

Bartering for Basics

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Science

Early Native American groups lived in different cultural regions. Their environments had different resources. Each group **specialized** in making particular products or developing certain skills, based on their resources. As they perfected their techniques, something exciting began to happen. For the first time in their tribes' history, they had a **surplus** of materials. They had enough to meet their own needs with some left over. The conditions were perfect for an **economy** to develop. In an economy, goods, services and often money are organized into a system to manage those resources.

Native American groups began to work with each other to simplify their work and share items they wanted or needed. They began to barter as they began to **interact** with each other. Bartering is trading goods or services directly for other goods or services rather than using any form of money. Having the ability to barter with other tribes meant that it was easier on all the groups. No one group had to work as hard to make or find everything they needed for survival.

Native American tribes would often travel long distances for the opportunity to trade with each other. In between trading times, they would gather or create surplus products. They set things aside especially for the purpose of bartering with other tribes at their trade meetings.

An additional benefit of trading between cultural regions was the ability to enjoy products that were impossible to make with the resources in the tribe's home territory. Tribal members of the Desert Southwest region wanted tools fashioned from whalebone. There is no whalebone available in the desert. However, they could get it from the tribes of the Pacific Northwest region, who had access to resources found on the beach or in the sea.

Some people still use bartering today to get the something they need or want. For example, you might offer to do the dishes for your brother if he will take you to the movies. Especially in tough economic times, people return to this age-old way of getting things that they need. We will probably always have some form of money, but we don't always have to use it.

Name _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) What is the purpose of this passage?

2) What was one advantage to bartering for the Native Americans?

3) What does it mean to specialize?

4) What is an economy?

5) Do you think that you would like to try bartering with someone in the future? Why, or why not?
