**The Houston Museum of Natural Science**

Online Curriculum

**Hall of the Americas**

Knowledge Hunt

K-2nd Grade

# **Dear Educator,**

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Thank you again, and we hope you enjoy your field trip to HMNS!

### How to use this guide:

1. Feel free to edit the questions to suit your student group.
2. The Knowledge Hunt is specifically for the John P. McGovern Hall of the Americas.
3. Visitor services and security staff are posted around the Museum and will be happy to assist you in finding any of the locations or objects mentioned.
4. Please ensure that one chaperone is with every group of ten students at all times as they complete these activities.

For TEKS information or questions, contact us at [**curriculum@hmns.org**](mailto:curriculum@hmns.org%0d%0c)

**Knowledge Hunt**

Instructions:You will use this document to lead your students through the Hall of the Americas. Invite them to complete the activities on their student activity sheets when indicated.

## Section: We Are Here

**Locate the inuksuk in the center of the exhibit. This is where you will begin your journey.**



Explain:

An inuksuk is a stone monument used by the Inuit to signify the direction of an important location or the meaning of a particular location. For example, if you are an Inuit and walk up to an Inuksuk, it would become apparent why it is there. You might see a river and realize that – at the appropriate times of the year – one might either catch salmon migrating upstream or hunt caribou migrating through. It is an example of a wayfinding tool, a technology that helps us find our way to specific locations.

Ask:

How do you think an inuksuk helped people find a specific location (How do you think it may have worked)?

What technologies do we have that help us find our way around Houston?

Instruct:

Invite students to make a simple sketch of the inuksuk on their activity sheets.

**Section: The Arctic Nations**

**Locate the** **“Map of the Arctic Nations” text panel.**

Explain:

Use the map of the Arctic Nations to show the students the locations of Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. The Arctic is Earth's northernmost region. It is almost entirely covered by water, much of it frozen.

The indigenous people inhabiting the Arctic regions of the United States, Greenland, and Canada have been here for thousands of years.

Ask:

What is the climate like in the Arctic?

How might the location of the Arctic affect the way people live?

**Locate the** **Arctic Hunting Diorama.**

Explain:

Arctic people have hunted and fished for thousands of years to feed themselves. The two men in this diorama are hunters. One is a modern hunter, and the other is a traditional hunter.

Ask:

Which one of the men in this diorama represents the modern hunter? What clues did you use to come to your conclusion?

Do the two hunters in this diorama have similar clothing or equipment? Name the items that they have in common.

Do you see a difference in how the ice the hunters are standing on looks? What might account for this difference?

Instruct:

Ask students to list two items that may be helpful to hunters in this type of climate that are not included in the diorama on their activity sheets.

**Section: The Andes**

**Locate the text panel titled “The Andes.”**

Explain:

The Andean Culture area is located on the western edge of South America. It includes areas in the six modern nations: Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina (point out these countries). The Andean culture area is on the western side of South America. About 5,000 years ago, people began to settle down in one place. These early people hunted animals, caught fish, and gathered food. In some places, they could stay for a long time. This means they only had to move around sometimes and didn't always live like nomads.

Ask:

An ocean is an example of a marine environment. Which oceans are available to people in this area for gathering food?

Who living in which of the six modern countries would have the least access to food from a marine environment?

**Locate the Balsa, Totora reed boat**

Explain:

Reed boats are common on Lake Titicaca, a body of water shared by Peru and Bolivia. Boats like this one are built by families using reeds and ropes that they harvest from the edge of the lake. Fishermen still make and use these balsas. Depending on their size, it can take an experienced family several months to build a reed boat.

Ask:

Why do you think people in this area chose reeds to build boats?

What would be the benefit of using reeds to build a boat?

What would be a drawback of using reeds to build a boat?

**Section: The Northwest**

**Locate the “Map of the Northwest Nations” text panel.**

Explain:

Use the map of the Northwest Nations to point out the narrow strip of coastal land stretching from Washington State into Northern British Columbia and Alaska. Explain that inhabitants of this land have taken advantage of marine, river, and lake resources such as fish and whales for thousands of years. Salmon was the most critical source of food. However, elk and deer were also hunted.

Ask:

Cedarwood grows throughout the region. Look around the Northwest Nations section of the exhibit. How many items can you locate that were made using cedar wood?

**Locate the “Salmon Packer” tool.**

Explain:

Indigenous people in the Northwest took advantage of the abundance of salmon in the area for food. Some believe this stone tool was used to pound dry salmon into cylinder-shaped baskets to store it more easily.

Ask:

How does the location of the Northwest people influence the types of food available to them?

What about this location makes it necessary to store food in the winter?

Invite:

Invite students to imagine an alternative purpose for the salmon packer and then draw a picture of the tool on their activity sheets.

**Section: The Southeast**

**Locate “The Map of the Southeast Nations” text panel.**

Explain:

Use the map of the Southeast Nations to point out the various modern states that make up this area. The Southeast was home to numerous Indigenous Nations. Before the arrival of the European settlers, people in this area lived in settled villages and practiced agriculture. The arrival of the European settlers on the Atlantic Coast marked the beginning of the loss of homelands for these tribes.

**Locate Cahokia.**

Explain:

A thousand years ago, an enormous pyramid rose towards the sky in Cahokia. The city thrived because of its location on the Mississippi River. Farmers grew crops in the rich soils left by the river's flooding, and traders used the river like a highway, traveling by boat for thousands of miles.

Ask:

Looking at the pictures of Cahokia, what features suggest that the city's layout was planned?

What unique geographical features influenced how people lived in the city of Cahokia?

**Locate the carved shell display – Artifact number 6: Carved shell gorget, modern recreation.**

Explain:

The image on this shell represents a Water Spider or Grandma Weaver. She brought the gift of fire to her people, carrying it in a basket she wove herself. The cross she holds in the basket on her back represents fire. The Muskogee Creek Indians believe that a spider in the house means good health and good fortune.

Ask:

What behavior does a spider have that makes it an appropriate choice for this story?

Why might a spider in your house be seen as something good?

Invite:

The carved shell represents fire as a solar cross. Invite students to create a new symbol for fire and draw it on their activity sheets.

**Section: The Plains**

**Locate the “Map of the Plains Nations” text panel.**

Explain:

Use the map of the Plains Nations to identify the modern states that make up this area, including the portion that extends into Canada. The population of the Plains grew after the Spanish reintroduced horses to the region. The introduction of horses allowed for easier and farther travel, making use of the region's resources more efficient. Bison was the primary food source, and the tribes relied on it for food, clothing, tools, and shelter. As the people followed the bison, they used tipis as portable homes to quickly carry their belongings while traveling.

**Locate the horse diorama.**

Explain:

The Spanish brought horses to their settlements in the Southwest in the 1500s. Eventually, the horses spread to the Great Plains, allowing people to travel across the Plains to hunt bison.

Following the buffalo's seasonal migration meant moving the entire village several times a year and moving often limited one's ability to own many possessions. As a result, artwork was typically used to adorn necessary items such as tipis, clothing, and ceremonial items instead of being separate items in themselves.

Ask:

* Can you find the following items in the horse diorama?
* Saddle
* A beaded pouch
* Bridle
* A pair of tepee poles (called travois)

**Locate Lone Dog’s Winter Count.**

Explain:

American Indians often used pictorial records and oral traditions to record the past. The Lone Dog Winter Count is an example of a record called a Winter Count. Each image represents one year, and years were measured from first snowfall to first snowfall. A year was named for the most memorable event that occurred during that period. One such event, “The year the stars fell,” was identified as 1833, when the Leonid meteor storm was visible.

Ask:

How many years are represented on the Lone Dog Winter Count?

Invite:

Invite students to pick a year from their lives and draw it on the buffalo hide on their student activity sheets.

**Section: The Maya**

**Locate the donut-shaped eccentric flint.**

Explain:

The Maya valued Flint for its ability to strike fire. They associated flint with lightning and believed that where lightning struck, flint was formed. The Maya perfected the art of chipping flint and produced stone tools in large numbers. The purpose of this donut-shaped artifact is unknown. Archaeologists call them “ceremonial” objects in cases like these.

Ask:

Looking at the size and shape of this object, can you imagine what purpose the tool may have served?

What tools do we have to help us start fires?

**Section: The Mexica**

**Locate the figurine of a ballplayer wearing a yoke and the ballgame yoke in the shape of a toad.**

Explain:

Around 3,600 years ago, Native Americans in Mexico, parts of Central America, and the Southwest United States played ballgames. What made these ballgames unique was the use of solid rubber balls, a material, and technology unknown to the outside world. The Maya made rubber using natural latex—a milky, sap-like fluid found in some plants.

This figurine depicts a ballplayer wearing a protective padded yoke around his hip. The larger U-shaped object is a stone yolk. The stone yolk is heavy, making it unlikely that it was worn while playing the game. It has been suggested that the stone yoke served as a mold. The stone form might have been wrapped in animal hide, which was then dunked in water, causing it to shrink. Eventually, this leather form, which had taken on the shape of the yoke, was peeled off and filled with cotton-like materials.

Ask:

What are the advantages of using a rubber ball over a ball made of wood or leather?

**Student Activity Sheet: Hall of the Americas**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sketch of an inuksuk |  |
| Two items that may be helpful to hunters in the Arctic. |  |
| Sketch the salmon packing tool |  |
| My symbol of fire. |  |
| A year of my life on a buffalo’s hide. | A black outline of a map  Description automatically generated |