

IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY Reading Comprehension

The Iroquois were the dominant tribe in the northeastern United States. The Iroquois Confederacy (the Six Nations) was formed in 1570 when the five tribes (Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, and Seneca) were brought together by Deganawida (a Huron prophet) and Hiawatha (a Mohawk medicine man). The Tuscarora were the last to join in the early 1700s after they migrated from the Carolinas to New York.

The Iroquois had a strong connection with nature and believed the woodland animals to be their kindred spirits. Their clans were named after animals and included the Beaver Clan, Deer Clan, Wolf Clan, Bear Clan, Turtle Clan, Hawk Clan, Heron Clan, Snipe Clan, and Eel Clan. Two people from the same clan were forbidden to marry. The resident Clan Mother headed each clan. The Iroquois made use out of many animals, especially the deer. Deerskins were used to fashion shirts, skirts, leggings, breechcloths, and moccasins. Beaver fur was used to make robes and mittens, and porcupine quills (a form of wampum) were used as decorations, money, and to record treaties with the American government. The Iroquois also used shells, beads, and rocks as wampum. To the Iroquois, wampum was used to record events and to make records. Colonists used wampum as money.

Many Iroquois festivals revolved around the planting and harvesting of corn. The Corn-Planting Festival, the Green Corn Festival, and the Corn-Gathering Festival were among the most important of Iroquois celebrations. They also held a Maple Sugar Festival and a Strawberry Festival.

The Iroquois were very spiritual people who believed in the Great Spirit, the creator of all living things. They also believed in a Good Spirit and an Evil Spirit who were in charge of good things and bad things that happened on the Earth. The Iroquois believed their souls would join the Good Spirit in the afterlife provided they had done a good enough job of honoring it. A minion of the Evil Spirit was known as the Flying Head, who lived in the forest and spread disease. The Iroquois formed the False Face Society, a healing group that helped scare the Flying Head and other evil spirits with carved masks, feasts, rattles, and chants. The masks were thought to become the homes of good spirits who would replace the evil spirits after the ceremony.

Iroquois society was matrilineal, meaning that property and descent passed through the female line. Women had a lot of power in Iroquois society and owned the property and chose the sachems.

The Iroquois, like other tribes of the Eastern Woodlands, practiced a game somewhat like modern-day lacrosse. The Iroquois version, however, was much more violent, and participants often suffered serious injuries and broken bones. Oftentimes, rival tribes bet on which team would win. The Iroquois also played a game called "Snow snake" in which players would see how far they could slide a javelin along a trench dug in the snow.

1.) Which of the following tribes was not part of the Iroquois Confederacy?

- a.) Onondaga
- b.) Cayuga
- c.) Tuscarora
- d.) Cherokee

2.) Which member of the Iroquois Confederacy joined well after the original five members?

- a.) Mohawk
- b.) Oneida
- c.) Seneca
- d.) Tuscarora

3.) Which of the following is NOT true about wampum?

- a.) Colonists used wampum as money.
- b.) The Iroquois used wampum to record events.
- c.) Wampum was used as sacred medicine by the Iroquois.
- d.) Porcupine quills were used as a form of wampum.

4.) Who was Deganawida?

- a.) A Huron prophet
- b.) A Cayuga chief
- c.) A Mohawk medicine man
- d.) An Iroquois warrior

5.) Which word or phrase most accurately describes the Iroquois and their relationship with the natural world?

- a.) The Iroquois did not consider themselves part of the natural world.
- b.) The Iroquois were confused about the natural world.
- c.) The Iroquois disrespected the natural world.
- d.) The Iroquois respected the natural world.

6.) Select all of the following that were actual Iroquois clans.

- a.) Badger Clan
- b.) Eel Clan
- c.) Eagle Clan
- d.) Heron Clan

7.) The Iroquois formed the _____ Society, a healing group that helped scare away the Flying Head and other evil spirits with carved masks.

8.) What does “matrilineal” mean?

- a.) Fathers belonged to their father's clan.
- b.) Children belonged to their mother's clan.
- c.) Mothers belonged to their father's clan.
- d.) Children belonged to their father's clan.

9.) The Iroquois played a game called _____, in which participants would see how far they could slide a javelin along a trench dug in the snow.

10.) Which of the following best describes the Iroquois?

- a.) An aggressive tribe that often raided villages from other tribes
- b.) An aggressive tribe that unanimously supported the British in the French and Indian War
- c.) A peaceful tribe that rarely raided surrounding tribes
- d.) An aggressive tribe that often raided other Iroquois villages