LESSON PLAN – CALIFORNIA INDIANS

TITLE: California Indians TIME: 60 minutes

LEARNER POPULATION: grade level 4

CURRICULAR CONTEXT: part of Social Studies, California History; unit: Native Americans

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this activity:

1) Students will be able to identify four different groups of California Indians.
2) Students will be able to identify their different environments and lifestyles.

CONCEPTS/INFORMATION:

• Different groups of California Indians: Pomo, Paiute, Hupa and Shasta.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:

1) Develop students' interest by asking them whether they have lived in different parts of California. If so, ask them how different their lives were when they lived in these places.
2) Introduce the different Native groups, Pomo, Paiute, Hupa and Shasta, by showing students on a map of California where they now live.
3) Hand out Background Information sheet on California Indians. Divide the class into 4 groups, and let each group focus on one Native group.
4) Students make themselves familiar with the Native groups' environments and lifestyles. They either write down key words relating to climate, housing, food and basketry, and/or draw pictures of these concepts, which thereafter will be presented to the whole class.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Background Information California Indians, map of California, paper, pencils, crayons.

EXTENSION/CLOSURE:

1) Students write an essay about living in a different part of California and about how their lives would be different.

Background Information: California Indians

The state of California has many different environmental zones: you will find dry deserts, cooler coastal ranges, mountain areas, and also wet forests. Naturally, the environment has a big influence on people's lives and their ways of living, for example, on housing, food, clothes, traditions and customs. You can see the differences in lifestyles in some of the California Indian cultures that will be discussed here: the Pomo, the Hupa, the Shasta and the Paiute.

The Pomo – North-central California

The Pomo Indians live in North-Central California; in the past, the Russian River area provided them with an abundance of food, such as fish, small game, deer, seeds and acorns. Acorns were especially important for the Pomo; it was their staple food, since it could be stored for the winter months, and was very nutritious. However, processing and cooking the acorns was a hard and lengthy task.

The Pomo have been making baskets for at least 1000 years. They are considered to be one of the most artistic basket makers in the world, and their baskets can be found in many museums. Pomo baskets are made for the purpose of storing, preparing and serving food, and to carry out daily tasks. However, the Pomo also created more artistic baskets for ceremonies or as gifts, such as when a Pomo bride gives baskets to the husband's family as part of a marriage agreement. These wedding and ceremonial baskets are typically beautifully decorated with feathers, shells and beads.

The Pomo used a variety of plant materials for making baskets, such as willow, sedge (Carex), the bark of redbud (Cercis), the root of bulrush (Scirpus), and the root of

the digger pine, but mostly sedge was used. Sedge has long, strong, underground runners that have the same diameter size, which results in a basket with an even design. Sedge has a white color, while bulrush roots are black and new redbud shoots have a reddish-brown color. Willow roots are picked in early spring; they are smoothed by scraping and forcing them through a hole. Split bulrush fibers are dyed black by burial in wet ashes; different colors can be obtained by varying the type of ashes or by adding materials such as walnut hulls or rusty nails to the ashes.

Before the harvest, ritual prayers and offerings are made, as the natural material is considered alive and has to be treated with respect. These traditions of how to harvest sedge are passed on from older to younger weavers. Today, the traditional Pomo ways of harvesting plants are threatened through the use of herbicides, water control projects and the denial of access to lands by private owners.

Pomo baskets come in all sizes and shapes and exhibit a variety of patterns which are mostly asymmetrical and discontinuous. The Pomo are one of the few groups where men and women weave baskets; however, it is the women who make the fine baskets, and the men who weave fish traps, baby carriers, burden and storage baskets.

The Paiute – Owens Valley

The Paiute lived in a near-desert region on the east side of the Sierra Nevada range, in Owens Valley. They relocated very frequently to hunt and gather food; in the summer, they hunted rabbits and mountain sheep, and during autumn, they gathered seeds and pinon nuts which are very rich in proteins. To supplement their hunting and gathering activities, the Paiute traded with other Native people for food and resources. As

Owens Valley is rich in Obsidian, which is a glass-like material from volcanoes that is used to make spears and arrow heads, the Paiute traded obsidian for other items they needed.

The Paiute made mostly light-weight basketry which allowed them to lead an active lifestyle. These light baskets were used to carry and store supplies, and they could be easily transported from camp to camp in bigger burden baskets the Paiute carried on their backs. Furthermore, they made bottle-shaped baskets that were covered with pitch to store their water while they were out hunting and gathering in areas with scarce water supplies. The Paiute used similar baskets to store nuts and seeds. Many times, Paiute basketry had designs in red and black colors.

Another typical Paiute basket is the women's hat; it was done with the twining technique and decorated with brown designs all the way around. The Paiute used rods of willow for their basketry. It was in more recent times that they started decorating bowl-shaped baskets with beads.

The Hupa – Northwestern California

The Hupa settled along the Trinity River in Northwestern California, as the river provided them with a firm supply of fish, and the land along the river was rich with acorns, vegetable and seed plants, and deer. This abundance in food and other resources made it possible for the Hupa to live in permanent villages. Their houses were built out of cedar planks with walls between 4 and 6 ft. high. The entrance was a small hole with a diameter of only 20inches that was about a foot above the ground. These houses were used to store a family's possessions, and the women slept inside this house. The men

stayed at sweat houses during the night. The Hupa mostly traded with groups from along the coast; their traders used paths and trails to cross the mountains and reach the coastal ranges. They traded for dried seaweed, fish an other oceanic products mostly in exchange for acorns.

The Hupa society places major value on wealth and social status, and individuals are ranked according to their possessions, examples of which are dentalium shells, unusually colored deerskins, and obsidian knife blades. It is during ceremonies, sponsored by the wealthiest, that these possessions are proudly displayed. Consequently, the Hupa communities are governed by the most powerful leaders.

The Shasta – Mount Shasta, Northern California

The Shasta lived in the regions around Mount Shasta in Northern California, where they would live in houses during the winter months and in summer brush and bark shelters where they would stay during the acorn season. The winter houses were as big as 16 by 20 ft, and the floor was about 3 ft below the earth. The houses had steep roofs, their side walls were made from dirt, and the end walls from wood. For the summer houses, the Shasta used willow poles, the bark of pine trees, and skins.

The Shasta's diet consisted of acorns, deer, elk, salmon, and bear. They would use the deer skins and the elk hides as blankets. Similar to other California Native tribes, the Shasta traded with other groups: they gave deer skins, pine nuts, bows and arrowheads, basketry caps, berries, meat, dentalia, which was a form of money, and obsidian; and they would receive acorns, baskets, beads, dried salmon, clams, seaweed, canoes, salt, shirts and dresses.

The Shasta baskets are made out of tule, dyed tule, bear grass, cane, and often have nettle or flax cord appendages. Most of their basketry is twined, and ceremonial gift baskets, gambling trays, burden baskets and hats are the most important of Shasta basketry.

Visit of a Shasta Village
Source: Pardee Home Museum

Source: Heizer, R. F. and M. A. Whipple (editors). 1971. *The California Indians. A Source Book*. Berkeley et al.: University of California Press.

LESSON PLAN – STORYTELLING TIME

TITLE: Storytelling Time TIME: 2 Sessions, each 60 minutes

LEARNER POPULATION: grade level 4

CURRICULAR CONTEXT: part of Social Studies, California History; unit: Native American Basketry

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this activity:

1) Students will be able to recount the Hupa story "Coyote steals Daylight".
2) Students will be able to draw a storyboard for the Hupa story

CONCEPTS/INFORMATION:

- The Hupa in Northern California
- The importance of storytelling and oral tradition.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:

1) Introduce the lesson by explaining the importance of storytelling and oral traditions to students. Use the Background Information sheet "Storytelling and Oral History" as reference.
2) Read the story "Coyote Steals Daylight" to the students.
3) Hand out the story to students. Ask questions about the content and possible origin of the story. Why do the Hupa tell this story?
4) Students create storyboards (cartoon) for the story. Assist students in dividing up the story into different scenes and sections that can then be represented in single pictures.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Story "Coyote Steals Daylight"; Background Information "Storytelling and Oral History"; paper, crayons, pencils.

EXTENSION/CLOSURE:

1) Ask students to tell stories from different cultures.
2) Students write a story that is part of their family's oral history.

Background Information - Storytelling and Oral Tradition

Individual families and whole cultures pass on their histories and traditions by telling stories about it. That way they remember and learn from the past. Reasons why people tell each other stories are to remember things that happened, and also to explain why and how something happened. Examples of what people tell stories about are:

What is the origin of the earth?
What is the origin of a certain people?
How did these people get to this place?
How did two people meet and fall in love?
How did someone from the group do something brave/amazing/wonderful?

Some of the stories we hear are fictitious, which means they are made up and do not reflect reality. Many other stories, though, are based on true facts and passed on orally to remember certain things and events. Oral and written traditions are each useful and valuable, and may times, written texts started out as oral traditions.

Discussion points:

Who writes down history?
What is the difference between oral history and a written history book?
Is there only one history, or do multiple perspectives exist?

Coyote Steals Daylight

This is a story about what Coyote did.

Coyote was walking along. And then he saw some people digging Indian potatoes. But it was still dark yet, there wasn't any daylight. When the people saw Coyote, they said, "Come on up to the house." Coyote was surprised to see a building, a big long house. There weren't very many long houses around there, so he became curious. He decided to go up to the long house. And then when he got there, Coyote saw two little boys sitting in that house. And then Coyote went inside the house and looked around. He saw a lot of things hanging up there next to the roof.

And then he looked up at the bags and asked the two boys, "What is that?" They told him that they didn't know. Then, when Coyote kept on asking them, one of them said, "Look, that bag there is only rain. That other one there is lightning." Now Coyote was really curious. He noticed that one of the bags was bigger than the others. Coyote asked, "What is that big bag for?" Coyote kept on asking about each one of the bags. Then, he saw a bag that was bigger than the others. He had to know what that one was, so he asked, "What's in that bag?" The boys kept silent, but finally one of the boys told him, "That one is daylight." And then when Coyote found out that Daylight was in that bag, he thought, "I am going to steal that bag with Daylight in it."

He told those two boys, "Bring some water for me." When they went off, he thought, "I hope you will be gone a long time." He wanted them to stay away from the house. If only they would start playing, they might stay away longer, he thought. That big bag was hanging up. Coyote knew he had to act quickly. And then he jumped up; he grabbed that bag. He jumped up and brought the bag down from the rafters. He ran away fast with that

big bag. And then he ran away fast with it all. And then those two boys came back. They went into the house. And then they looked inside. That big bag wasn't hanging there any more. They looked; that big bag that used to be hanging there was gone. He stole that daylight. Yes he did.

And then the two boys ran off. They were chasing Coyote. "Come back here," one of them shouted to Coyote. "You stole Daylight from us." But Coyote didn't stop. And then one of the boys said, "We'll have to bring in the fastest birds: Hummingbird, grouse, pigeon." That's some of the fastest ones, they had to bring in the fastest birds to catch Coyote. And the two boys kept on looking for Coyote. Then they came across a house. There was an old man sitting in front of the house. He was someone who looked like a rich man. He looked like he had been sitting there for a long time. So they thought, "Maybe this is his house." They asked him, ""Haven't you seen coyote? He stole daylight from us." The old man said, "No."

Outside the house, there was a flat rock. Just then, the boys saw Coyote running around the back of the house. The boys knew that the old man had turned into Coyote. They ran to tell the birds, "We know where Coyote is." Those birds flew after him. And then they caught him. And then they picked him up. They told him, "Bring that bag of daylight back." As they were carrying him, he was still holding the bag. He brought it back out. And then Coyote threw the bag down on a rock. The bag of daylight fell down on the rock. It broke the bag. Daylight went everywhere. When he broke the bag, Daylight came to be. He did it, he brought the daylight.

That's the end of it.

LESSON PLAN – CALIFORNIA BASKETRY

TITLE: California Basketry TIME: 90 minutes

LEARNER POPULATION: grade level 4

CURRICULAR CONTEXT: part of Social Studies, California History; unit: Native American Basketry

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this activity:

1) Students will be able to identify the many different usages of Native American baskets.
2) Students will be able to identify basket-maker Julia Parker.

CONCEPTS/INFORMATION:

- The Pardee Home Museum's collection of basketry
- Different weaving styles, colors, shapes, usages
- Julia Parker, basket-maker in Yosemite Valley

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:

1) Develop students' interest by asking them who lived in California long before it was conquered by Spanish explorers during the 16th century. Use a map to explain that nearly 500 different Native American tribes lived all across the state. Ask students whether they know what these groups originally used to store their food, to catch fish or to cook. They used baskets in all kinds of sizes and shapes.
2) Introduce the Pardee Home Museum, and show photos of the original basketry collection at the house which was given away to the Oakland Museum of California. Then show different kinds of basketry that still remain at the museum.

3) Introduce Julia Parker and tell students about her life.
4) Show photos of different baskets to students and let them guess about their functions. Use the sheet “Shapes and Uses of California Indian Basketry” for help.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Photos Basketry; pencils; map of California (see first lesson plan); photos of Julia Parker; background information on Julia Parker; “Shapes and Uses of California Basketry” sheet.

EXTENSION/CLOSURE:

1) Students learn about the specifics of a museum environment that is acceptable for storing baskets.

Background Information on Basket-weaver Julia Parker

Julia Parker was born in 1929 in Sonoma County to Lily Pete, a Pomo woman. Her parents died when she was still very young, and Julia and her brothers and sisters were placed into boarding schools. In 1948, she married Ralph Parker, and they had 4 children. It is customary for California basket-weavers to learn the art from their mothers, but since Julia did not have a mother anymore, she learned it from her husband's grandmother, Lucy Telles.

After the Second World War when tourism began to pick up again, Lucy was demonstrating basket weaving at Yosemite. Julia spent many hours with Lucy, watching and learning how to gather materials and make beautiful and useful baskets. After Lucy Telles' death in 1956, the National Park Service asked Julia to take over as a cultural demonstrator within the Indian Cultural Program. She also continued her studies of basket-weaving with other local Miwok-Paiute and Pomo women.

Today, Julia Parker teaches classes and gives demonstrations at Yosemite; she visits schools, colleges and museums. She has dedicated her whole life to learning, teaching and continuing the culture of her people in order to safe her culture and the art of basketry. Her baskets are in museums all over the world, and supposedly even the Queen of England has some that were made by Julia Parker. Julia hopes that the traditions of her people will not be lost, and so she continues her work; she worries that the land and the lessons that people can learn from the land will be lost to development and modernization; she also worried that Indian children will not learn the traditions and cultures of their ancestors. Nevertheless, Julia has been successful in her endeavor, since

she inspired her daughter Lucy Parker, and her granddaughter, Ursula Jones, to continue making traditional baskets.

The following sentence is Julia Parker's philosophy: "Take from the earth and give back to the earth, and don't forget to say please and thank you." Basket weavers learn great respect for the land that provides them with the materials and for the materials they use, because according to Julia, "it is the fiber and not the weaver who makes a beautiful basket."

Source: www.yosemite.org

Shapes and Uses of

California Indian Basketry

Note: The sizes of the baskets illustrated here are proportional to one another.

Plant Food Gathering and Transport

Gift/Storage Basket. The gift/storage basket is presented as a gift and is used for transporting goods or plant foods. Typical size: ht. 30"; dia. across mouth: 25".

Gift/Storage Basket. Ht. 30"; Dia. 25".

Seedbeater. Using the seedbeater, edible wild seeds were harvested by knocking seeds off the plant and into the burden basket. Typical length: 20".

Seedbeater. Length 20"

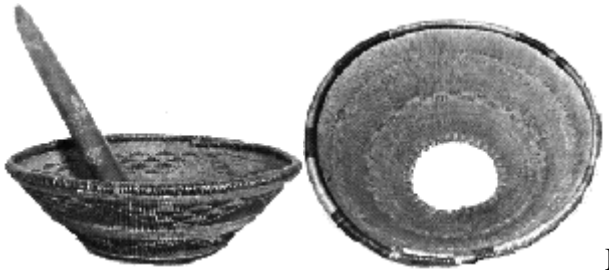
Acorn and Seed Meal Winnowing, "Sifting" Baskets, and Trays. "Sifting," winnowing baskets, and trays are round or triangular. The baskets are deep while the trays are shallow or flat. Close-twined round or triangular "sifters" were used to separate fine, fully-ground acorn meal from the coarser meal which required additional pounding. Seeds were also sifted with these basketry implements. The fine meal was separated by a side-to-side shaking action. Both closed- and open-weave baskets and trays were used for winnowing. Typical dia.: 20".

Deep Sifting Basket. Dia. 20".

Openwork Winnowing Basket. Dia. 20"

Triangular Basket. Length 20".

Mortar and Pestle. Acorns were the staple food source of the California Indians. These nuts were pounded into meal on stone mortars. The funnel-shaped mortar baskets, with a hole at the bottom, were used to concentrate the meal in the bottom of the basket onto the mortar rock. This prevented the meal from flying off the mortar during pounding. Typical dia. across the top: 14".



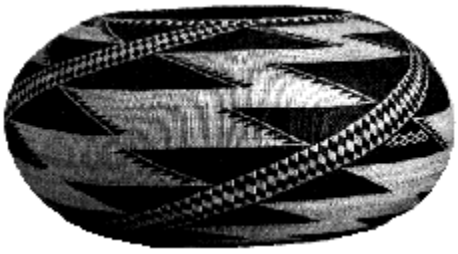
Mortar Basket. Dia. 14".

Mortar Basket and Pestle. Dia. 14".

Storage and Food Serving Baskets

Large Storage Baskets. Large twined storage baskets for acorns and other non-perishable foods often have sides incurving toward the top. In north central California the baskets are round or globular in shape. In the northwestern area of the state the large storage baskets are typically taller with a larger opening. Fancy or highly decorated gift baskets were used for storing different items. Typical dia. across largest area: 30".

Large Gift/Storage Basket from North Central California. Dia. 30".

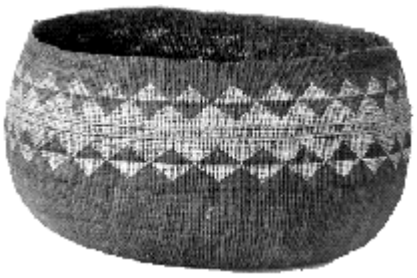


Large Storage Basket from Northwestern California. Dia. 30".

Food Serving Tray. Dia. 20".

Food Preparation and Serving Baskets

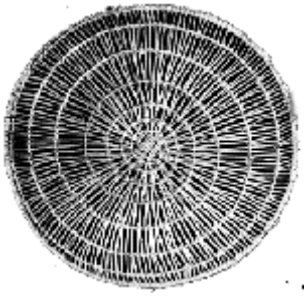
Cooking Baskets. Cooking baskets have flared, straight or slightly incurved sides. Red-hot rocks are repeatedly dropped into the basket until the acorn soup or mush is cooked. The large (24" or more) cooking baskets have flaring sides to make it easier to remove the cooled rocks. These large baskets would probably have been used to cook for the extended-family households typical in pre-contact times. Today feasts for community gatherings are prepared in the baskets. Small cooking baskets (12" or smaller) may have a slightly incurved profile but are more open (so that rocks can be removed) than the storage basket with strongly incurved sides.



Large Cooking Basket. Dia. 24".

Large Cooking Basket. Dia. 24"

Food Serving Platters. In many parts of northern California, openwork twined platters were used to serve roasted fish or meat. Typical dia.: 12-15".



Food Platter. Dia. 15".

Food Serving Baskets. Small coiled or twined gift baskets with flaring sides were used for individual servings of acorn soup or mush, and for dipping and pouring water. Typical dia. across mouth: 3" to 6".

Small Serving Basket. Dia. 6".

Specialized Baskets

Shell money and other valuables were often stored in small, necked gift baskets whose shapes are reminiscent of pottery. Typical dia.: 7".

Shell Basket. Dia. 7".

Lidded "Trinket" Baskets were a post-contact innovation in northwestern California. They were made primarily for sale to European collectors. Typical dia.: 6".

Basketry Tobacco Pouches were also made in northwestern California. Typical dia.: 3".

Gambling Trays, shallow, round woven basketry were used by women while playing gambling games. Typical dia.: 20".

Tobacco Pouch. Dia. 6".

Gambling Tray. Dia. 20".

Lidded Trinket Basket. Dia. 6".

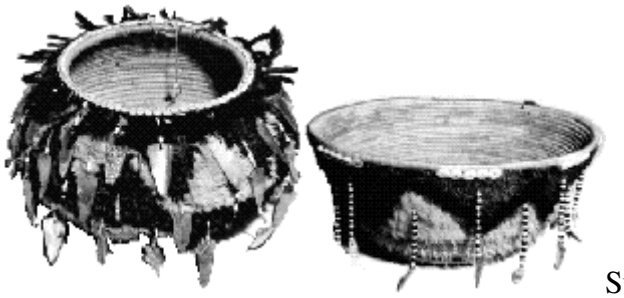
Fancy Gift Baskets

Elliptical or Boat-Shaped Baskets. These baskets had various uses. Small ones (typically 5" long) were often used to store valuables. Shaman and native doctor's paraphernalia were stored in medium-sized baskets (typically 14" long). The very large elliptical baskets (typically 30" or more in length) were used to store dance equipment and regalia.

Elliptical Basket. Length 5-30".

Treasured Gift Baskets. The Pomo tribes are famous for their elaborately decorated coiled-baskets used as gifts to store small valuables. Such "treasure" baskets were (and are) more valuable than the items stored in them. The baskets are decorated with beads or feathers. Sometimes they are completely covered with red woodpecker feathers ("sun" baskets), or with a combination of brightly colored feathers. The feathers were tightly stitched into the basket weave. Such valuable baskets were presented as gifts to friends as well as for wedding gifts. They are also used as sacrifical item when a person who owned the basket dies. These elaborate baskets are also made for sale to collectors. Typical dia.: 7".

Feather Basket. Dia. 7".



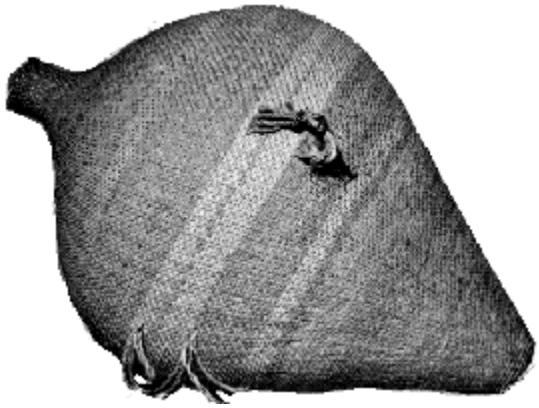
Sun Basket. Dia. 7".

Miniature Baskets displayed the basketweaver's skill. They were given as a gift or sold, and sometimes were used in doctoring ceremonies. Typical dia.: 1/4" - 2".

Miniature Basket. Dia. 1/4" - 2" .

Other Specialized Basket Types

Water Bottle. A water-proof twined weave was used for these baskets from the central area of eastern California. Typical dia.: 10".



Basketry Water Bottle. Dia. 10".

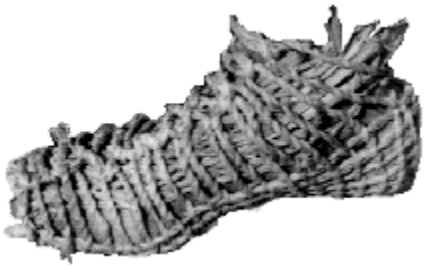
Basketry Cradle. Basketry cradles were used by all northern California tribes. The baby was fastened into the cradle which was carried on the mother's back. Typical length is 30" although a variety of sizes were made to correspond to the age of the infant.

Basketry Cradle. Length 30".

Basketry Cap. Basketry caps were worn in the northwest and areas of eastern California. Plain, everyday caps were worn by both men and women. Fancy dress-up caps of the finest quality twined weave are still made and worn by the women today. Typical dia.: 8".

Basketry Cap. Dia. 8".

Basketry Moccasins. Some tribes also used basketry techniques to weave foot-gear or moccasins out of tule rushes or other plant materials.

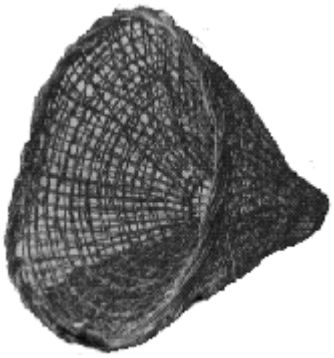


Basketry moccasins. Length 10".

Traps

Birds and fish were the principal animals caught with traps. In California, salmon and certain other migratory fish were second only to acorns as a food staple. Basketry traps were made in three main forms. A "plunge" trap was used to scoop up fish. "Invaginated" traps had a narrow, funnel-shaped opening leading the fish into a second chamber from which they were unable to exit. A third trap type is long and funnel-shaped. Upon entering the trap, the woodpecker, quail or certain fish became wedged into the small

end. The size, structure, and weave of each trap varied according to the specific animal. Three types of traps are illustrated: the Pomo invaginated fish-trap, typical dia. at the mouth: 18"; the Atsugewi basketry fish-trap, typical dia. at the mouth: 12"; and the Pomo woodpecker trap, typical dia. at the mouth: 4".



Invaginated Fish Trap. Dia. 18".

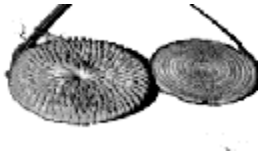
Fish Trap. Dia. 12".

Woodpecker Trap. Dia. 4".

Basket Weaving Methods

A basket was worked, and formed of grasses, twigs and fibers into a piece of artistic design--sometimes only to be admired for its artistry, but usually created to serve a further purpose. Baskets were made to serve all the container needs of the early California peoples who had no pottery. Not merely handwoven, they were filled with meaningful designs, symbols, even stories, following tribal tradition. Beyond tradition, weavers exercised artistic freedom leaving their individual marks. Three types of basket weaving is illustrated below.

Coiling. A flexible rod, or cluster of 3 rods, is coiled and continuously bound to the preceding level. This method produces a strong but quite stiff basket or tray.


Coiling.

Simple Open-Work Twining is used for traps and some winnowing trays. As in cloth weaving, a horizontal weft goes under and over the vertical warp. Two or three pieces of horizontal weft material may also be twisted around each other.


Simple Open-Work Twining.

Tightly Woven Twining. This weave is used for cooking baskets, caps, water bottles, and for other items where waterproofing is required, or where flexibility is essential. The weaving includes a variety of complex and difficult techniques and designs.


Tightly Woven Twining

Source: http://www.mip.berkeley.edu/cilc/basket.html

Mrs. Pardee's collection of basketry displayed on the front steps of the house

Woven Purse

Shasta Basket

Shasta Basket seen from above

Klamath hat

Berry basket

Basket with black design

Museum Catalogue Information on Objects

Unfortunately, Mrs. Pardee's extensive basketry collection was given to the Oakland Museum of California. Only a few examples of basketry remain at the Pardee Home Museum today.

Woven Purse

A woven bag with a draw-string. Woven of dyed fibers into a tube-like shape without any seams. Colors of zigzag band design on beige background are purple, yellow, green and maroon. Bottom of bag has a small hole where weaving began or ended. 26.3 cm long, 10.5 cm wide. Provenance unclear.

Shasta Basket

Open-weave, bowl-shaped basket made by Shasta Indian woman. Of straw-colored reed of approximately 3 mm diameter. Slightly flat bottom of basket is woven more tightly than very open sides. Tag attached to rim with red ribbon says "Basket made by Shasta Squaw Price $ 1.50". From Shasta, California.

Shasta Basket seen from above

Here Mrs. Pardee's labeling can be seen very well. The old label is attached with a red ribbon to the rim of the basket.

Klamath Hat

This example might be a hat, oven woven by the Klamath River people.

Berry Basket

This basket might have been used to collect berries. Many of the Notherwest Coast cultures used berry baskets similar to this one.

Basket with black design

Large basket, maybe used for storage. Nice band of black zigzag design

LESSON PLAN – BASKETRY MATERIALS AND WEAVING TECHNIQUES

TITLE: Basketry Materials and Weaving Techniques TIME: 60 minutes

LEARNER POPULATION: grade level 4

CURRICULAR CONTEXT: part of Social Studies, California History; unit: Native American Basketry

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this activity:

1) Students will be able to identify different basketry materials.
2) Students will be able to identify different styles of basket-weaving

CONCEPTS/INFORMATION:

- The Pardee Home Museum's collection of basketry
- Different natural materials used for making basketry
- Weaving styles, colors, shapes, usages

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:

1) Introduce the lesson by explaining that students will learn about the different natural materials that were used by California Natives to make basketry.
2) Show photos of the baskets at the Pardee Home Museum, and invite students to guess what materials the baskets are made from.
3) Hand out photos and/or information on plant material. Have students research the different materials in groups to identify where they grow, what their preferred conditions are, and also how Native Americans used the materials. After 20-30 minutes, have groups report back to the whole class.
4) Then, introduce the most common weaving techniques.

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS: Background Information Basketry; photos of baskets at the Pardee Home Museum (see third lesson plan); pencils; photos and information on plant materials (Internet resources); books on California Native Plants.

EXTENSION/CLOSURE:

1) Students learn about the specifics of a museum environment that is acceptable for storing baskets.

Background Information – Basketry

There are many different techniques for making baskets. The three most common ones are twining, coiling and plaiting.

1) TWINING is two or more flexible weft elements that engage one or more rigid warp elements, interlacing with the warps or being twisted between them The warp is the passive element and normally vertical; the weft is the active part in this technique and usually horizontal. The active element is very fine and weakest across the twining elements. As a result, splitting and breaking occurs between the passive, vertical elements. This technique is used primarily for making mats, bags and sandals.

2) COILING is the technique where a warp foundation is wound in a circular pattern and the weft (usually one strand instead of two or more) is sewn over the foundation to link each successive row. The foundation is more sturdy and stiff and gives the object its shape while the active element is rather fine. Therefore, it is logical that the weakest part of a coiled basket is between the foundation's rows where splitting or breaking can easily occur. As a foundation, people use willow sticks, bark, grass, roots and shoots. It is often easier to produce a variety of shapes with twining than with coiling.

3) PLAITING involves sets of elements interwoven at a 90º angle.

A basket's shape does not necessarily dictate a certain weaving technique. No matter which technique is used, the process is very labor-intensive: single basket can take several months or even a year

-quote from Julia Parker, Pomo: "You follow the rules and just relax, let those pieces of fiber in that basket just dance in your hands…"

Material:

-Bracken Fern: when buried in mud or left to soak in a rusty tin can, the color will become shades of dark brown and black

-Sedge Roots: formed the yellow-white background

-once the material has been harvested, it is left to age, so that it will remain straight

-sedge roots are split with fingers, knives or teeth and stored in coils

-before starting to weave, the materials are soaked in water to soften them; then the weaver gives them a final trimming

-Willow: usually the foundation of all coiled baskets

-Bulrush: one of the two Pomo traditional pattern color plants: buried in wet ashes to dye black

-Redbud: traditional Pomo source for red-colored designs

Color:

-in Miwok tradition only one color has been used per basket (either black from Bracken Fern Root or red from Split Redbud Twigs), but this was modified by Lucy Telles (Julia Perker learned the art of basketry weaving from Lucy Telles who is her husband's grandmother) who began to use two colors

-much knowledge goes into choosing color and selecting the materials for it, as Julia Parker, a Pomo basket weaver states: "Even vibrant color is a sign of carefully chosen materials. The color of redbud is different depending on where it grows. The sticks growing on the south side of the river are darker than those growing on the north. One of

the rules I was taught is that you wait for it to rain and wash all the dust off the bushes, and then you can really see the colors."

Design:

-Lucy Telles large design had often stylized pictorial elements arranged in overall symmetric patterns, giving the whole basket a unified design

-There is no established pattern for different types of basketry; the entire design of the basket has to be formed inside the weaver's mind before beginning weaving

Decoration:

-variation of technique

-appendages like feathers, shells, tassels and beads

-use of different colors by dying materials

Basketry Materials

Resources for Teachers

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