



THE SHOSHONES

SHOSHONE SEASONAL LAND USE AND CULTURE

TEACHER BACKGROUND

The name “Shoshone” comes from the descriptive “So-so-goi,” which means “those who travel on foot.” The Shoshones traveled with the seasons to most efficiently utilize the natural resources of their homeland. The culture that grew around these travel patterns and resources make the Northwestern Shoshones unique.

Like other Indian peoples, the Northwestern Shoshones teach family and tribal history through the oral tradition. In this lesson your students will teach each other about their own seasonal traditions by sharing stories. By creating a personal connection to the oral method of cultural transmission and the relationship between seasons and culture, your students will more readily retain the knowledge they gain about the Shoshones.

OBJECTIVE

The student will be able to analyze the relationship between the culture and environments of the Northwestern Shoshones. The student will also understand the importance of oral tradition to the transmission of Shoshone culture.

TEACHER MATERIALS

At a Glance: The Land and Culture of the Northwestern Shoshones

Shoshone Seasonal Activities and Foods Cheat Sheet

Instant Book Sample

We Shall Remain: The Shoshone (chapter 2, 2:19–4:45)

STUDENT MATERIALS

A White Explorer Meets Shoshone

Indians Camped at Bear River

TIME FRAME

Two thirty-minute periods

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS NEEDED

11 x 17 copy paper

Standard art and crafts supplies



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PROCEDURE

Prior to lesson (at the end of the school day or social studies class one day ahead of the lesson), ask students to think about what activities they take part in at this time of year and what foods they eat and be prepared to talk about it tomorrow.

The next day or period, hand each student a copy of “A White Explorer Meets Shoshone Indians Camped at Bear River.” Have them read it silently and then discuss the questions as a class. This should lead you into a discussion of food and cultural practices.

Next, explain to the class that Shoshone children learned about their history and culture by listening to storytellers. Story time was very important and the Shoshone children could not interrupt or fall asleep. That is how children memorized the history of the Shoshone people. Tell each student that in this next activity, they will get to be a listener and a storyteller.

Hand each student a piece of 11x17 copy paper, and have him/her fold it into 8 boxes (see Instant Book Sample). Tell students to label the inside pages of the book for the seasons of the year. Put the students into groups of four, and assign a season to each student in that group. Ask each student to take turns sharing the foods and traditions for the season he/she was assigned. The whole team will write and draw examples on the season pages in their books. By the end, each student will have taught and learned through oral storytelling about the seasonal traditions, activities, and foods of three of his/her classmates.

Have students return to their seats and turn their foldable inside out. Tell them to label the pages for the seasons again. Then use the teacher background material to explain the seasonal diet and activities of the Northwestern Shoshones. Tell the students to record the foods and activities of the ancestors of the modern Shoshones as they migrated with the seasons.

If time permits, discuss of the similarities and differences in the dietary habits and activities of the modern students and the ancestral Shoshones. (A Venn diagram could be used to summarize class learning, or as an assessment of understanding.)

ASSESSMENT / PRODUCTS

Discussion participation

Group participation

Seasonal Activities and Foods book – both sides

VARIATIONS / EXTENSIONS

Students may take their Seasonal Activities and Foods book home and teach someone about the ancestral Shoshones. The “learner” may sign the student’s book to prove the experience took place.



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ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

D'Azevedo, Warren L., ed. *Handbook of the North American Indians*. Vol. 11, *The Great Basin*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1986.

Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation. "Harvest and Diet."
<http://www.nwbshoshone-nsn.gov/culture/history/diet.htm#content>.

Parry, Mae. "The Northwestern Shoshone," in *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Ed. Forrest S. Cuch. Salt Lake City: Utah State Division of Indian Affairs, 2000.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

State Standards

Fourth Grade Social Studies – Utah Studies: 1/2/b; 2/1/c; 2/2/a

Accreditation Competencies

Personal Growth and Character Development/Demonstrates an Understanding of Health and Wellness/Understands how to access, analyze and use resources to promote physical, social, and emotional wellness

NCSS Standards

Early Grades: 1/a&d; 3/f; 7/a



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AT A GLANCE: THE LAND AND CULTURE OF THE NORTHWESTERN SHOSHONES

Before white settler laws limited their access to their traditional homeland, the Northwestern Shoshones moved with the seasons and traveled throughout the areas that are now northern Utah and Nevada, southern Idaho, and western Wyoming. As they traveled, the Northwestern Shoshones used a variety of foods they harvested from the land. Their subsistence practices were cleverly adapted to the region and time of year.

In the spring and summer months, the Northwestern Shoshones moved around northern Utah and southern Idaho, utilizing the local flora and fauna in the areas they traveled through and made camp in. They gathered berries and collected seeds. As Northwestern Shoshone historian Mae Parry notes, “Gathering seeds was a hard task at times. When seeds were scarce, a woman might spend an entire day gathering enough for only one family meal.” In the late summer, the Northwestern Shoshones hunted small game and used digging sticks to extract roots and bulbs from the beneath the earth.

In the early fall, the Northwestern Shoshones fished at Salmon Lake in Idaho. After drying the fish for winter use, they moved to western Wyoming to hunt for large game, including buf-

falo, elk, deer, and moose, whose meat they also dried for winter. The Northwestern Shoshones became even more efficient at hunting these large animals after they adopted the horse. Around late October, they moved into northwestern Utah and northern Nevada to gather the all-important pine nut from the piñon tree. The pine nut is rich in nutrients and could be roasted or ground up for use in mush, gravy, and soups.

After gathering supplies for the colder months, the Northwestern Shoshones moved to their winter home in southwestern Idaho, near what are now the towns of Franklin and Preston. This location along the Bear River was ideal because it was in a natural depression and willow and brush provided protection from wind and snow. The area also had abundant hot springs that attracted fish and game.

The Northwestern Shoshone people were very mobile and skilled at hunting and gathering. Based on their migration patterns, some experts have claimed that they were among the most ecologically efficient and well-adapted Indians of the American West.



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SHOSHONE SEASONAL ACTIVITIES AND FOODS CHEAT SHEET

FALL

FOODS HARVESTED

Seeds
Roots
Berries

SIGNIFICANCE

Women gathered; chance for the women to socialize
Used digging sticks
Eaten fresh or dried

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Salmon fishing
Gather pine nuts
Fishing
Duck hunting

SIGNIFICANCE

Salmon could be dried for winter
Rich in nutrients; could be saved for winter
Caught fish with spears, fishing poles, and baskets

WINTER

FOODS HARVESTED

Cactus

SIGNIFICANCE

Helped avoid starvation when food was scarce in the winter

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Rabbit hunting

Storytelling

The “Warm” Dance

Sledding
A form of Hockey

SIGNIFICANCE

Could be snared, shot with bows and arrows, or clubbed; rabbit skins could be braided into quilts

Way to teach Shoshone children the history of their people; young people listened without interrupting and memorized tribal history

Chance to meet with other Shoshone bands; danced to drive out the cold of winter, hasten the return of spring

Used dried deer hides and sleds



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SHOSHONE SEASONAL ACTIVITIES AND FOODS CHEAT SHEET

SPRING

FOODS HARVESTED

Plant Foods
Cattails

Wild Onions
Indian Carrots
Wild Roses

SIGNIFICANCE

Could eat parts of the stalk; roots were dried, then ground into meal for mush or cakes

Could be eaten raw or cooked

Could be eaten raw or cooked

Ate both blossoms and fruit or “hips”

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Dancing

SIGNIFICANCE

SUMMER

FOODS HARVESTED

Roots
Bitterroot
Sego Lily
Ground Potatoes
Thistle Stalks
Squash

Corn

SIGNIFICANCE

Used digging sticks

Look like noodles, could be boiled until soft, then used in soup

Bulb used in stews; could be dried and stored for winter

Looked like small potatoes; tasted like sweet potatoes

Stalks were picked then peeled; tasted similar to celery

Introduced to the Northwestern Shoshones by the Utes; could be dried for winter use

Introduced to the Northwestern Shoshones by the Utes; could be dried for winter use.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

Rabbit Hunting

Foot Races
Horse Raced
Dancing

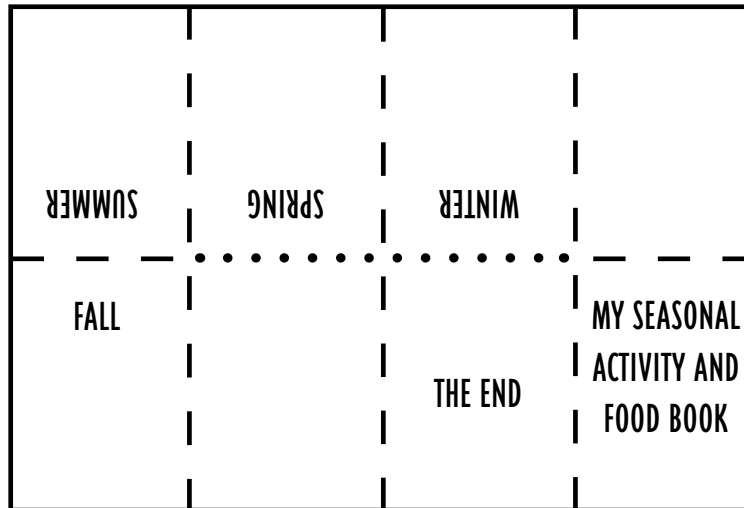
SIGNIFICANCE

Could be snared, shot with bows and arrows, or clubbed; rabbit skins could be braided into quilts.



INSTANT BOOK SAMPLE

FRONT



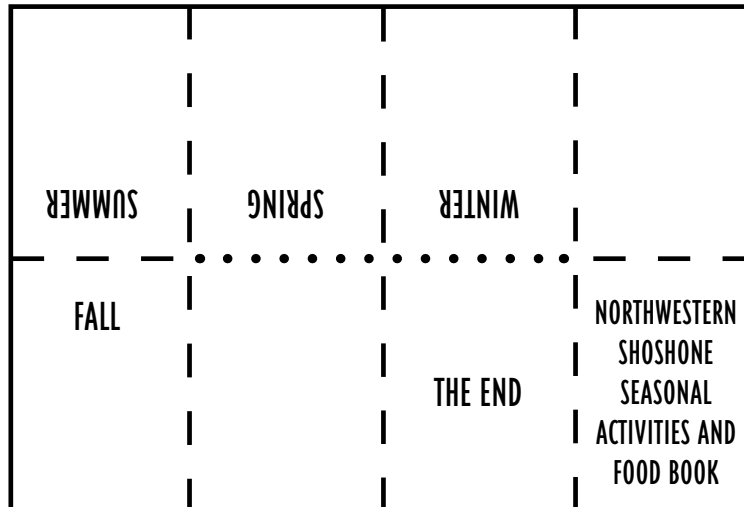
FOLD



CUT



BACK



Once the pages are folded and the cut is made, have students lay the page out flat and pinch the folds perpendicular to the cut. Tell them to slowly open the cut until the bottoms of the folded pages touch. They should be looking down at an “x” that, when all four sides are folded together, becomes a book.

A WHITE EXPLORER MEETS SHOSHONE INDIANS CAMPED AT BEAR RIVER

This is a page from the journal of Howard Stansbury. He was an engineer and he worked for the U.S. Army. In 1849, the army asked Stansbury to lead an expedition to the Great Salt Lake. His job was to map the valley. Stansbury kept a journal on his trip, and on August 20th he met a group of Shoshone Indians camped at Bear River.

How does he describe the Bear River? Does there seem to be a lot of food around?

How does he describe the Shoshone Indians? Do they waste any of their food?

At our encampment on Bear River, near this Butte, abundance of speckled trout were caught, resembling in all respects the brook trout of the States, except that the speckles are black instead of yellow. An ox, which had strayed from some unfortunate emigrant, was found on the bank of the stream, in such capital condition that he was shot for food, and such portions as we could not carry with us were most generously presented to a small encampment of Shoshonee Indians, whose wigwams were erected among the bushes on the opposite side of the stream. It was curious to see how perfectly every portion of the animal was secured by them for food, even the paunch and entrails being thoroughly washed for that purpose. The [women] acted as the butchers, and displayed familiar acquaintance with the business They had quite a large number of horses and mules, and their encampment betokened comparative comfort and wealth.

The bottom of Bear River is here four or five miles in breadth, and is partially overflowed in the spring: the snow lies upon it to the depth of four feet in the winter, which prevents the Indians from occupying it during that season of the year. . . .

Howard Stansbury, *An Expedition to the Valley of the Great Salt Lake of Utah* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, 1855), 77–78.