



Lesson 2.1 “People of the Dawn”

Unit 2: The Abenaki Before 1600

Lesson Objectives

- Students will construct a class KWL chart to organize their understanding of Abenaki life during the Woodland period.
- Students will examine the lessons found in the oral traditions of the Abenaki people.
- Students will investigate the likely locations of Abenaki settlements in 1600 in relation to New Hampshire’s geographic features.
- Students will draw conclusions about the Abenaki way of life based on names of Abenaki months.

Lesson Competencies

- I can interpret and use information delivered orally or visually and respond by asking relevant questions, summarizing key points or elaborating on ideas. (ELA 7)
- I can determine the central message/lesson/theme of a text and support my interpretation (saying why my evidence is accurate and convincing). (ELA 2)
- I can analyze, use, and construct maps and other geographic representations to explain relationships between people and environments. (Moose SS)
- I can use sources (pictures, primary and secondary sources, discussion) to expand my understanding of the topic/text and locate information to support my point of view. (ELA 6)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

Focus Questions

How did where the Abenaki lived impact how they lived?
How did Abenaki traditions reflect their way of life and beliefs?

Estimated Time

Two 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

“Map of N’dakinna” for printing or projection
KWL template
“Map of N’dakinna with New England States” for printing or projection
Class set of “Modern and Abenaki Names in New Hampshire” worksheet
Recording of “Creation Story” told by Joseph Bruchac for playing
Class set of “Abenaki Stories” worksheet
“An Abenaki Calendar” infographic for projection
Class set of “Personal Circular Calendar” worksheet



Educator Introduction & Rationale

The first people to live on the land that is New Hampshire were indigenous people, now known as the Abenaki. As the last ice age began to recede about 12,000 years ago, groups of these peoples arrived in New Hampshire, and until the 1600s their societies were the only ones of any significance in the area. During the millennia the indigenous peoples lived here their culture changed and evolved, adapting to new environmental conditions and developing new technologies and methods to thrive in the world around them. Reference the educator guide for more information.

This is the first lesson in Unit 2: The Abenaki Before 1600 and introduces students to the Abenaki people during the Woodland period in a two-part lesson. In Part 1: Their Land, students encounter an unfamiliar map marked with likely Abenaki settlements and begin a class KWL (Know, Want to know, Learned) chart. They return to the map, this time with familiar boundaries overlaid to investigate where the Abenaki typically lived and why. They then consider how the Abenaki referred to places by looking at current-day places that have Abenaki-influenced names before returning to the KWL chart. In Part 2: Their Beliefs, students listen to an Abenaki storyteller recount an oral tradition of the creation of the Abenaki and analyze the morality and nature lessons within. They conclude by looking closely at an infographic of an Abenaki calendar and draw conclusions about how the Abenaki lived. Please note, unit vocabulary and definitions are available at the end of this document. You may wish to preview them with your students.

Teaching tips: The “Abenaki-influenced Names in New Hampshire” worksheet gives both the translation and approximation of the Abenaki name of current-day places in the state. The approximation of the Abenaki names, especially, may be unfamiliar to students. Learning how to pronounce unfamiliar words respectfully supports the learning process; you can search on Google or visit westernabenaki.com/pronunciation.php or www.native-languages.org/abna_guide.htm for help.

A reinforcement activity is suggested to aid students in conceiving of 12,000 years of history, the length of time historians believe the Abenaki have lived in New Hampshire. Extension activities are suggested for students to explore an excellent mapping site of native lands and to compare how western culture names places in comparison to the Abenaki.

Learning Activity

Part 1: Their Land

Activation

Map of N'dakinna. Project the "Map of N'dakinna." Ask students if they recognize this place. Suggest they look for familiar features. If guidance is needed, point at the Cape Cod area as a reference point and then direct attention north and east, toward the New Hampshire shoreline.

Explain that this map shows the area now known as New England, in a time where natural landmarks marked the edge of territories and boundaries or state lines did not exist. Explain that the people who lived on this land called it N'dakinna. Pronounce the word to the class ("in-DAH-ki-nah") and have students repeat the word.

Important note: The map of N'Dakinna is complete to the best of our knowledge, but we cannot ensure its correctness. The map shows areas of settlement. However, it is approximate due to our lack of knowledge about where the Abenaki lived as well as how bands of Abenaki moved seasonally to meet their subsistence needs.

Discussion

KWL chart. What do students know about the people who lived on this land before it had state and town boundaries? Consider starting a Know/Want to Know/Learned (KWL) chart to document this discussion; use the provided template if you wish. The KWL chart can be a useful tool and point of reference to develop as students progress through the unit. The L column will remain empty until students have completed learning objectives in the unit lessons.

Possible outcomes:

- Students may know that people who lived on the land were indigenous peoples and that thousands of years ago their ways of life were different from the way most people live in New England today. Work with students to identify the vocabulary word "indigenous."
- Explain that indigenous peoples live all over North America and have their own names for their groups.
- Native American, American Indian, and indigenous people are all terms that are used by native and non-native people today; however native people usually prefer the use of their unique group names.
- The "Moose on the Loose" website refers to the people who lived in the area of New Hampshire for thousands of years before the Europeans arrived as the Abenaki.
- Note that there are Abenaki people who live in New England today, though this unit focuses on their ancestors and their way of life before explorers from Europe arrived in North America.



- Students may have other knowledge from different sources about the Abenaki; if you are unsure whether that information is correct, guide students to phrasing it as a question to be answered through your class’s study in the unit.
- Carefully correct any impression students have of the Abenaki people as “savages” that has existed in western culture. This biased term was used by European explorers for different peoples whose complex societies the explorers did not understand.

Teaching tip: You may wish to explain that Abenaki people call themselves “Alnôbak,” meaning the People. Collectively, all the groups living in this area are referred to as Abenaki even though it is important to realize that they were actually diverse, separate peoples (though interconnected, often by marriage and sharing of resources), such as the Penacook or the Amoskeag.

**Direct
Instruction &
Discussion**

People of the Dawn. Return to the map and confirm that the people who called the land N’Dakinna are the Abenaki. Explain that this name roughly translates to “people of the dawn,” “easterners,” or “people of the first light” and was used to refer to them because of their location. It was other native peoples who lived further west than they did who used this term. As students look at the map, ask them why they think other groups used this name—“people of the dawn”—to distinguish the Abenaki from other groups?

Possible outcome: Students should observe that the sun, rising in the east, would reach the land farthest east first. The Abenaki were the people who experienced dawn before others.

**Independent
Practice**

Map of N’dakinna. Project or distribute print outs of “Map of N’dakinna with New England States.” Ask students what is different about the map compared with what they saw previously. They should observe that modern borders have been layered on top. Discuss where Abenaki settlements are marked compared with New England borders. How are they similar and different? What surprises students?

Distribute “Modern and Abenaki Names in New Hampshire” worksheet. Explain that just as the Abenaki’s neighbors used a name for them that described them geographically, the Abenaki themselves used names for places that helped them document important information about the world around them. Read through the list with students, but be sure to be clear with students that this is not a complete list of places with Abenaki name influences in New Hampshire. Also remind students that these names would have been passed along by oral tradition so spellings are determined by European settlers writing Abenaki words and are approximate.

On a separate piece of paper, ask students to use the map and the list of place names to answer the following questions:

- Which places are close to you?
- Which places do students know?
- How do the Abenaki name places?
- Where did Abenaki people tend to live? What was there?

Possible outcomes:

- Abenaki names seem to be descriptive
- Abenaki names give information about the place
- Abenaki names are generally nature-based
- The Abenaki lived near important resources, such as rivers, and had wide ranges for where they lived so they would have enough resources for food, clothing, and shelter

Reflection

Add to the KWL chart. Ask students to share their responses and add to the KWL chart. What else do they know? What other questions do they have? Have they learned anything new, or have they learned something that corrects what they thought they knew?

Part 2: Their Beliefs

Direct Instruction & Discussion

Creation story. As part of the study of the Abenaki, each lesson in the unit contains an Abenaki story to help students become familiar with their traditions and beliefs. In this first lesson, the story of the creation of Gluskabe is told by Joseph Bruchac in a recording from 1995 made at the New Hampshire Historical Society.

Distribute the “Abenaki Stories” worksheet and tell students they are going to listen to a short Abenaki story, told by an Abenaki storyteller, that was passed down from generation to generation to teach the people about their history.

Play the Abenaki story “Creation” and give students time for the worksheet. Find the story in the Media Library on the “Moose on the Loose” website under Audiovisual Resources. If time allows, play it more than once so that students can think about the lessons and consider the story a second time. Share and review as best for your class. Consider keeping a large chart of stories, nature lessons, and morality lessons in the classroom and add to it throughout the unit.

Guided Practice

An Abenaki calendar. Marking time throughout the year can happen in many ways. When students think about the months of the year, what are some ways in which they mark the passing of time?

Possible responses:

- School starts in September, ends in June
- Vacations usually happen in December, February, April
- Birthdays
- Other holidays
- July and August are summertime months
- Sports and activities occur in different seasons



Display the infographic “Abenaki Calendar” and invite students to read it. See the “Pronunciation Guide” for how to pronounce the various months. The outline of the calendar was designed by an Abenaki artist, Jeanne Brink, based on information from Abenaki Stephen Laurent. Conduct a Notice & Wonder activity to encourage close looking. What do students notice about the calendar? What do they wonder?

Once students have noticed and wondered about the calendar, ask students what they can learn about the Abenaki based upon this calendar?

Possible responses:

- Abenaki marked the passage of time by watching the moon and the changing of the seasons.
- Their lives were organized by the natural world.
- They saw the seasons and moons in a circular, rather than linear, manner, which repeated yearly.
- The names of the moons are based upon activities performed in that time period that were done to sustain their communities.
- Some names are clear, like The Planter and The Corn Maker. What do students think the Greetings Moon means?
- The Abenaki were hunters, gatherers, and gardeners. Which months shows each of these activities?

Independent Practice & Reflection

Personal calendar. Distribute “Personal Circle Calendar” worksheet, review directions, and have students complete individually or in pairs. Reflect together on what month marks the beginning of their year. Why?

KWL chart. If the class completed the KWL chart from Part 1, return to it and add knowledge from the Creation story and Abenaki calendar discussions.



Reinforcement

1. **Abenaki timeline.** When conceiving of time, it can be difficult to explain to students “how long ago” something happened without placing events in context. Ask students how long they think people have lived on the land now called New Hampshire. Gather a few ideas, then tell them the Abenaki people have lived on this land for more than 12,000 years. How does the length of time the Europeans have been here compare with how long the Abenaki have been here? Complete “Timeline of New Hampshire Inhabitants” worksheet, noting that students need four colored pencils to do so. Give students time to complete reflection questions, then review as best for your class.

Extension

1. **Explore more territory.** Native Land Digital, an indigenous-led Canadian nonprofit, offers this interactive map of indigenous territory across North America. Take time to explore the map with students. How would life be different today if we observed these boundaries? Visit: Native-land.ca.
2. **How do we name places?** Have students think about towns in New Hampshire, streets in their town, and places they know. How does western culture name places? Be sure to note that not all students may originate from western culture, but that since New Hampshire was founded by people in western culture, naming conventions in the state stem from it. How is the Abenaki way of naming places different compared to how western culture names places? How are they similar? What do students think could explain the difference between how each culture names places?



Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

“Map of N’dakinna” and “Map of N’dakinna with New England States” created by New Hampshire Historical Society staff with information from Native Land at Native-land.ca as well as informed by the sources below.

“Modern and Abenaki Names in New Hampshire” worksheet created by New Hampshire Historical Society staff with information from:

- Caduto, Michael J., *A Time Before New Hampshire: The Story of a Land and Native Peoples* (2003)
- Dionne, Mark, “Paths to New Hampshire’s Native Past” (2017), www.nhmagazine.com/paths-to-new-hampshires-native-past/
- N’dakina — Our Homelands & People at www.cowasuck.org/history/ndakina.cfm
- New Hampshire Folklife’s *Native American Heritage* at www.nh.gov/folklife/learning-center/traditions/native-american.htm
- Wiseman, Frederick Matthew, *The Voice of the Dawn: An Autohistory of the Abenaki Nation* (2001)

“Creation” story told by Joseph Bruchac, produced by the New Hampshire Historical Society, circa 1995.

“An Abenaki Calendar” infographic created by New Hampshire Historical Society staff with information from “New Hampshire Through Many Eyes: An Activity Book for Students to Discover, Explore, and Imagine the People, Places, and Events of New Hampshire’s Past, Present, and Future.”

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that New Hampshire has a diverse geography, with mountains, seacoast, and farming land. They will understand it has been inhabited for thousands of years, and has a variety of resources. (3-5.T1.1)
- ✓ Students will understand that the Abenaki inhabited the area that became known as New Hampshire for thousands of years before European settlement. They will understand that the Abenaki interacted with the environment and used its resources to meet their needs. (3-5.T1.2)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1)
- ✓ Comprehensive Geographical Reasoning (3-5.S4.1, 3-5.S4.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Geography: The World in Spatial Terms (SS:GE:4:1.2, SS:GE:4:1.3, SS:GE:4:1.5)
- ✓ Places and Regions (SS:GE:4:2.1, SS:GE:4:2.5)
- ✓ Geography: Environment and Society (SS:GE:4:5.2)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 1: Culture
- ✓ Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- ✓ Theme 3: People, Places, and Environments

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Determining Helpful Sources (D1.5.3-5)
- ✓ Exchange and Markets (D2.Eco.3.3-5)
- ✓ Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World (D2.Geo.2.3-5, D2.Geo.3.3-5)
- ✓ Human-Environment Interaction: Place, Regions, and Culture (D2.Geo.6.3-5)
- ✓ Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements (D2.Geo.7.3-5, D2.Geo.8.3-5)
- ✓ Causation and Argumentation (D2.His.16.3-5)
- ✓ Gathering and Evaluating Sources (D3.1.3-5)
- ✓ Developing Claims and Using Evidence (D3.3.3-5)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Reading Literature (RL.4.2)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Reading Literature (RL.4.9)
- ✓ Phonics and Word Recognition in Foundational Skills (RF.4.3, RF.4.3a)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.1c, SL.4.1d, SL.4.3)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.4.4)



Lesson Vocabulary

Abenaki	(noun) Name used to refer to the indigenous people of the land now called New Hampshire
consensus	(noun) When a group of people come to agreement about an issue
Gluskabe	(noun) The central figure in many Abenaki legends; a kind and helpful figure with magical powers
indigenous people	(noun) The first people who lived in an area before people from other cultures arrived
morality	(noun) Words and actions that reflect good and honorable human conduct
N'dakinna	(noun) The word the Abenaki use to refer to their homeland
oral tradition	(noun) The practice of sharing knowledge through word of mouth and storytelling
tradition	(noun) A well-known belief or custom shared by a group of people over many years