Twenty Thousand Years Ago Example

Twenty thousand years ago when the Paleo-Indians hiked into North America over the land bridge, they began to divide into distinct groups. They often spoke different languages with their own beliefs of how to get food, create shelter and live altogether. When global warming reduced allowing nomadic hunters to pour into North America, they divided and created such diverse cultures that one would not believe each group was on the same continent. Within just a few thousand years, the Native Americans had traveled from present-day Colorado to the southern tip of South America. The groups of settlers before European conquest were the Paleo-Indians, the Archaic, and the Woodlands (Kincheloe). There is minimal evidence about the Paleo-Indian period which suggests that they were the first Indians in the Southeast. The Paleo-Indians hunted and defended themselves with stone tools, spears, and clubs, which were all crafted by hand. During the Archaic period, baskets, bone tools, and finer stone tools started to appear. Archaic peoples were the ones who also began to develop more specialized knowledge of their environments and the animals and plants that lived there. Although they did not generally travel far beyond their own environments, this is the point in time when the American Indians began to establish trade and migration routes that brought the native peoples of the Carolinas in contact with other bands and tribes. (Kincheloe)

The Eastern Woodland Indians lived in the Northeastern part of the United States in the area we would now call New York. These Indians, like the Paleo-Indians and Archaic people, depended on the natural resources around them to support their tribes. All their belongings like clothing, food, shelter, weapons, and tools were developed from the forests that they lived in. Their villages were located near lakes or streams so they could use the resources these bodies of water had to offer. Eastern Woodland were also some of the first to organize diplomacy, trade, and war around mutual relationships that would soon impress the Europeans that came to this continent. (Brands/Breen/Williams/Gross). Native American leaders had to develop a strong public appearance because persuasive speaking was often their the most effective source of power in this culture.

Many groups of indigenous Americans were hunters and gathers and others relied on agricultural ways of producing food. American Indians domesticated a variety of plants and animals, including squash, corn, beans, potatoes and animals like turkeys, llamas, and alpacas. These and other resources were used to support communities ranging from small groups with an estimated population of 10,000 to 20,000 members and large bands with some 125,000 to 200,000 individuals. (Prine Pauls). The Agricultural Revolution contributed to population growth, allowing some groups to establish intricate societies. North and South America had a vast variety of geologic and climate changes. As the weather warmed, the animals died off, and the Indians who hunted them had to turn to grow crops; which brought about the Agricultural Revolution. Along the Atlantic coast of North America, the Native Americans lived in smaller tribes and substituted agriculture for hunting and gathering. Most of the time women worked the farming fields, and men spent most of their time on the hunting grounds.

Indian houses were typically homes made of bark or straw and were sometimes raised off the ground. Some Indians also built winter homes without windows in order to keep the heat inside more efficiently. Some of the furniture you could find in the houses were straw or cane mats, pottery, basketry, and wooden utensils. The way villages developed were when families or small band of Indians settled in an area with fertile farming land. Some villages were even surrounded by a protective barrier like a fence or mountains, and most included a "council house" for public gatherings.

One of the last aspects that defined the pre-Columbian Native Americans was their unique styles of retaliating against neighboring tribes. Before the arrival of the Europeans, Indian wars were rarely lethal. Young warriors attacked neighboring tribes mainly to seek revenge for an insult or the death of a relative. The reason the Indians did not like fatalities during fights was that when a fatality did occur, the tribes that had the casualty would seek revenge on the tribe that killed their member. When captives were taken some were tortured to death, while others were adopted into the community to replace fallen relatives. (Brand/Bren/Williams/Gross)

During the thousands of years prior to European contact, the Native American people developed resourceful, creative and beautiful cultures and beliefs. They refined plants for food, dyes, medicines, and textiles, domesticated animals and established extensive patterns of trade. However, the most widely known developments were the complex systems of religious beliefs and construction of a social and political organization ranging from family bands and tribes to “city-state associations”. Native Americans not only adapted to the diverse and challenging environments, but they also redesigned the natural environments to fit their needs. After the arrival of Europeans in the New World in 1492, the Native Americans struggled to preserve the major parts of their diverse cultures while adapting to rapidly changing conditions (Mintz/McNeil). When the English and French explorers came to North America, they delivered tremendous changes to American Indian tribes. Europeans carried a hidden enemy not known to the Indians at this time; new diseases. Although Native Americans experienced illnesses like tuberculosis, they have not suffered from the major epidemics that under normal conditions would have killed much of their population each year. The native peoples of America were not immune to these new diseases the European explorers and colonists brought with them. Diseases such as smallpox, influenza, measles, and even chicken pox proved deadly to American Indians (Kincheloe). When the Europeans began to settle in the New World, it was both complicated and assisted by its indigenous people. However, the Native American, in turn, became allies and enemies of the newly arrived settlers from Europe. These two contradictory cultures were plunging toward each other in an impact that would soon be the end for one of them.