

Chapter 1 – First Las Vegas Visitors

- **Paleo-Indians: Petroglyphs**
- **The Anasazi: Builders. Making Food. Basket Makers**
- **Paiutes: Growing Corn. Chewing Gum. Wikiups. Storytelling**

Teacher/Parent: Students will explore the similarities and differences between their own lives and the lives of the first Las Vegas. They will compare and contrast how they get food, make things, and communicate in writing.

Paleo-Indians

Background

The first people to live in Southern Nevada are known as the Paleo-Indians, which means “ancient ones.” They didn’t live in one place like we do, but instead camped in different places, following the animals they hunted. The only evidence we can see that they lived here are the pictures on the rocks that they left behind. These ancient people carved pictures in the rocks called petroglyphs.

Etch Your Own Petroglyphs

- 1 Study petroglyphs (see **figure 1** for examples) and try to figure out what they might represent. Discuss possible meanings.
- 2 Prepare “stone” by pouring wet plaster into flat molds.
- 3 When mold is completely dry, remove and cover with paint or shoe polish.
- 4 Use carving tools to scratch petroglyphs into stone.

What You Need

Plaster of paris, flat molds (baking pans or boxes lined with plastic wrap), dark reddish-brown paint or shoe polish, paper clips, carving tools such as spoons or butter knives.

Alternate method: Use crumpled craft paper for stone and draw petroglyphs with charcoal or crayon.

Alternate activities:

- ✓ Take a short hike from the Willow Springs picnic area at Red Rock Canyon to view rocks with petroglyphs.
- ✓ Visit the Valley of Fire State Park and climb up the staircase to visit Atlatl Rock and view the ancient petroglyphs.
- ✓ Create your own new petroglyphs to communicate modern day ideas.

Questions for Exploration

- What do petroglyphs mean?
- How did the ancient Native Americans etch the designs?
- How do the petroglyphs left by Indians give us information about how they lived?
- What are some modern day examples of petroglyphs?

The Anasazi

Background

About 2,000 years ago, the Anasazi moved to Southern Nevada. Archaeologists have recently found evidence that the Anasazi, also known as the ancient Puebloan, lived briefly right in the heart of what is Las Vegas today. A pit house was found near the springs. The springs that provided the water are located today near US 95 and Valley View Boulevard. Archeologists have uncovered artifacts at several dig sites.

Like the Native Americans before them, the Anasazi were hunters and gatherers. They gathered seeds and nuts from the trees and plants in the mountains and desert around them. They used a large flat rock called a “metate” and a smaller rock called a “mano” to grind the seeds. The ancient Puebloans processed their food by grinding the tough outer covering of the seeds that would have been inedible.

The Anasazi made beautiful baskets out of the natural grasses and willow branches that they found in the desert.

Form your own adobe bricks

- 1 Mix small amounts of straw and powdered clay into soil.
- 2 Mix in water until a thick damp mixture is formed.
- 3 Mold the mixture by hand into the ice cube tray and dry completely.

Alternate activity: Build a miniature pueblo out of natural materials or visit the pueblo at the Lost City Museum in Overton.

What You Need

1 liter soil (loam) for each student/group, straw, powdered clay, old ice cube trays or bread tins.

Questions for Exploration

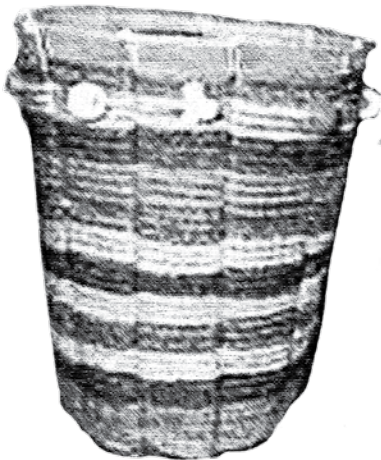
- What other materials could be used to make adobe bricks?
- What are some disadvantages of using this type of material to build a house?
- What else could be built from these adobe bricks?



Carolyn Uber

Grind seeds or nuts with a Mano and Metate

- 1 Find two rocks, one large and flat, and one smooth and small enough to hold in your hands.
- 2 Collect hard desert seeds such as mesquite seeds. Bird seed or flower seeds will work as well.
- 3 Use the large flat rock as the metate and place it on a solid surface.
- 4 Put seeds in the center of the metate.
- 5 Grind seeds by moving the smaller rock or mano over the seeds in a back and forth motion until outer shells are removed.



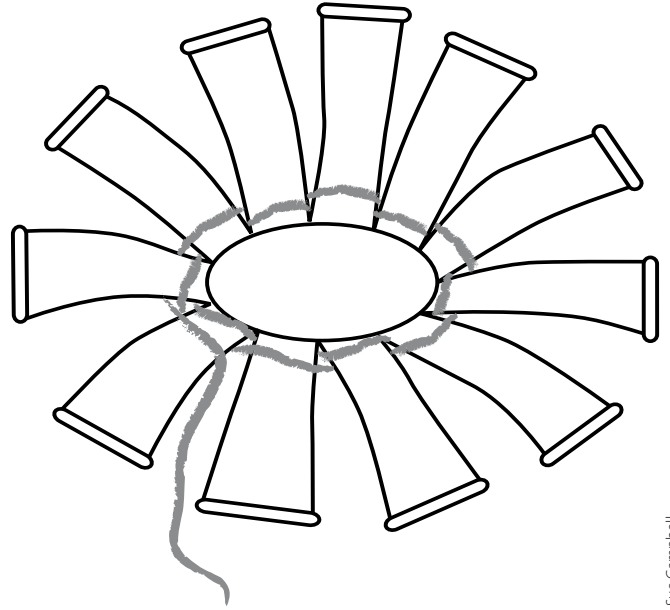
Sue Campbell

Learn the skill of Basket Making

The Anasazi made beautiful baskets out of natural grasses and willow branches. An easy and inexpensive way of weaving a basket is from a drinking cup and raffia.

- 1 Make straight cuts down the sides of a paper or plastic cup, from rim to bottom, but not through the bottom. Cuts should be about 1/2" apart. It must be an odd number of cuts in order for the weaving to come out correctly.

- 2 Begin weaving raffia through the cup strips until reaching the top. You can angle the strips out to make a curl or wide opening.
- 3 Tuck the ends of the raffia into a previous row.



Sue Campbell

Related Activity: Make a Venn diagram comparing life today and the life of a basket maker (figure 2). Include how we get food, what we eat, how we dress, and where we live.

Questions for Exploration

- Why were cone shaped baskets used to gather seeds?
- How could you make a cone shaped basket?
- What natural fibers did the Anasazi use?
- How did the Anasazi use the stringy fibers from the yucca cactus?
- How could you use natural fibers to make a basket?

Solve the Anasazi Mystery

- 1 Around 1150 A.D., all of the Anasazi mysteriously disappeared from Nevada.
- 2 After studying the contributions of the Anasazi and how they lived, have a discussion as to why they disappeared. Brainstorm some ideas of what might have happened to them.
- 3 Write an essay telling what you believe happened to the Anasazi.

Additional activities: Visit the interactive exhibits at the Big Springs Preserve or the Nevada State Museum at Lorenzi Park.

Questions for Exploration

- What were some environmental factors for the Anasazi?
- What hardships did they encounter in everyday life?
- What were the dangers of the desert for the Anasazi?

How is YOUR life like the ancient basketmakers?

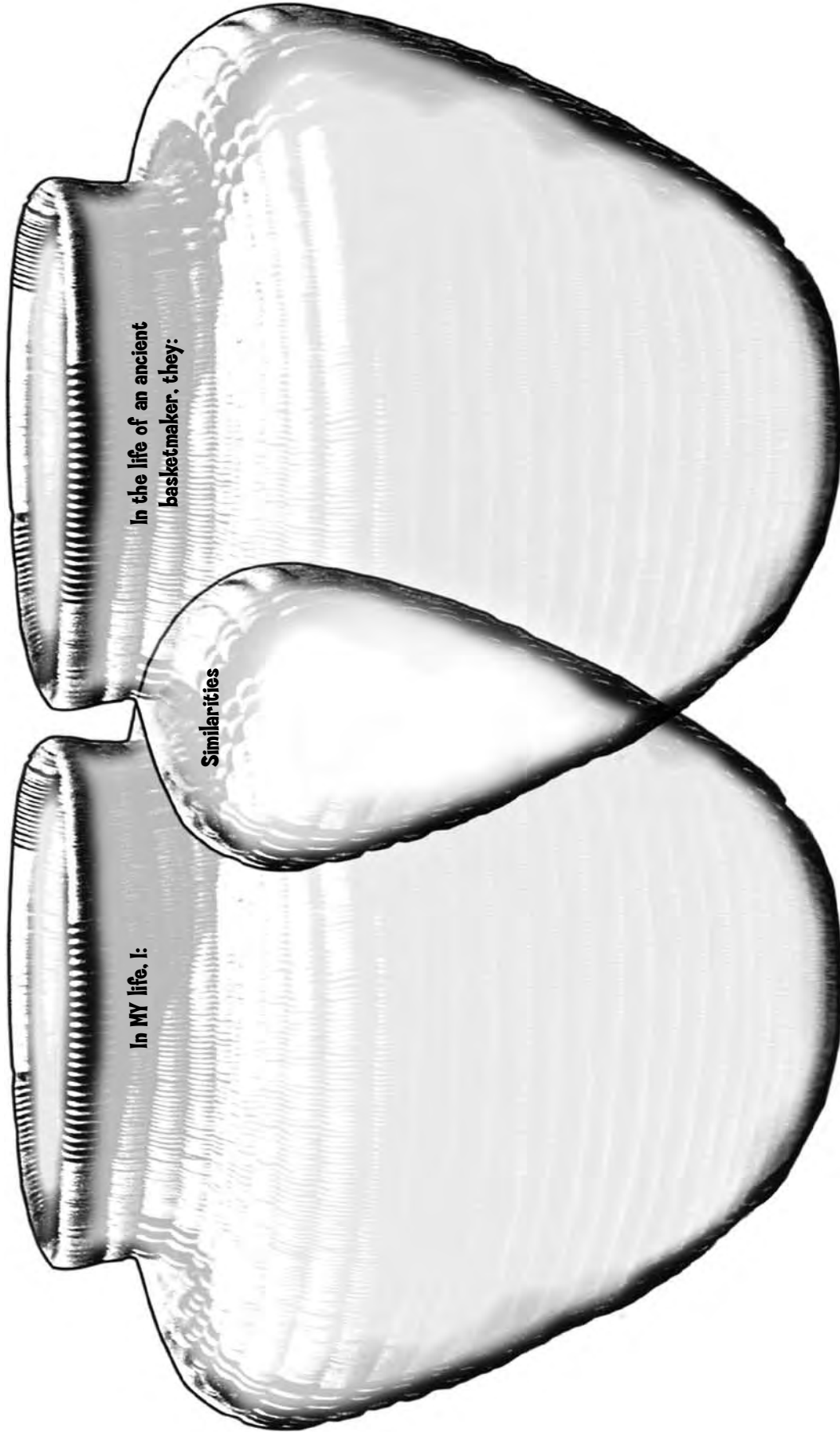


Figure 2–Basket Maker’s Venn Diagram

The Paiutes

Background

The Paiutes were living in the Las Vegas Valley when the Europeans began exploring the Southwest. The Las Vegas Springs provided the Paiutes with water to drink. They planted crops of corn, beans, and squash and dug trenches to irrigate their crops.

Plant and Grow your own Corn

- 1 Plant corn seeds in a tray filled with soil.
- 2 Try this experiment using different kinds of soil or sand.
- 3 Grow using the least amount of water possible. Experiment with different methods of watering the seeds.
- 4 When seed sprouts are three to four inches tall, transplant them outside.

Roll Out your own Chewing Gum

The Paiutes made gum by roasting the stalks of the agave plant.

To make 1/2 pound of gum, you will need:

1/3 cup gum base
 3/4 cup powdered sugar
 3 tablespoons corn syrup
 1 teaspoon glycerin
 1/2 teaspoon citric acid
 5 drops flavoring

- 1 Place gum base, citric acid, corn syrup, glycerin, and flavoring into microwave safe bowl. Heat for one minute on high. Remove from microwave, stir, and check to see if it has melted; if necessary, heat for another 30 seconds. Repeat the above step until the mixture is gooey.
- 2 Remove one tablespoon of powdered sugar and set aside.
- 3 Pour 1/2 of the remaining powdered sugar onto your work surface and make a well in the middle of it.
- 4 Pour the melted gum base mixture in the well. It may still be hot, but it will cool quickly.
- 5 Dip your fingers in the powdered sugar and knead the mixture with the sugar. Keep mixing it together just as you would knead bread dough. Add more powdered sugar when sticky and be sure to add all of the sugar. Knead for at least 15 minutes. The longer you knead the gum, the smoother it will become. Gum that is not kneaded enough will break up when you chew it.
- 6 Now roll out the gum into a 1/2" rope. Cut in pieces (about 1/2" in length) with scissors. If you want flat gum, you can roll it out with a rolling pin.
- 7 Dust all of the pieces with the remaining tablespoon of powdered sugar. Store in a zip lock bag or individual pieces of wax paper.

Chewing gum kits are available at various Internet sites.

Construct a Wikiup Shelter

- 1 You will need a shovel, large branches or small tree trunks, small branches, long grass, and rope.
- 2 On a convenient spot of level ground, draw a circle perhaps eight feet in diameter and dig a trench beside it.
- 3 In the trench, put the ends of poles made from young trees or branches. If the poles are long and flexible enough, bend them into arches; otherwise tie them together in the middle to make a dome five or six feet high.
- 4 Cover with small branches and grass everywhere except the doorway.



UNLV Libraries, Special Collections

Questions for Exploration

- How are our tents today like the wikiups of old?
 How did the wikiups protect the Native Americans from the wind, heat, and cold?

Become a Story Teller

There are many great Paiute legends, such as the "Coyote Story of How the Paiutes Came to Live in the Great Basin." Read and listen to a variety of Native American stories.

Create a story bag to help you tell the story.

- 1 Research Paiute legends and choose one to tell with a story bag.
- 2 Decorate the outside of a paper bag with petroglyphs or pictures. Use craft supplies like feathers, beads, leather, leaves, or seeds for added interest.
- 3 Fill the story bag with various props or symbols needed to tell the story.
- 4 Tell the story using the objects in the story bag.

Alternate activities: Research and create your own book of Paiute legends. Practice telling one of your stories as if you were sitting around a campfire. Participate in the Bristlecone Storytelling Festival.

Places to Visit

Red Rock National Conservation Area

Located approximately 25 minutes driving time west of the "strip." There are several useful websites to plan a trip or to find more information.

<http://www.nv.blm.gov/redrockcanyon/Kids/>

This site for kids offers a variety of activities including how to become a Junior Ranger.

<http://www.redrockcanyonlv.org>

The Red Rock Canyon Interactive Association website includes driving directions, information on the elevation, fees, visitor's center, weather and a web cam.

Valley of Fire State Park

<http://www.parks.nv.gov/vf.htm>

Just 55 miles northeast of Las Vegas, Valley of Fire State Park is Nevada's oldest and largest state park. It has picnic, hiking and camping facilities.

Big Springs Preserve

<http://www.springspreserve.org>

Opening in Spring 2007, this preserve will have several interactive exhibits and labs to explore. Virtual exhibits of some of the galleries may be found on the Big Spring Website.

Nevada's Lost City Museum

<http://dmla.clan.lib.nv.us/docs/museums>

The story of the Pueblo Grande of Nevada is preserved in the Lost City Museum in Overton. It has artifacts unearthed from sites that are now under the waters of Lake Mead. These artifacts are housed in a reconstructed Pueblo residence cluster.

Sources for Additional Information

WEBSITES

First People

<http://www.firstpeople.us>

This website is an excellent resource for Native American legends and can easily be searched to find Paiute legends.

Native Nevada Classroom

<http://www.unr.edu/nnap>

This website focuses on the tribes of the Great Basin, including the Washoe, the Shoshone, and the Paiute. It provides a wealth of information and lesson plans. Paiute legends including "Coyote Tales" and "The Origin of the Echo" can be found at this site.

Bristlecone Storytelling Festival

<http://www.ccsd.net/cpd/bristlecone/about.htm>

The Clark County School District sponsors the Bristlecone Storytelling Festival every year for students in fourth to eighth grades. Information can be found at this website.

BOOKS

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