

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

## THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE



The Wampanoag tribe is a community of Native Americans who, at one time, occupied much of southeastern Massachusetts, the islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, and western Cape Cod.

In the early 1600s, before many European settlers began colonizing the present-day United States, there are estimated to have been 12,000 people belonging to this community. The Wampanoag lived in villages spread throughout the region, and hunted and farmed for their livelihoods. Fishing and whaling were also part of early Wampanoag life.

The Wampanoag people emigrated with the seasons. During warmer months, they lived by the shore, planting food, including corn, and fishing. When the weather changed and they could no longer farm, they moved inland and set up small camps of family groups. These small groups spread out and hunted the land surrounding their camps.

The name "Wampanoag" refers to an entire community of Native Americans, and comprised several dozen sub-tribes. The only sub-tribe of Wampanoag that is a Federally Recognized tribe is the "Wampanoag of Gay Head". This sub-tribe has lived on Martha's Vineyard for over 10,000 years. Other sub-tribes are known to have existed historically, and some are still trying to become Federally Recognized. Most sub-tribes have completely disappeared because every member of the tribe died or was killed.

Wampanoag leaders were known as *sachems*, and the title was passed through family lines, including to women if no male could claim the title. The leaders had the respect of others in the tribe, but worked with the rest of the community and did not have special privileges attached to their title, and they did not command others. The Wampanoag tribe also had a Grand Sachem, who provided leadership for the entire tribe. When war began with the English settlers, the Grand Sachem King Phillip organized warriors from all over the region, including tribes that were not were not part of the Wampanoag people.

From 1614-1620, diseases that arrived with early European colonists swept through the region, and some destroyed whole villages. By 1620, there were only about 5,000 Wampanoag people. Over half of them had been killed by disease.

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## ***THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE, part 2***



The Wampanoag tribe is well known as the tribe that shared a harvest celebration with the Pilgrims from the Mayflower ship. These settlers arrived in Plymouth and formed a small community in the winter of 1620, following a difficult voyage at sea. They weren't able to plant any food for themselves, and were lost in the new world they had settled in. Some members of the Wampanoag spent time helping the settlers learn how to live in their new home. The two groups of people shared a friendly and cooperative relationship for over ten years, as more English settlers began moving to Plymouth and settling throughout the area.

As more and more English Puritan colonists arrived throughout the mid-1600s, they tried to convert the Native Americans to their faith. They moved groups of Native Americans from their tribes to "Praying Indian" villages and forbade inhabitants of these villages to perform any ceremony from their culture. The relationship between the colonists and the Native Americans wishing to continue their traditional way of life became less friendly as more and more English colonists appeared.

King Phillip traveled to visit with other tribal leaders and gained support for going to war with the English colonies. From 1675-1676, King Phillip's War raged between the English colonies and local Native American tribes. Some Wampanoag sub-tribes, including the Wampanoag of Gay Head, did not want to participate in the war and stayed neutral. By the end of the war, there were only 400 Wampanoag.

There are about three thousand Wampanoag people alive today, most of whom reside in Massachusetts or on Martha's Vineyard. The last of the Wampanoag from Nantucket Island died in 1855 following another outbreak of disease through that area.

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**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT *THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE***

1. How could a Wampanoag become sachem?
  - a. By being a strong warrior
  - b. By having a large enough family
  - c. By inheriting it from a parent
  - d. By killing the previous sachem
  
2. How many Wampanoag people were left after the war with the colonists?
  - a. 12,000
  - b. 5,000
  - c. 1,000
  - d. 400
  
3. The Wampanoag are well known for...
  - a. Being great sailors
  - b. Sharing the "first Thanksgiving" with the Pilgrims
  - c. Discovering corn
  - d. Building the pyramids
  
4. What caused the largest number of lives lost for the Wampanoag?
  - a. Disease
  - b. King Phillip's war
  - c. Freezing temperatures
  - d. Starvation
  
5. For at least how long have the Wampanoag's ancestors lived on the island of Martha's Vineyard?
  - a. 1, 000 years
  - b. 5,000 years
  - c. 10,000 years
  - d. 100,000 years
  
6. Why do you think King Phillip wanted to go to war with the English colonies?

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**Answers to *THE WAMPANOAG TRIBE***

1. c
2. d
3. b
4. a
5. c
6. answers will vary; accept reasonable answers

