

Native Americans Totem Poles

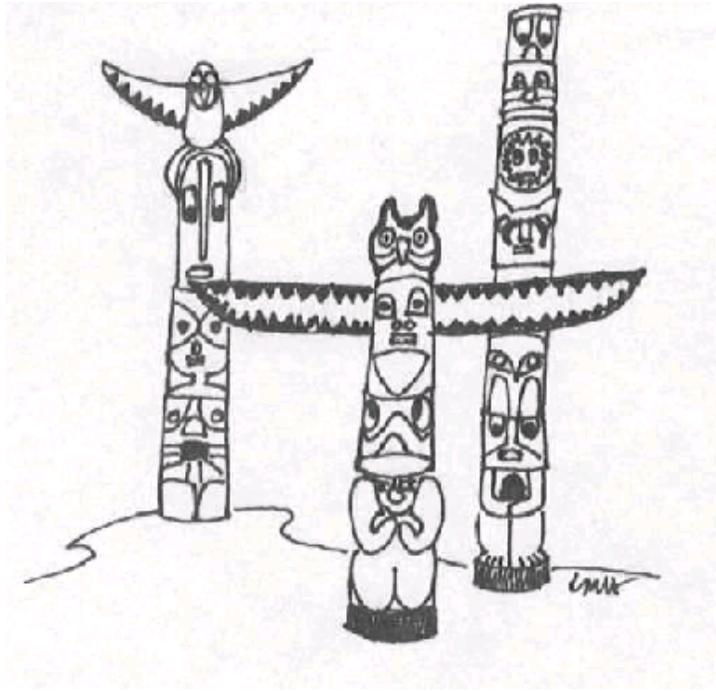


Illustration by Lynn M. Hanousek

Northwestern Native American families traditionally place totem poles in front of their houses. Totem poles are tall wooden **posts**¹. Some of the tallest totem poles are over one hundred feet high. Totem poles are used to tell the history of the family.

Totem poles are colorful. They have faces carved and painted on them. The faces are carved to look like people, animals, or plants. Each face represents a special part of the family's past.

When totem poles are **erected**², the whole tribe throws a grand feast. These celebrations are called potlaches. People are invited from near and far. The hosts of the party give out fine gifts to the guests. It's important to give out a lot of gifts. The more you give, the more **wealth**³ and power you are seen to have.

Food at the feast might include whale meat, salmon, and halibut. These are all foods that the Northwest tribes hunt.

¹ **posts**: tall round or square poles usually made of wood or metal

² **erected**: put up

³ **wealth**: riches

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. A face on a totem pole would most likely represent
 - a. a friend
 - b. a family pet
 - c. a king
 - d. a great-grandparent

2. Much of the Northwest Tribes' food comes from
 - a. the ground
 - b. other tribes
 - c. hunting in the woods
 - d. the sea

3. A **potlatch** is
 - a. something that keeps pot lids closed
 - b. a kind of totem pole
 - c. a character that might be carved onto a totem pole
 - d. a feast held in honor of a new totem pole

4. According to the passage, what would make a person appear wealthy?
 - a. Wearing a lot of expensive jewelry
 - b. Buying a lot of fine things
 - c. Giving away a lot of presents
 - d. Killing a lot of animals

5. Based on the passage, it is likely that
 - a. totem poles are easy to make
 - b. different symbols on totem poles have different meanings
 - c. people do not like to celebrate the raising of totem poles
 - d. each family has the same totem pole

6. What is the main idea of this passage? Be sure to cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

7. Why might a totem pole have faces carved on it?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Food at the feast might include whale meat, salmon, and halibut _____ these are all foods that the Northwest tribes hunt.

- a. because
- b. but
- c. even though
- d. despite

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

When totem poles are erected, the whole tribe celebrates by holding a grand feast.

Who? the whole tribe

(does) What? _____

When? _____

How? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** wealth: riches

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
