



Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center
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This lesson was created by a teacher participating in a Wisconsin ESEA Improving Teacher Quality grant entitled Inquiry Based Technology-Mediated Teacher Professional Development and Application.

- Title: Discovering Prehistoric People of Wisconsin
- Submitted by: Danielle Renz
- Grade Level: 4-6
- Subjects: Social Studies, Science, Language Arts
- Objectives:
1. Students will use observation to list the characteristics of the four main groups of prehistoric people of Wisconsin.
 2. Students will compare the characteristics of the four main groups of prehistoric people to determine the chronological order of existence in Wisconsin.
- Standards:
- Social Studies B.8.1, B.8.12
 - Science B.8.2, C.8.1, C.8.2, C.8.9, F.8.9
- Duration: 45-60 minutes
- Materials:
- One set of “Early Cultures Images” from MVAC’s web site for each group. Mount each culture image on different colored sheet paper for identification.
 - One set of “Early Cultures Images” transparencies for class discussion. (Option – use the MVAC web site to present images)
 - One copy of “Prehistoric People of Wisconsin Observation Notes” for each group.
 - One set of “Culture Overview” from MVAC’s web site for teacher reference.
- Vocabulary:
- Archaic Culture - (Hunters and Gatherers) 8,000 BC–500 BC
 - Oneota Culture - (Hunters, Gatherers, Fishers, Farmers) 1,000–1,650 AD
 - Paleo Culture - (Big Game Hunters) Earliest group of people in N. America, 10,000–8,000 BC
 - Prehistoric - The time before written records.

-Woodland Culture - (Hunters, Gatherers, Fishers, Farmers) 500 BC–1700 AD

- Background:** About 10,000 years ago, Paleoindians entered Wisconsin as they hunted woolly mammoth, mastodon, and bison. These large mammals lived on the abundant vegetation beginning to grow as the glaciers retreated northward. Around 8,000 years ago, during the Archaic Period, the climate became warmer and dryer. The larger Ice Age mammals were replaced by animals found in the state today. People lived in smaller family groups in caves, rockshelters, along rivers, and around lakes and wetlands. They harvested wild plants, nuts and acorns. They hunted smaller animals such as deer and elk. About 3,000 years ago, during the Woodland Period, people lived in large villages and began to use bows and arrows to hunt. It was during this period that many mounds, including effigies or mounds built in the shape of turtles birds, bears and other animals, were built throughout Wisconsin. These people were Wisconsin's first potters and gardeners. The Mississippian Period began about 1,000 years ago. In Wisconsin these people are called Oneota. They lived in villages and planted gardens to grow crops such as corn, beans and squash. They had a complex trade network, which extended to both the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.
- Setting the Stage:** Ask students to imagine what life may have been like for the earliest people to live in Wisconsin. Ask them to describe what they imagined and list ideas on the board. Explain that students will be learning about the four main pre-European cultures of Wisconsin.
- Procedure:**
1. Organize students into small groups (3-4). Groups should choose one person to record data.
 2. Hand out materials.
 3. Explain that students should study the images and list as many details as they can identify on the "Prehistoric People of Wisconsin Observation Notes" page. Allow 20 minutes for students to complete assignment.
 4. Use "Early Cultures Images" transparencies to discuss observations in class.
 5. Ask students to work with group members to determine the chronological order of the images.
 6. Discuss inferences and conclusions with class.
 7. Use "Culture Overview" information sheets to provide additional information about prehistoric people of Wisconsin.
- Closure:** Ask students to provide questions they have about prehistoric people of Wisconsin. List questions on board for students to discuss. Ask students to suggest methods of research that would allow them to find the answers to their questions.

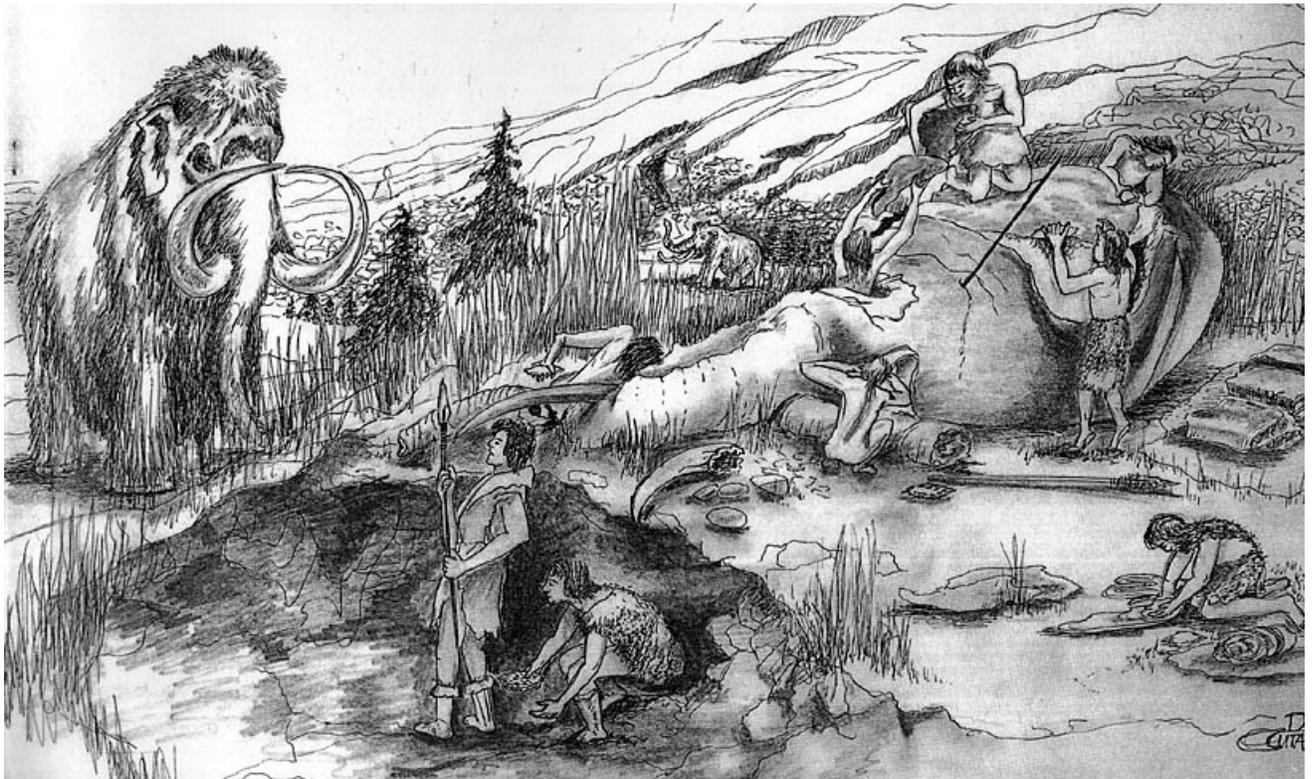
- Evaluation: Students turn in their “Prehistoric People of Wisconsin Observation Notes” for evaluation.
- Links/Extensions: 1. Intrigue of the Past – Lesson 1 “Why is the Past Important?” (Pre-Activity)
2. Intrigue of the Past – Lesson 3 “Observation and Inference” (Post-Activity)
- References: MVAC’s web site:
<http://www.uwlax.edu/mvac/PastCultures.htm>
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/archaeology>

Prehistoric People of Wisconsin

Observation Notes

Group Members: _____ Culture Color _____

Shelter	
Food	
Clothing	
Tools	
Other man-made items	
Activities	



Top Image: Paleo

Bottom Image: Archaic

Taken from MVAC's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/mvac



Top Image: Woodland

Bottom Image: Oneota

Taken from MVAC's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Tradition Name

Paleo

Lifeways

Big Game Hunters

Time

10,000 - 8,000 B.C.

Climate

It was colder than today. Very similar to present day Alaska or northern Canada.

Environment

Glaciers were present in northern Wisconsin. Southwestern Wisconsin was without glaciers, and is known today as "the Driftless Area." In this area there were many evergreens, such as pines and spruces.

Settlement

Small roving bands of 15-25 people lived in temporary camps. They traveled great distances to follow herds of animals.

Food

Big game such as mastodons, mammoths, elk, caribou, and deer formed the main part of their diet. They ate limited quantities of plant foods, for few plants were available in the climate of Paleo times.

Tools

Spear points were very important for hunting big game. They made endscrapers and modified flakes for dressing hides. They probably used some bone and wooden tools.

Toolkit

Spear points, scrapers, knives, gravers, drills, modified flakes, hammerstones

Household

Few artifacts are preserved from this period. They probably used light weight objects made out of skins that were easy to carry.

Religion/Rituals

Unknown

Social/Political

Their social organization was probably based on the family. They participated in co-operative ventures for hunting. They traded or traveled long distances to obtain different kinds of stones for their tools. Some materials came from hundreds of miles away.

How Different From**Previous Group**

They were the first Wisconsin inhabitants.

Major World Events

9,000 B.C. - Origins of agriculture in the Middle East

Taken from MVAC's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Tradition Name

Archaic

Lifeways

Hunters and gatherers

Time

8,000 - 500 B.C.

Climate

It grew warmer as the glaciers retreated, then it became warmer than today, and finally changed to about today's conditions.

Environment

Oak, hickory, and maple forests replaced the evergreens in the southern part of the state. A large quantity and variety of plants and animals were present.

Settlement

Small bands continued in seasonal camps. Summer camps consisted of 25 to 30 people. During the winter the people may have lived in smaller groups in sheltered areas such as caves or rockshelters. They were roving less and territories were beginning to develop.

Food

They used a wide variety of large and small game, mainly deer. Plant foods became more important. They used mainly nuts, but seeds, fruits and berries were also very important.

Tools

Most of the tools used during Paleo times were also used during this time period. Axes were used to cut down trees. During the middle of this period the use of copper began. It was used for spear points and decorative and ceremonial objects.

Toolkit

Spear points, atlatl, knives, modified flakes, hammerstones, ground stone axes, nutting stones

Household

Heavier household goods were now being used, for they could be left at a campsite. Textiles and basketry originated during this time. Grinding stones were used to process food products. Containers may have been made from gourds and skins.

Religion/Rituals

Decorative and ceremonial pieces were introduced. Cemeteries and special individual burials are known, particularly from the end of the period.

Social/Political

Social organization was still based on the family. Hunting was no longer always in large groups. People were doing more individualized hunting.

How Different From**Previous Group**

The glaciers had retreated to the north. The people during this period adapted to and fully exploited the environment in which they lived. They began to use different food types, developed localized territories, used copper and had some special burial practices.

Major World Events

6,000 B.C. - Earliest writing in Mesopotamia

2,500 B.C. - Egyptian pyramids

1,200 B.C. - Stonehenge in England

1,000 B.C. - Beginning of Mayan civilization

Taken from MVAC's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Tradition Name

Woodland

Lifeways

Hungers, gatherers, fishers and gardeners

Time

Southern Wisconsin 500 B.C. to 1200 A.D.

Northern Wisconsin 500 B.C. to 1700 A.D.

Climate

It was very much like it is today.

Environment

It was very similar to today.

Settlement

Larger groups of 50 to 100 people, or more, would gather for short times during the summer. They separated into smaller groups of 25 to 50 during the winter when food was scarce. Camps developed along rivers and lakes in the summer and in more protected places during the winter.

Food

Squash and sunflower seeds, which were grown in small gardens, were added to the previously used wild food items. Towards the end, people started growing corn. Rivers and lakes provided fish, clams and turtles. Deer, small mammals and birds continued to be used.

Tools

The smaller and more efficient bow and arrow began to be used by the individual hunter. Spears and nets were now used for fishing.

Toolkit

Spear points, arrowheads, bow and arrow, knives, modified flakes, hammerstones, manos and metates, abraders and pottery

Household

Seasonal, housing structures began to be used during this period. Pottery was first introduced during this time. Gourds and squashes were used for vessels and food. Textiles and fabrics were decorated with shell beads and dyed with natural dyes. Tobacco and pipes began to be used.

Religion/Rituals

During this period large scale and elaborate burial rituals took place, particularly the Hopewell culture. Conical, linear, and animal shaped mounds began to be employed. Rock art also appeared during this time.

Social/Political

A large scale network of trade developed at this time, extending from the Gulf Coast to Canada, Wyoming to West Virginia and Ohio. Ritual goods and raw materials were exchanged. People were organized in large groups for social and ritual gatherings.

How Different From**Previous Group**

Burials of the dead were more elaborate. People were more politically structured and became more localized and territorial. Pottery and gardening had their beginnings at this time.

Major World Events

100 B.C. - Great Wall of China

0 - Birth of Christ

400 A.D. - Fall of Rome

1,000 A.D. - City of Timbuktu built in West Africa

Taken from MVAC's web site at: www.uwlax.edu/mvac

Tradition Name

Mississippian and Oneota

Lifeways

Hunters, gatherers, fishers and farmers

Time

1,000 - 1,650 A.D.

Climate

It was very much like it is today.

Environment

It was very similar to today.

Settlement

Mississippian people lived in permanent villages, sometimes with stockades.

Oneota people began to gather in large semi-permanent villages along rivers and lakes and near farmland. Over 100 people would gather in summer camps.

Food

Previously adopted foods continued to be used in addition to large quantities of animal resources found by rivers and lakes. This was the beginning of agriculture and the introduction of corn and beans.

Tools

Earlier developed tools continued to be employed at this time. The bison scapula hoe first appears during this time.

Toolkit

Arrowheads, bow and arrow, knives, modified flakes, scrapers, hammerstones, manos and metates, abraders, drills, hoes and pottery

Household

Bundles of grasses were used for a variety of household purposes such as for the walls and roofs of houses or lining of storage pits. Large pots, shell spoons and turtle shell bowls were employed. Grinding stones were now mainly used for corn instead of nuts.

Religion/Rituals

Decorative and ceremonial pieces made out of exotic materials continued to be used although less than in Woodland times. Rock art as well as bone and stone engravings were created by these people.

Social/Political

Mississippian cultures arose in Illinois, and their unique artifacts and ideas spread into Wisconsin. Oneota cultures may have arisen from interactions between these Mississippian peoples and the local Wisconsin Woodland populations. Both cultures were agriculturalists, which required people to work co-operatively. Ranking within the social structure increased. Mississippian peoples traded widely, but the Oneota groups traveled less than the Mississippian.

How Different From**Previous Group**

The Mississippian and Oneota people were the first true farmers. They grew domesticated corn and beans. They created few mounds but possibly buried their dead in group cemeteries.

Major World Events

1,100 A.D. - Rise of Inca empire

1,300 A.D. - Aztecs settle Mexico city

1,492 A.D. - Columbus arrives in North America

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