

## **SIOUX (LAKOTA) NATION Reading Comprehension**

In the Sioux culture, men were the providers and women tended to the home and cooked. In fact, in Sioux culture, the home belonged to the woman, and she was in charge of every aspect involved in caring for and maintaining the home. Since there were often more women in a village than men, many Sioux men had several families and killed enough buffalo to feed them all.

Only men could become "chiefs" in Sioux society. Unlike in some Native American tribes, however, the title of "chief" was earned rather than inherited. Sioux warriors used bows and arrows, clubs, and spears when hunting or defending the tribe. "Fighting" between Indians was often nonviolent and usually involved stealing horses or proving bravery. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the travois was used to transport the tepees and family belongings. A travois was a V-shaped formation of tree trunks dragged by a team of dogs. After the Europeans arrived, the Sioux became dependent on horses and were known as accomplished riders.

Children were thought of as sacred in Sioux culture. Children were rarely punished. When they were punished, the adult usually confiscated an item that was loved. Adults often hung dream catchers above the cradles of their children to "catch" bad dreams in the web.

Like most tribes, the Sioux were very spiritual. They believed in Wakan Tanka (The Great Mystery of The Thunderbird), a god who created all living things. Wakan Tanka lived in a grand tepee in the Black Hills of South Dakota, one of the most sacred areas in Sioux culture. The Sioux also believed in the spirit of the White Buffalo Calf Maiden. This spirit first appeared to the Sioux in human form but was actually a white buffalo calf. She taught the Sioux lessons to avoid ignorance, evil, and self-destruction. She also introduced the sacred pipe, which was the center of seven secret ceremonies performed during times of religious persecution. Among these ceremonies was the Sweat Lodge Ceremony in which Sioux villagers purged themselves of guilt, burden, and evil by smoking the pipe in a "sweat lodge" (a dome-shaped tent made of willow branches, furs, and hides with a fire pit in the center) before an important event. The ceremony was also thought to bring its participants closer to Wakan Tanka. Another ceremony was known as the Vision Quest. In a vision quest, an individual would purify himself in the sweat lodge before isolating himself on a mountaintop, forest, or desert without food. The object of the vision quest is to help the participant seek oneness with all living things and to learn about his future in the form of a vision. The participant would then communicate his vision to the village shaman (medicine man) who would interpret it. Based on the interpretation, a medicine bundle (a bag of tokens and items that had special meanings to the owner) would be prepared with various items to represent the guiding spirit. This is just a small sampling of Sioux spiritual beliefs. It is important to note that there were many more spiritual ceremonies that may be interpreted in a variety of ways.

**1.) In Sioux culture, only men could...**

- a.) own property.
- b.) prepare the buffalo.
- c.) become chief.
- d.) tend to the house.

**2.) A \_\_\_\_\_ was a V-shaped formation of tree trunks that was used to transport possessions.**

**3.) Which of the following is NOT true?**

- a.) Children were very important in Sioux culture.
- b.) Sioux men sometimes had more than one family.
- c.) The Sioux would eventually become dependent on the horse.
- d.) Fighting between the Sioux and other Indian tribes was usually violent and caused much death and destruction.

**4.) According to Sioux culture, \_\_\_\_\_ created all living things.**

**5.) After the arrival of the White settlers, the Sioux became dependent on horses.**

**Which of the following is an example of another dependent relationship?**

- a.) cub -> lioness
- b.) bottle -> water
- c.) spider -> fly
- d.) math -> calculator

**6.) Analogy**

shield: knight :: \_\_\_\_\_

- a.) buffalo: Sioux hunter
- b.) bravery: warrior
- c.) travois: dog
- d.) dream catcher: Sioux baby

**7.) Which of the following WAS NOT true about a vision quest?**

- a.) Vision quests sometimes occurred in the forest or on top of a mountain.
- b.) The participant was prohibited from telling anyone about the details of his vision during the vision quest.
- c.) Those experiencing a vision quest hoped to learn about their future.
- d.) The vision quest was experienced alone.

**8.) What would probably NOT be found in a medicine bundle?**

- a.) A bottle of water
- b.) A token representing a guiding spirit
- c.) An eagle feather representing bravery
- d.) A special rock handed down from father to son.

**9.) Which of the following were lessons taught by the White Buffalo Maiden Calf?**

- a.) Those to avoid war with neighboring tribes
- b.) Those to avoid charging buffalo stampedes
- c.) Those to avoid conflicts with White settlers
- d.) Those to avoid destroying themselves

**10.) Which of the following WAS NOT true of the sweat lodge?**

- a.) It was made of willow branches.
- b.) Most vision quests occurred in the sweat lodge.
- c.) It had a fire pit in the center.
- d.) It was dome-shaped.