

Building a Tipi

Overview: This lesson uses photographs, objects, and a small tipi to introduce students to the tipi as one type of housing used long ago by Indians living on the Kansas plains. Sentence strips and corresponding pictures reinforce ten facts about the tipi. This lesson is designed to be taught in two parts.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the lesson “Indians in Kansas Today” be taught first and that the tipi lesson be taught in conjunction with those on the grass house and earth lodge.

First Grade Standards:

History (adopted 2004):

Benchmark 2, Indicator 4: The student will compare types of shelter used by American Indians in Kansas over time (e.g., grass lodge, tipi, earth lodge, frame house).

Benchmark 4, Indicator 3: The student asks questions, shares information, and discusses ideas about the past using resources such as maps, photographs, books, and people.

Geography (adopted 2004):

Benchmark 5, Indicator 2: The student describes how the physical environment impacts humans (e.g., choices of clothing, housing, crops, recreation).

Reading (adopted 2003):

Benchmark 2, Indicator 3: The student reads expressively with appropriate pace, phrasing, intonation, and rhythm of speech with familiar text.

Objectives:

Content

- The student identifies facts about the tipi.
- The student identifies that natural resources were used to make tools and tipis.
- The student identifies where tipis were used in Kansas.

Skills

- The student matches pictures to expository text.
- The student reads expository text to gain knowledge.
- The student reads to practice fluency.

Essential Questions:

- Who lived in tipis in Kansas?
- Why did Indians choose to make their house out of bison hide and wood?

Trunk Materials Needed:

“Setting Up a Tipi” sequence cards

Miniature tipi

- Tipi cover (fabric)
- Tipi footprint marked for pole placement (fabric)
- 4 Lacing Pins
- Tipi Instruction Sheet

Kansas floor map (fabric)

Tipi scale model

10 pink tipi sentence strips and corresponding picture clue cards

Pocket chart

Reproduction Objects

- Pole sample
- Scraper (stone attached to elk antler)
- Tanned hide without fur
- Sinew
- Awl
- Flesher

Images #13-20

- #13 – Dry Kansas Environment
- #14 – Tipi Village
- #15 – Bison
- #16 – Travois
- #17 – Setting Up a Tipi
- #18 – Scraping a Bison Hide
- #19 – Three Tipis
- #20 – Girls with a Toy Tipi

Materials You Need to Supply:

- 11 poles for tipi (These should be 36” long and approximately 5/16” in diameter. Dowels will work for this activity.)
- 9 rubber bands
- 4 markers or pens (blue, black, red, and yellow) for writing on the poles
- 65” length of string or yarn for tying poles together
- “Indian Homes in Kansas” KWL chart with the first two columns completed. If one has already been started, continue using it. (For information on what a KWL chart is and how to prepare and use one see page vii.)

Advance Preparation Needed:

- The first two columns of the “Indian Homes in Kansas” KWL chart need to be done before starting this lesson.
- Read through the instructions for setting up the miniature tipi and prepare the poles as indicated. It is recommended that you practice setting up the tipi before using it with your class. The small size and light weight of this tipi give it less stability than a larger sized tipi and makes it more difficult to set up in some ways.

Vocabulary:

Footprint = The section of ground that the tipi is sitting on. The footprint is the shape of the tipi where it touches the ground.

Natural Resources = Materials found in nature that are useful or necessary for life. Water, forests, and minerals are natural resources.

Content Background for the Teacher:

The tipi is conical tent made from bison hide stretched over wooden poles. It, along with the adobe and igloo, is the Indian housing style most widely known today, but it was not used by all Indians. This lesson explores the use of the tipi by nomadic tribes.

The tipi is a structure that has evolved over time. By the 1800s it had developed into an extremely functional housing style for life on the plains. Before the introduction of the horse, people carried their own supplies and provisions or packed them onto dogs. Life for many Indians changed drastically with the introduction of the horse. One of these changes was the ability to transport more weight and to travel farther. Tipis became larger when the horse became available to transport it. Some Indian tribes who had previously lived in villages began living nomadic lifestyles.

The tipi became a perfect house for nomadic lifestyles. It was compact, mobile, made with available resources, adaptable to both warm and cold temperatures, and able to withstand the windy plains environment. By the 1800s the tipi had evolved into the large hide dwellings most people associate with the tipi today. Like all forms of housing, the tipi was designed to provide shelter from the elements. A central fire pit provided heat and light, as well as an area for cooking. It was usually set up so that the door faced east.

- The people – The tipi was used by many Indian tribes in Kansas. The use of the tipi can be broken into two basic groups – semi-nomadic and nomadic people. This lesson focuses the use of the tipi by nomadic people.

Nomadic tribes had no permanent village site where they grew crops and had additional housing available. Nomadic tribes moved continually as they followed the bison, looked for new food sources, traded with other tribes, and dealt with conflicts that arose with neighboring tribes. Kansas was part of the territory used by several nomadic tribes including the Kiowa, Kiowa-Apache, Arapaho, Comanche, and Cheyenne. All of these tribes lived nomadic lifestyles on the high plains that relied on the availability of the horse and the bison. Today most of these Indian nations are located in Oklahoma. These are the people this lesson focuses on.

Semi-nomadic tribes also used tipis. People in Kansas living semi-nomadic lifestyles lived in non-mobile homes like earth lodges and grass houses. These people went on annual bison hunts for extended periods of time. They lived in tipis while on these hunts. During the rest of the year they lived in permanent villages near their crops. Semi-nomadic tribes of Kansas that used the tipi when bison hunting include the Pawnee and Wichita.

- A house that moved – The mobility of the tipi is perhaps one of its most functional features. The use of the tipi flourished in the dry plains environment where there was little rain and few rivers. The climate did not allow for the cultivation of crops. The Indians living on the plains hunted, gathered wild plants, and traded with tribes from other areas who did grow crops. Plains tribes needed to move frequently to follow the bison herds and relocate as they depleted water and plant resources. Tipis were the year-round form of housing for these nomadic plains tribes. A tipi could be taken down and set up very quickly. Two experienced women could set up a tipi in 15 minutes. The cover easily folded up for transporting to a new campsite.
- The climate - The tipi is adaptable to extreme climates. In the cold Kansas winters, a lining was added to the inside of the tipi, and grass was stuffed between the tipi cover and the lining for insulation. Snow packed around the outside of the tipi cover provided additional insulation. Pulling the cover back during the heat of a Kansas summer opened up the house to catch a breeze while still providing shade.

A tipi is basically a cone shape tilted to one side, its back has a steeper slope than its front. A cone shape is very functional. Because there is no place for the wind to catch, a cone shape can withstand strong winds. Cones also have no pockets or folds to catch water. This allows

them to shed water very well. By tilting the basic cone shape to the back Indians created a structure with a shorter back, longer front and a smoke hole directly over the center of the tipi floor. The shorter and steeper backside of the tipi formed a brace against the strong western winds of the Great Plains.

- The size of a tipi – There was no uniform size for a tipi. Size depended upon a variety of things including the number of hides and poles available, whether the tipi would be used for ceremonial or religious purposes, and the number of people who would live in it. The average tipi slept seven to ten people.
- Construction of a tipi - Tipis were built using natural resources. A tipi is constructed by covering a conical frame of wooden poles with a cover made from bison hides. The poles making up the frame were the most valuable part of the structure for plains tribes as they did not have ready access to tall, straight trees. Poles varied in size depending upon the size of the tipi and the tribe making it. Some tribes preferred that the poles stick out well above the top of the tipi cover while other tribes preferred them shorter. Poles averaged from 10 to 24 feet. The number of poles needed also varied upon the size of the tipi and how closely they were spaced. The average tipi needed about seventeen poles.

Bison were more readily available on the plains of western Kansas than the trees necessary for the poles. It took between eight to twenty hides to make a tipi depending upon the size of the hides and the size of the tipi. Bison hunts provided hides for tipis, clothing, and other needs. Men hunted the bison and women prepared the hides and made the tipi. Preparing hides involved removing the flesh from the hides, tanning them, rubbing them, and finally scraping the hides to make them soft and pliable. Only after these steps had been completed were the hides laid out, cut, and sewn together to make a tipi cover. Laying out, cutting and sewing the hides was usually a community event somewhat similar to a quilting bee. An older, experienced tipi maker was usually in charge of the process. The finished tipi was stretched over a frame, closed up tight, and smoked by lighting a fire inside it. Smoking the tipi helped to make it waterproof. Tipi decoration varied from person to person and tribe to tribe. Designs often indicated ownership. A tipi cover would last about two years. Old covers were recycled into moccasins, clothing, and other essential items.

Setting up a tipi consisted of several steps. Each tipi frame was based on either a three-pole or four-pole foundation depending upon the tribe and its traditions. Once the foundation poles were set up additional poles were added to create a conical shape. These were tied together where they met. Next the cover was laid on the ground and the top edge tied to a lifting pole. With this pole the women lifted the cover up onto the frame. The edges were then pulled around the frame and laced together with sticks above the doorway. Tipis were set up so that their doorways faced east. The bottom edge of the tipi was held to the ground with stakes or rocks.

Lesson:

Day 1

Discuss the tipi with your students using photographs #13 to #20, the reproduction objects, the floor map, the tipi scale model, and the miniature tipi as indicated below.

- Keep the objects out of sight until they are shown to the students. (Covering them or placing them in a box will work.)
- Gather students around the floor map of Kansas for this discussion.
- The table below outlines how to relate the photos, objects, the floor map, and the tipi scale model to specific topics related to the tipi.

Directions	Script
<p>1. Introduce the topic of the lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All people who lived long ago had houses different from ours.• Some of the houses people lived in long ago were made from natural resources.• One type of house some Indians in Kansas lived in long ago was a tipi.	<p><i>Everyone that lived a long time ago lived in houses different than the ones you and I live in today.</i></p> <p><i>Does your house have a bathroom? Houses built a long, long time ago didn't.</i></p> <p><i>Do you have a faucet in your house that you turn on to get water? Houses built a long, long time ago didn't have running water.</i></p> <p><i>Does your house have lights that you can turn on and off with a light switch? Houses built a long, long time ago didn't have lights they could turn on and off with a light switch.</i></p> <p><i>Houses that were built a long, long time ago were different from houses today.</i></p> <p><i>Some houses built a long time ago were built with natural resources. Today if someone is building a house they can go to a store to buy wood and windows and bathtubs and light switches and anything else they need. A long, long time ago many people built their houses with things they found around them in nature. They built their houses with natural resources. Can anyone give me an example of a natural resource?</i></p> <p><i>Today we're going to talk about one type of house Indians in Kansas built a long, long time ago. This house is called a tipi. It was built from natural resources.</i></p>

Directions	Script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kansas Floor Map 	<p><i>On the Kansas map there is a place for us to put this tipi near the picture we looked at. Where does the tipi go? What shape is it? [circle] The shape is a circle because the bottom of the tipi is a circle. The circle on the map is called a footprint.</i></p> <p><i>We know that Indians built tipis from natural resources, and we know that tipis were easy to move. Let's find out how the Indians moved their tipis.</i></p>
<p>4. Discuss how a tipi is moved. Use the <u>tipi scale model</u> and photo #16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tipi Scale Model • Photo #16 - Travois 	<p>This piece of the script is also located on the back of Photo #16 - Travois.</p> <p><i>We said that the tipi was a good house for Indians that lived in western Kansas long, long ago because it could be moved. It could be moved to follow the bison herd. It could be moved when the Indians needed to find more wild plants.</i></p> <p><i>Look at our tipi model again. The model looks small, but a real tipi was big enough for a family to live in. It was too tall to fit in our classroom. It was too big and too tall to pick up and move like this.</i></p> <p><i>This picture shows us how Indians moved their tipis. This is a picture of a travois. When the Indians needed to move their village they had to take down the tipis. Then they folded a tipi like you might fold a very big blanket. The Indians tied the tipi poles to their horses. They placed the folded tipi on the poles behind the horse. The horse pulled the tipi poles and tipi cover. The horse moved the tipi from place to place.</i></p> <p><i>Where are the tipi poles on these travois? Where will they put the folded tipi cover?</i></p> <p><i>The travois was a good way to move things across the Kansas prairie where there were no roads. The horse pulled the travois over bumps and over holes. The travois was a good way to move a tipi.</i></p>

Directions	Script
<p>5. Discuss how a tipi was set up. Use <u>photo #17</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo #17 – Setting Up a Tipi 	<p>This piece of the script is also located on the back of Photo #17 – Setting Up a Tipi.</p> <p><i>What shape did we say the bottom of the tipi was? [a circle] Let's sit in a circle like the bottom of the tipi.</i></p> <p><i>A tipi was made by placing a bison hide cover over a frame of wooden poles.</i></p> <p><i>The poles are made from tall, straight trees. There were few trees in western Kansas. The Indians had to travel a long way to get new poles. It took a lot of work to get new tipi poles.</i></p> <p><i>The first picture shows how the poles looked when they were set up. The poles were tied together near the top. The bottom ends were spread out to make a circle.</i></p> <p><i>Next, the tipi cover had to be wrapped around the frame. It took several people to put the cover on the frame. The tipi frame was very tall. The Indians couldn't reach to the top of the frame. The frame was too tall. The Indians used a pole to help lift the tipi cover to the top of the wooden frame. Look at the second picture. Where is the pole they are using to lift the tipi cover to the top of the frame?</i></p> <p><i>After the tipi cover was wrapped around the frame the edges had to be laced together. Small sticks were used to fasten the edges of the tipi together. Stakes or rocks held the bottom of the tipi cover to the ground.</i></p> <p><i>How do you think they took the tipi down? [in the reverse order]</i></p> <p><i>A tipi was easy to set up and take down. A tipi could be put up or taken down quickly.</i></p>
<p>6. Discuss the process of making a tipi. Use <u>Photo #18</u>, the <u>scraper</u>, <u>flesher</u>, <u>tanned hide sample</u>, <u>awl</u>, and <u>sinew</u>.</p>	<p>This piece of the script is also located on the back of Photo #18 – Scraping a Bison Hide.</p> <p><i>The tipi cover is made from bison hides.</i></p>

Directions	Script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo #18 – Scraping a Bison Hide • Flesher and Scraper • Hide Sample • Awl and Sinew 	<p><i>Indian men hunted the bison. Bison were very important to Indians long ago. Hunting bison gave the Indians food to eat, bones to make tools from, hides to makes clothing and tipis from, and much more. Indian men hunted the bison. Hunting bison was hard work.</i></p> <p><i>Indian women made tipi covers from bison hides. This is a picture of an Indian woman working on a bison hide. Does this look like hard work or easy work? [hard] Making a tipi cover was hard work.</i></p> <p><i>Indian women learned how to clean the hide, remove the fur, and make the hide soft. They used tools made from natural resources. This woman stretched the hide out tight. She used sticks to hold the hide in place. Once she has the hide stretched tight she uses a flesher and scraper like these. The flesher is made from the leg bone of a bison or elk. The scraper is a sharp piece of stone fastened to the antler of an elk. Do these tools look sharp? They are sharp. They will clean the fur and flesh off the hide. The woman in the picture is scraping the fur off a hide.</i></p> <p><i>After the hide was tanned it looked and felt like this. This piece of hide is soft not stiff. This piece of hide does not have any fur left on it. It can be folded easily.</i></p> <p><i>It took many bison hides to make one tipi cover. Indian women had to sew the hides together. They used an awl to poke holes in the hide. The awl is very sharp! The Indian women used these holes to sew the hides together. They sewed the hides with sinew. The awl is made from a piece of bone. The sinew is from a bison.</i></p> <p><i>Does it sound like making a tipi cover was hard work or easy work?</i></p>
<p>7. Share additional information about the tipi, and direct students to learn more about the tipi by looking at a photo. Use <u>photo #19</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo #19 – Three Tipis 	<p>This piece of script is also located on the back of Photo #19 – Three Tipis.</p> <p><i>This is a photo of three tipis. Look at the woman walking near the tipis. Are the tipis the same size as the woman, bigger than the woman or smaller than the woman? [bigger] Some tipis were big and some tipis were small. These tipis look pretty tall. Usually around 10 people lived in one</i></p>

Directions	Script
	<p><i>tipi.</i></p> <p><i>A fire was built in the center of the tipi. The fire was used to cook food and heat the tipi when it was cold. The smoke escaped through a hole at the top of the tipi. Each tipi had flaps that could be opened or closed over the smoke hole.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can you find the smoke holes on these tipis?</i> • <i>Are the flaps open or closed? [the front one is closed, the back two are open]</i> • <i>Why might the Indians want to close the flaps over the smoke hole? [to keep out the rain or the wind]</i> <p><i>Each tipi had one door. Are the doors of these tipis facing the same direction or different directions? [same] Tipis were set up so that their doors faced the east.</i></p> <p><i>Look closely at the tipis in this picture.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do tipis have any windows? [no] Were there any windows on the tipi model? [no]</i> • <i>Are the doors of these tipis open or closed? How did the Indians close their doors?</i> • <i>Can you find the sticks that laced the edges of the tipi covers together.</i> • <i>Are sticks or rocks being used to hold the bottoms of these tipis to the ground?</i> • <i>Can you see the wooden frames of these tipis? Where are they?</i> • <i>These tipis are decorated. Do these three tipis have the same decorations or different decorations. [different, although some use the same decorative elements likes stripes or circles] Why would Indians want to decorate their tipis? [to identify the tipi's owner, like an address]</i>
<p>8. Review information about the tipi and reinforce the fact that tipis were mobile and good homes for people that moved frequently by setting up a miniature tipi. Use <u>photo #20</u>, the <u>tipi sequence cards</u> and the <u>miniature tipi</u>.</p>	<p><i>We've learned a lot about the tipis that some Indians in Kansas made a long, long time ago.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We know that the tipi was shaped like a cone.</i> • <i>We know that wooden poles were used to build a frame.</i> • <i>We know that a bison hide cover was placed over the wooden frame.</i> • <i>We know that tipis were good houses for people that moved from place to place.</i> <p><i>Indian woman set up and took down the tipis. They began learning how to do this when they were</i></p>

Directions	Script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo #20 –Girls with Toy Tipis • Tipi Sequence Cards (Have the class sequence these cards correctly. They can be self checked with the number written on the back of the cards. • Miniature Tipi (use the directions included with the tipi) 	<p><i>children. It took practice to be able to set up a tipi quickly. It took practice before setting up a tipi was easy. The girls in this picture have toy tipis. The girls would set up and take down their toy tipis when their village moved.</i></p> <p><i>We are going to set up a small tipi too. Before we do this let's review how a tipi is set up. I have six cards. Each card shows one thing we will need to do when we set up our tipi. Let's put the cards in order.</i></p> <p>Direct students to place the tipi sequence cards in the correct order.</p> <p>Put up the miniature tipi following the directions included with tipi. Use this activity to reinforce the mobility of the tipi and why it was a good home for people who moved (ease of setting up, ability to be folded and transported, little preparation of campsite when setting up, etc.) People who have experience setting up a tipi can erect a full sized one in 30 minutes or less.</p>

Day 2

Place the sentence strips and icons in the pocket chart before beginning this part of the lesson.

Directions	Script
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the <u>“Ten Facts About the Tipi” sentence strips</u> and the corresponding <u>tipi sentence strip icons</u> and the <u>pocket chart</u> to review facts about the tipi. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First reading - Guide the students through a reading of the sentence strips using the icons to assist with 	<p><i>Yesterday we learned about one type of house Indians in Kansas built a long, long time ago. Can anyone tell what the name of this house is? [tipi]</i></p> <p><i>Today we're going to review ten facts about the tipi.</i></p> <p>Use the directions to the left to use the sentence strips to review ten facts about the tipi.</p>

Directions	Script
<p>word recognition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second reading – Do a choral reading of the sentence strips as the class reads the sentence strips along with the teacher. • Third reading – The class reads the sentence strips. • Remove the icons from the pocket chart and distribute them to students. Have students match the icons to the corresponding text as they place them back in the pocket chart. The icons are numbered on the back for self-checking. 	
<p>2. Add information the students learned about the tipi on the <u>KWL chart</u>.</p>	<p><i>Let's add some of what we have learned to our KWL chart about Indian homes in Kansas. What is one thing we learned?</i></p>