

Grade 7 Narrative

Cisneros, Sandra. "Eleven." *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1991. (1991)

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are — underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five.

And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

Grade 7 Informational

Native Americans in Early Nebraska

In the 1800s, multiple Native American tribes—including Pawnee, Ponca, Omaha, Otoe, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Lakota (Sioux)—were located in what is now Nebraska. Since these groups lived in the same region, they had many similarities. However, differences existed in their ways of life—some lived in permanent villages, while others roamed the plains to hunt buffalo. Each tribe had its own culture, which made it unique.

Organization

Native Americans in Nebraska had many similar values. They respected the rights of their people and admired bravery. The groups were organized in similar ways.

Each tribe had a form of government. A chief was the leader of the government. Sometimes a person inherited the position of chief, and sometimes a person earned this position. No matter the circumstances under which a person became chief, the leader was respected for wisdom and bravery. In some cases, a council helped the chief make decisions.

Location

The Pawnee were the largest Native American culture in Nebraska in the early 1800s. At their height, they numbered 10,000 to 12,000 people. The Pawnee established villages near the Platte River Valley and the Republican River Valley.

The Ponca lived in the northern part of the state, along the Niobrara River. The Omaha and Otoe were located in the eastern part of Nebraska along the Missouri River. The Omaha settled in northeastern Nebraska north of the Platte River. The Otoe lived south of the Omaha, and their territory extended to the present-day Missouri border.

The Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho lived in western Nebraska. The Cheyenne could be found in the northwest section of the state; the Sioux lived in the north central part; and the Arapaho lived in the southwestern part, bordering what are now Oklahoma and Colorado.

Housing

Some Native American tribes lived in permanent houses called earth lodges. As many as thirty people might live in one lodge. The lodges were mainly domed-shaped structures built with logs and earth. Logs provided the framework for walls and support beams. The roof was covered with grass and earth. The center of the roof was left open to allow smoke to escape from the fire pit dug in the floor. The Pawnee, Ponca, Omaha, and Otoe lived in these types of structures.

Native American tribes in central and western Nebraska lived in tepees. Long poles were crossed to form the frame of the cone-shaped structure. Animal skins were sewn together and

positioned over the frame. A fire pit was dug in the center of a tepee. A hole was left in the center of the roof to allow the smoke to escape. The Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho lived in tepees year round. At times, the Pawnee, Omaha, Ponca, and Otoe traveled to hunt buffalo. During these times, they lived in tepees, which were easy to construct and to disassemble.

Clothing

Native Americans in Nebraska dressed in a similar manner. Their clothes were mainly made from deer, elk, antelope, or buffalo skins. Women wore dresses or skirts made from animal skins. Men wore breechcloths and leather leggings in colder weather. Shirts and blouses were also made from animal skin.

Most women and men wore their hair long and often braided. Ponca and Pawnee men, however, were known to wear a scalp lock—a long lock or tuft of hair grown from the crown of an otherwise shaved head.

Men and women wore moccasins to protect their feet. Cheyenne women usually wore high, fringed boots instead of moccasins.

The Ponca, Pawnee, and Arapaho decorated some of their clothing with porcupine quills, beadwork, and elk's teeth. Other Native Americans also decorated some of their clothing with meaningful designs. Most groups painted their faces for special occasions.

Ways of Life

The Pawnee, Ponca, Omaha, and Otoe were farmers. They planted a variety of vegetables, such as squash, corn, and beans. Many also gathered fruit that grew near rivers. They learned how to dry some types of fruits and vegetables for future use. They placed the dried food in a cache that had been dug into the earth.

The Cheyenne, Sioux, and Arapaho were nomadic people. They traveled with the buffalo. The buffalo were used as a food source and for clothing, blankets, shoes, and tools. Native Americans traded buffalo skins for other goods.

After horses were introduced on the plains, some tribes became seminomadic. The Omaha, Pawnee, Ponca, and Otoe kept their agricultural ways of life, but they also went on buffalo hunts twice a year. Each group had a similar way of traveling. A travois was used for moving possessions. A travois was created with two long tepee poles. A buffalo skin was fastened between the poles to produce a carrier. The poles were placed over the shoulders of a dog or a horse, with the carrier trailing behind on the ground.

Native Americans are an important part of Nebraska's present and past. An understanding of their ways of life in the past provides insights into Nebraska's various cultures today.