



Homes and Natural Resources Classroom Activity



SYNOPSIS

Homes and villages were the center of life for the early California Indians. Prior to European contact, California Indians built homes utilizing available natural resources.

OBJECTIVES

Students will compare the types of homes that were built depending on where they lived and the resources available to them. Students will be encouraged to build an example model of a traditional California Indian home utilizing any resources available to them.

STANDARDS SUPPORTED

HSS 4.2.1. Discuss the major nations of California Indians, including their geographic distribution, economic activities, legends, and religious beliefs; and describe how they depend on, adapted to and modified the physical environment by cultivation of land and use of sea resources.

NGSS 4–ESS3-2. Generate and compare multiple solutions to reduce the impacts of natural Earth processes on humans.

MATERIALS

- [California Tribal Regions map](#)
- [California Water for Life map](#)
- Photos of different houses (see below)
- Materials found in your yard, such as sticks, leaves, stems, grasses, etc.
- Materials found at school or home such as paper, cardboard, tape, glue, etc.

LESSON

1. Ask students what type of natural resources they may be able to use if they lived in a location such as a forest, wetland/ocean or desert environment?
2. How would their homes differ by location and why?
3. What kinds of skills would they need to build these homes?
4. What types of tools might they need?
5. Explain that many different tribes live throughout California. Each one of these tribes use natural resources in their everyday lives to survive. Natural resources are materials found in nature that are useful or necessary for living things.
6. Ask students to give examples of what they think would be important natural resources for people to have access to who lived in CA 500 years ago?
7. Students will view a map of California showing the various tribes and their distribution.
8. Explain that many different tribes live throughout California. Each one of these tribes use natural resources in their everyday lives to survive. Natural resources are “A material found in nature that is useful or necessary for living things.”
9. Ask students to give examples of what they think would be important natural resources for people to have access to who lived in CA 500 years ago?

10. Students will view a map of California showing the various tribes and their distribution and identify where on the map they approximately live.
11. Ask the students what California Indian tribe is from their area?
12. Ask students if they think the natural resources would be the same or different for the people in Southern California as they would be for people living in Northern California?
13. Have the students look at the Water for Life map and more specifically the charts at the top of the map.
14. Ask them if they think Northern California gets more or less rain than Southern California? Based on rainfall amounts do you think the types of plants would be different? Would they be smaller or taller?
15. Show the students the examples of the two main types of homes built by California Indians. The type of houses built would depend on the available natural resources.
16. Challenge students to build a small scale model of one of these traditional homes using whatever “natural resources” they can find at school or their house.
17. Once completed their model, have the students share their with you and/or their classmates.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

- Was it easy or difficult to build a model? What types of skills do you think you would need to build a full size home?
- What types of tools do you think they used?
- Where did they get these tools, and what type of natural resources did they use to make them?
- Do you think these homes lasted very long?
- Which of the two homes (Ki or Umuucha) do you think lasted the longest? Why?
- What would you do if you could not find the same type of natural resources you wanted to repair your home (for example, due to vegetation loss from a fire)? What could you do differently?
- In poor weather, what would you do to keep warm in these homes? How would you keep the rain, wind out?
- Do you think 500 years ago most people spent most of their time inside or outside of their homes and why?
- Of the two types of houses, which one do you think you would prefer to live in and why?

EXTENSION

- Have the students make both houses and compare and contrast their two models.
- Use check for understanding questions as writing prompts for the students.

Ki/Kish/Kiicha



Depending on where in California you lived, the dome shaped houses were either called a Ki, Kish or Kiicha. They were made from the natural materials found in the area. Those that lived near wetlands or the ocean would cover the framework with other plant materials such as cattail leaves and/ or bullrush plant (reeds) also known as tule or animal hides. The Gabrielino/Tongva, Serranos, Coastal Miwok, and Chumash are some of the tribes that built this type of house.

Framework of a Ki/Kish/Kiicha



People would often use the branches from living Willow trees (which were fairly easy to bend, yet strong) to make the framework of the house. They would tie the branches together using string/rope they would make from plants or animal tendon called sinew.



UMUUCHA (BARK HOUSE)

These cone shaped houses were often made of wood or bark, usually from a redwood tree. The Luisenos, Yokuts, Wintus, Sierra Miwoks, and Yuki are some of the tribes that built this type of house.