

# Life of a Powhatan Indian

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## Standards of Learning

Social Studies 1.1, 2.3, 2.4

English 1.1, 1.2, 1.13, 2.1, 2.2, 2.12

## Objective

Students will:

- Locate the region of the Powhatan on a map
- Describe how the Powhatan Indians adapt to their environment

## Materials

- United States Map of American Indian Regions (handout provided, but teacher will need to make a transparency)
- Black marker
- Powhatan Indians of the Eastern Woodlands Region worksheet (handout provided)
- Pictures of Powhatan Indian crops (corn, beans, squash, gourds, and passion flowers)

## Background Knowledge

This lesson focuses on the farming practices of the Powhatan Indians, who farmed, fished, and hunted in the area that today is Virginia. These tribes were titled this because they were all under the rule of Chief Powhatan. It serves as a review of the environmental conditions of Virginia at the time of the Powhatan Indians while introducing how the people had to adapt to these conditions.

The weather in Virginia during the time the Powhatan flourished was much like it is today, with mild winters and hot summers. The land of Virginia was covered by forests, hills, mountains, and rivers. Due to the abundance of forests, the most common plant in Virginia was trees. The Powhatan were able to make many of their belongings, including homes, weapons and tools, from wood of the many trees.

The Powhatan used weapons and tools for hunting, fishing, and farming. Some of the animals which the men hunted were deer, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, and opossums. The Powhatan were also able to fish due to their location on the Chesapeake Bay and the many rivers in Virginia. The crops the women planted provided the Powhatan with a main food source which included corn, beans, squash, gourds, and passion flowers. The women and children also gathered nuts and berries for food.

## Procedure

1. Ask the students the following questions as a review of the environmental conditions of Virginia during the time of the Powhatan Indians.
  - What was the name of the group of American Indians living in Virginia?
    - Why were they titled this?
  - What was the weather in Virginia like during this time?
  - What was the land like at this time?
  - What were the most common plants in Virginia at this time?
2. Hand out the United States Map of American Indian Regions to each student.
3. Ask the students to locate the region labeled Eastern Woodlands.
4. Give each student a black marker and tell them to outline the state of Virginia in black ink.
5. Place a copy of the map on the overhead and point out Virginia for students to check their work.



6. Have students brainstorm similarities and differences between present-day Virginia and Virginia in the time of the Powhatan. Write these on the board.
7. Tell the students that since the land of Virginia was covered by forests, the Powhatan used trees to make many of their belongings.
8. Ask the students to brainstorm and Think-Pair-Share what resources the Native Americans were able to get from trees. Record answers on the board.  
*Tell the students that the wood from the trees allowed the Powhatan to make homes, weapons, canoes, and tools.*
9. Ask the students why they may have needed weapons and tools.  
*The Powhatan people needed weapons and tools for hunting, fishing and planting. Animals, including deer, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons, opossums and wild turkeys, were hunted for food. These animals provided the people with food and other resources, including clothing, all year round.*
10. Tell the students to look at their map and find Virginia.
11. Ask them what types of water sources were available to the Powhatan.  
*Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, and rivers*  
How might the Powhatan have benefited from these?  
*Since Virginia is located on the ocean and there are many rivers, the Powhatan were able to fish for food. Rivers could also be used for transportation and trade.*
12. Another main source of food for the Powhatan was crops. The women were the farmers and planted during the fall and spring season. Ask the students to think of some crops they may have planted.  
*Corn, beans, squash, gourds, and passion flowers were all common crops of the Powhatan Indians. Also, during the winter and summer months, when crops could not grow due to weather conditions, the women and children gathered nuts and berries from the forests for food.*
13. Ask the students which of these plants they have heard of and which they have not. Provide pictures of each of these plants for the students.
14. Hand out a Powhatan Indians of the Eastern Woodlands Region worksheet to each student.
15. Organize the students into groups of three and tell them to work together to complete their worksheets. (Every student should write down their answers.)
16. Review the worksheet with the students.

### Extension

Take students to visit the Jamestown Settlement located in Jamestown Virginia. See the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation website for information, [www.historyisfun.org](http://www.historyisfun.org).

### References

- Feest, C. (1990). *The Powhatan Tribes*. New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers. ISBN: 1-5554-6726-1
- Kohn, R. (1995). *Celebrating Summer*. USA: Childrens Press, Inc. ISBN: 0-516-05201-2
- Kohn, R. (1995). *The Fall Gathering*. USA: Childrens Press, Inc. ISBN: 0-516-05202-0
- Kohn, R. (1995). *Spring Planting*. USA: Childrens Press, Inc. ISBN: 0-516-05203-9
- Scott County Public Schools. *Native Americans*  
<http://www.scott.k12.va.us/trishsweb/1native.htm>



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Powhatan Indians of the Eastern Woodlands Region

**Instructions: Answer these questions from the information given in class.**

1. What did Virginia look like during the time the Powhatan Indians lived in the state?

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2. What natural resource did the Powhatan Indians often use for making their homes and tools?

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3. Name three ways the Powhatan Indians got food.

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4. Name three crops the Powhatan Indians grew.

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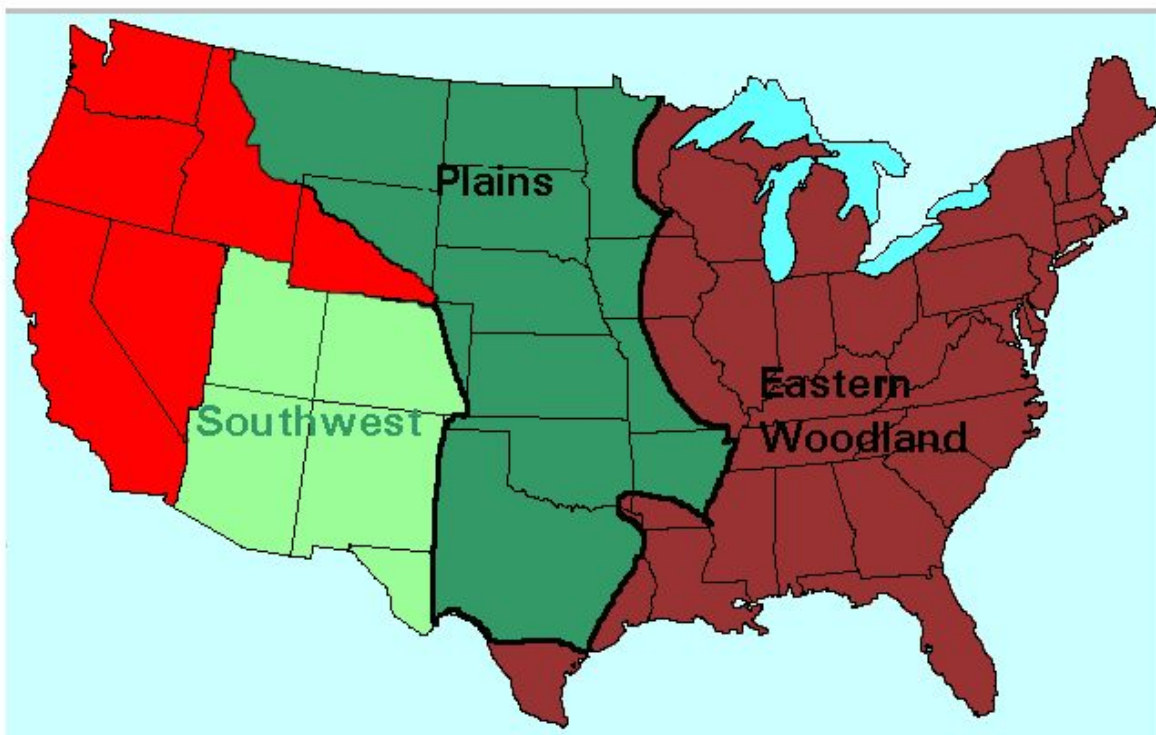
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# Map of American Indian Regions

**United States Map of American Indian Regions (1800's)**



<http://www.scott.k12.va.us/trishsweb/1native.htm>



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