

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Read the passage below about Life in the Iroquois League. The Iroquois League was a group of Native American tribes formed for defense in the modern-day eastern United States. After reading, fill in the Five Themes of Geography chart that follows.

### **Life in the Iroquois League**

Long before English settlers swarmed over the eastern coast of the “New World,” Native Americans occupied the land around Lake Ontario now known as New York, as well as parts of New England and Canada. Five of these tribes experienced much intertribal fighting. According to legend, a wise sachem (chief) named Deganiwidah sought to make peace and foster goodwill among the nations through the efforts of another sachem named Hiawatha (no, not *the* Hiawatha). These five tribes- Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk- sent 50 chiefs as a council and formed an alliance between 1500 and 1650 that came to be known as the “Five Nations of the Iroquois League.” (A sixth nation, the Tuscarora, joined in 1722).

Each tribe in the League was unique. The Seneca tribe- “People of the Great Hills”- was the largest, while the Cayuga, called the “Pipe People,” was the smallest. The Onondaga were relatively peaceful and known as the “People of the Mountain.” The Oneida- “People of the Standing Stone”- were violent. The Mohawk, known as the “People of the Flint,” were the fiercest of all. Yet the League had four moral principles on which they all agreed: a love of peace, respect for their laws, a sense of brotherhood, and a reverence for their ancestors.

### **A Longhouse is a Home**

Life in an Iroquois village was based on farming, even though the tribes did not have animals to help cultivate their fields. As such, many settlements were situated along rivers, where a spiral wooden fence surrounded the main buildings. These structures, known as “longhouses,” could be anywhere from 30 to 350 feet long and were home for many, many families in individual living quarters under one roof (a somewhat primitive form of tenement housing). Several longhouses in an Iroquois village could house as few as 100 to as many as 3,000 people. A number of fires were kept burning in the middle of the longhouse to provide heat in the winter months and allow cooking and baking year-round.

So strong was the concept of the longhouse in the Iroquois League, the tribes actually regarded their occupied land as one enormous longhouse. The Seneca considered themselves the “Keepers of the Western Door,” and the Mohawk were the “Keepers of the Eastern Door” on the other end at the Atlantic Ocean. In between, the Onondaga were the “Keepers of the Fire,” the Cayuga were the “Younger brothers of the Seneca,” and the Oneida were the “Younger Brothers of Mohawk.”

### **The Role of Women**

The social order of the League was matrilineal- women owned the longhouse, as well as garden plots and farming tools. They also set and maintained rules in the village and could appoint religious leaders. Women in the village were wholly responsible for daily life, as the men were seldom in camp. Their jobs- warfare, trading, trapping, and hunting- kept them away from the longhouse for months at a time.

Though the League claimed to have a “love of peace,” they engaged in warlike activities. The Huron and Algonquian tribes were natural enemies of the League, and tribal warfare was a component of Iroquois society. The Mohawk were known for wielding heavy tomahawk axes to kill their enemies and pillage their goods. But the League avoided large-scale war, remaining satisfied with small skirmishes.

The League lacked the social economics and organization to maintain standing armies and stage war. Europeans landed in America in the mid-1600s and joined the list of foes. The Iroquois were forced to move out into other territories for their prey, and their aggressive tactics increased.

The Iroquois were masters of psychological warfare. They intimidated their foes through kidnapping and torture. Many captives were used as slaves. Hideous instances of cannibalism were also common among the Iroquois.

The Iroquois League held many religious beliefs, including the power of medicine men. One group, known as the “False Face Society,” donned fearsome carved wooden masks. They danced, shook turtle shells, and sprinkled ashes to bring about a cure for illness. A similar curing group, called the “Huskface Society,” wore cornhusks as masks.

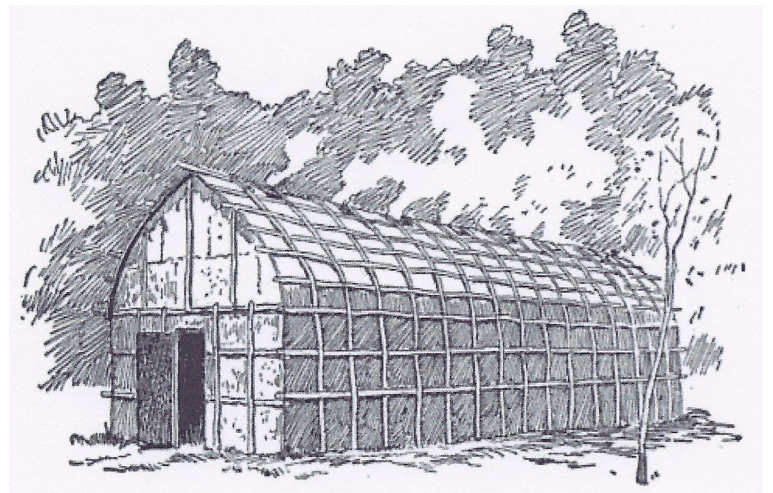
#### **Working with the White Man**

The Iroquois had much to offer in the way of operating a complex government body. The council of 50 sachems required that all decisions of the village had to be unanimous. If a sachem caused problems in the council, he was given three warnings; after that, he was ousted.

Some historians believe that portions of the U.S. Constitution were based on the Iroquois Confederacy. Benjamin Franklin observed many of the council meetings. The Presidential Seal of America features an eagle holding 13 arrows- one for each original colony. Similarly, the Iroquois seal showed an eagle with five arrows in its talon- one for each nation. The Iroquois nations signed a treaty with the United States in 1794. Terms of the agreement endure to this day; some members receive calico cloth as annual payment, while other tribes receive \$1,800 a year.

Source: Publications International, “Life in the Iroquois League” in *The Book of Amazing History*, (Illinois: Publications International, 2011), 532-534.

On Right: Illustrated example of an Iroquois Longhouse.



### The Five Themes of Geography

The five main themes of geography are **location**, **place**, **movement**, **regions**, and **human-environment interaction**. Using the reading above and your knowledge of social studies, fill in one example per each geographic theme that shows the characteristics of the Iroquois League's environment or how they responded to it.

<b>Geographic Theme</b>	<b>Definition of Theme</b>	<b>Example from Text</b>
Location	Location tells where a place is and can be expressed in two ways: absolute or relative. Absolute location is the place's position on the globe as determined by latitude and longitude. Relative location describes a place's position in relation to other places. An example of relative location: "New York is north of Pennsylvania."	
Place	Place describes the characteristics of a location. These can be physical characteristics such as landforms, vegetation, and climate, or human characteristics such as culture, economy, or government of the people who live there. An example of a physical characteristic: "The city of Phoenix, Arizona is characterized by a hot, dry climate."	

<p>Movement</p>	<p>Movement describes the travel of people, goods, and ideas from one place to another. An example includes the westward migration of Americans in the 19th century.</p>	
<p>Regions</p>	<p>A region is any group of places with at least one common characteristic. Regions can be any size, and a single place can belong to several different regions. Example: New York is part of the northeastern region of the United States.</p>	
<p>Human-Environment Interaction</p>	<p>Human-environment interaction explores the ways in which people use and modify their environment. An example includes Americans utilizing the Great Plains to create expansive wheat fields.</p>	