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# Native American Shelter in Kansas

Architects are people who design buildings and structures, like schools, skyscrapers, tunnels, and bridges. Architects try to come up with new and interesting designs for their buildings. They want their buildings to stand out and make people want to look at and visit them.

Many architects find inspiration for new building ideas from the past. For example, the state capitol building in California was inspired by ancient Greek temples. The Greek temples had white columns. Can you see white columns on the state capitol building?



Today, you will learn about the history of Native American homes in Kansas. Then, you will design a building inspired by these homes! Follow the steps below.

## Step 1: Read about Native American Shelters in Kansas

The first people to live in Kansas were Native Americans. The Native Americans lived in different groups called tribes. Many Native American tribes lived in different parts of Kansas. Each Native American tribe is unique. Each tribe has its own traditions, languages, and culture.

When the Native Americans arrived in Kansas, they found different kinds of natural resources. Natural resources are materials that are found in nature. Trees and water are examples of natural resources. The tribes used these natural resources to build their houses. Depending on where a tribe lived, Native Americans used different natural resources to build their homes.

Below, you will see information about how three Native American tribes used natural resources to build their homes many years ago. After you read about each Native American tribe, answer the questions.



## Pawnee Indians

The Pawnee lived in the northern part of Kansas. In this part of Kansas, there are a lot of trees and grass. It is also colder in this part of Kansas compared to southern parts of the state.

When the Pawnee arrived in the northern part of Kansas, they built permanent homes. This means that their homes could not be easily moved from one place to another. Their homes were called earth lodges.

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These houses were shaped like a big circle with a roof that was rounded, at the top. To build their homes, the Pawnee covered timber poles with layers of branches and grass. Then, they packed mud on top of the building. The mud sealed any cracks or holes in the building. When the mud dried, the lodge was weather tight. When something is weather tight, it means it protected the people inside from the rain and cold weather.

Here is a model of what an earth lodge would have looked like:



**Did the Pawnee Indians use natural resources to build their homes? Explain your reasoning.**

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**What could have happened if the Pawnee Indians didn't use mud on the tops of their homes?**

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## Wichita Indians

The Wichita lived in the central and southern parts of Kansas. In these parts of Kansas, there are different types of prairie grass and the land is very flat. The summers are also very hot while the winters can be cold. There is not much snow in this part of Kansas.

The Wichita built both temporary and permanent homes. A temporary home could be moved from one place to another. Their temporary homes were called tipis. A tipi consists of a wooden frame covered with buffalo hides. This temporary shelter was used while the Wichita were hunting. Because the Wichita followed the path of buffalo to hunt them, they would fold their tipis up and carry them from place to place. The men hunted buffalo year round. The women and children accompanied the men twice a year on hunts.



The Wichita also built permanent homes known as grass lodges. These houses looked like bee hives. Wood frames were made by attaching sticks together. The Wichita then covered the sticks with different grasses to cover the walls and roofs. The houses were big enough for 10 to 12 people to live in. There were two entrances on the east and west sides of the house to provide light. Many houses had another small structure near the grass lodge that was made of four wood poles and a grass roof. There were no walls. This building provided shade during the hot summers.

**Why did the Wichita use tipis?**

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**Why do you think the Wichita used grass instead of wood or tree branches to build their homes?**

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What other types of buildings did the Wichita build near their homes?

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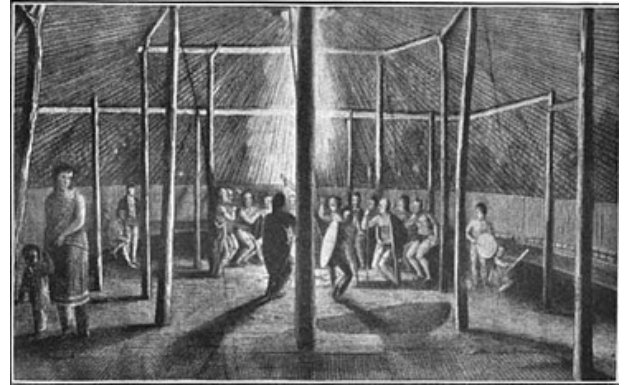
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## Kansa Indians

The Kansa lived in northeastern Kansas. This area has a lot of trees, hills, and grasses. In this part of Kansas, summers can be very hot and winters can be very cold with some snow.

The Kansa lived in different kinds of houses. One type of house was called an earth lodge. Earth lodges were permanent shelters. The earth lodges had low wood or earth walls. The rest of the house was covered with mats of leaves, bark and tree branches. They also built lodges made of wood. These were also permanent shelters. These houses looked like long rectangles where three to five families could live at one time. The lodges were built using wood poles and tree branches. Unlike other types of houses that had dirt floors, these houses had wood platforms inside. Platforms are a type of floor that sits above the ground.



The inside of a Kansa lodge

The Kansa sometimes built tipis that were used as both permanent and temporary homes. They took tipis with them on hunting trips. They also set up tipis in as permanent homes in their villages.

Why do you think the Kansa built both temporary and permanent homes?

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How did the Kansa use natural resources to build earth lodges and wood lodges?

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## Step 2: Design a New Building

As an architect, you will design a building that is inspired by the Native American shelters you learned about in the passage. Your building should be designed in a respectful way and honor the history of Native Americans. The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. is an example of a building that is inspired by Native Americans. The outside of the building is made from limestone and is meant to look like natural rock formations that have been shaped by wind and water. This building is inspired by how Native Americans used natural resources to build their homes. Along the outside of the museum are areas that look like the wetlands that some Native American tribes live in. The museum honors the history of Native Americans by creating a building that is inspired by their history and use of nature.

Follow the steps below to design your building!

### Choose a building

Fill in the bubble under the type of building you want to design:



Library



School



Museum



Post Office

### Other

(Describe another type of building you want to design). \_\_\_\_\_

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## Draw a Sketch of the Outside of Your Building

In the box below, draw a picture of your building. Your drawing must have the following:

- Labels for doors and windows and other features
- A list of materials that could be used to build the buildings
- Inspiration from Native American homes



## Describe Your inspiration from Native Americans

On the lines below, describe how your building is similar or different from Native American homes.

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## Create a Plaque

A plaque is a sign that tells people about a building. On the plaque template below, write 3-5 sentences about how your building is inspired by Native American homes in Kansas.

A large rectangular plaque template with a thick black border and a white background. The corners are decorated with a dotted pattern. The interior is filled with ten horizontal lines for writing.

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# Native American Shelter in Kansas-Answer Key

## Answer Key

Answer Key to Questions in Step 1:

**Did the Pawnee Indians use natural resources to build their homes? Explain your reasoning.**

Yes, they used natural resources like mud, wood, and grass to build earth lodges.

**What could have happened if the Pawnee Indians didn't use mud on the tops of their homes?**

The Pawnee Indians used the mud to make the homes weather tight so rain could not get in. Without the mud, the inside of the house could be flooded with water.

**Why did the Wichita use tipis?**

The Wichita used tipis because the tipis could be carried easily when traveling on buffalo hunts.

**Why do you think the Wichita used grass instead of wood or tree branches to build their homes?**

The Wichita lived in a very grassy area. They likely used grass because it was the most available resource.

**What other types of buildings did the Wichita build near their homes?**

They built a small shelter that had a roof but no sides. The shelter could be used as a shaded place to sit on warm days.

**Why do you think the Kansa built both temporary and permanent homes?**

The Kansa built both types of homes so that they always had a place to stay in the permanent homes, but also had homes they could use when they would travel to hunt.

**How did the Kansas used natural resources to build earth lodges and wood lodges?**

They used leaves, bark, and tree branches to make earth lodges that would protect people from the rain. They also used wood with dirt floors to make the long lodges.