

Name _____ Date _____

The Navajo

"A History So Rich"

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. The Anasazi people were early inhabitants of the present-day Southwest United States. From about 200 to 1300, they inhabited the "Four Corners": southern Utah, southwestern Colorado, northwestern New Mexico and northern Arizona. They built elaborate dwellings on cliffs.

Notes

The Pueblo people are thought to have descended from the Anasazi. They formed permanent settlements and grew corn, beans and squash. The Pueblo built homes with many stories of adobe brick. The name "pueblo" is actually a Spanish word meaning "town" or "village." When the Spaniards arrived in 1542, they called these people "the Pueblo" because of the appearance of their villages.

2. The Navajo likely migrated to the Southwest from Canada around 1100-1500. In their language, the Navajo call themselves the "Diné," which means "the people." The word "Navajo" comes from a Tewa Pueblo word "nava hu," meaning "farm fields in the valley." The earliest Navajo were hunter-gatherers. They found and killed animals like deer and prairie dogs and picked foods like berries that grew in the wild. But they soon adopted the farming practices of the Pueblo people. They planted fields of corn, beans and squash near the San Juan River. And when sheep and horses were introduced to the region by the Spaniards, they began to herd sheep.

Notes

3. Navajo society is traditionally matrilineal. This means that a person's identity comes from the women and the mothers instead of the men and the fathers. In many societies, it is reversed. When a woman marries a man, she often changes her last name to her husband's last name. But in Navajo society, people traditionally introduce themselves by first saying the name of their mother's clan, then saying name of their father's clan. Traditionally, when a Navajo man married a woman, he would move into his wife's house. Woman traditionally own the land and the animals and pass them down to their daughters.

Notes

4. The Navajo have many ceremonies, which are sets of actions that are performed to mark occasions. These ceremonies are performed to maintain balance and harmony. The major ceremonies last nine days, while others last four days and some just one day. The Blessingway ceremony, for example, is used to ensure good luck, good health and blessings. Many ceremonies are used to heal illness. A trained medicine man performs these ceremonies. During many ceremonies, multicolored sand paintings are created to help heal the person. After the ceremony, the sand painting is destroyed because it is considered toxic, having absorbed the person's illness.

Notes

5. Spanish explorers arrived in the Southwest in the 16th century. They enslaved the Pueblo people and forced them to abandon their religion. In 1680, the Pueblo rebelled against the Spaniards. The Navajo aided the Pueblo, and they forced the Spaniards back into Mexico. However, the Spaniards returned and reconquered in 1693.

Notes

After the Spanish introduced the horse as a form of transportation, the Navajo carried out raids on neighboring tribes and on the Spaniards for food and slaves. In the late 18th century, conflict between the Spaniards and the Navajo arose again. Other Native American tribes allied with the Spaniards against the Navajo. Many Navajo were forced into slavery.

6. In 1863, US Colonel Kit Carson began a brutal war against the Navajo. To force the Navajo to give up their land, Carson burned their crops, destroyed their villages and killed their animals. Carson's approaches were called "scorched earth tactics." He then forced 8,000 Navajo to march 300 miles from their home to a reservation in New Mexico. Many died on the march, which was called the Long Walk. The reservation was overcrowded and lacked supplies. After four years of being kept on the reservation, the Navajo were released and allowed to return to a small part of their original homeland.

Notes

7. Today, the Navajo Nation's land extends into Utah, Arizona and New Mexico. It covers over 27,000 square miles. Most Navajo people speak English and participate in the larger US economy. However, they have also maintained their culture, including customs and religion. Many Navajo people speak their native language in addition to English. The Navajo Nation works toward including the Navajo language in schools. They want students to be able to learn in both English and their culture's native language. Many Navajo have jobs in local government, schools and business. They also make traditional crafts and jewelry to sell.

Notes

