

What happened to the Native People of Massachusetts?, Grade 3

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Introduction

A jigsaw activity is a commonly used collaborative lesson designed to allow students to become authorities on a specific document or resource that they will share with a larger group of students to build a more complete answer to an underlying question. In this case, students will attempt to answer the question, “What Happened to the Native People of Massachusetts?” Students have already learned that the word Massachusetts is not only the State Name, but also the name of the large tribe of Native People present in the Burlington area before the arrival of English colonists.

Massachusetts Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks, Grade 3

Topic 1

2. Research the demographic origins of the town or city (e.g., the Native People who originally lived there or still live there, the people who established it as a colonial town, its founding date, and the free, indentured, and enslaved women and men who contributed to the wellbeing of the town).

Topic 2

3. Explain the diversity of Native Peoples, present and past, in Massachusetts and the New England region.

- the names of at least three native groups (e.g., Abenaki/Wabanaki, Massachusett, Mohican/Stockbridge, Narragansett, Nipmuc, Wampanoag)
- contributions of a tribal group from the area of the school (e.g., language, literature, arts, trade routes, food such as corn, beans, and squash, useful items such as baskets, canoes, wampum, and useful knowledge of medicinal plants, words such as powwow and moccasin, and many names for waterways, hills, mountains, islands and place names, such as the Connecticut and Merrimack Rivers, Mount Wachusett, the Taconic Range, Nantucket, Natick, Seekonk, Agawam, Chicopee).

Topic 5

2. Explain why Puritan men and women migrated in great numbers to Massachusetts in the 17th century, how they moved west from the Atlantic coast, and the consequences of their migration for the Native Peoples of the region (e.g., loss of territory, great loss of life due to susceptibility to European diseases, religious conversion, conflicts over different ways of life such as the Pequot War and King Philip’s War).

Learning for Justice – Anti-Bias Framework

- JU.3-5.13: I know that words, behaviors, rules and laws that treat people unfairly based on their group identities cause real harm.

Materials (for jigsaw groups):

- “[We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know](#),” bookmarked pp 4-5
- Britannica Kids article about the Massachusett people (included)
- “The History of the Neponset Band of the Indigenous Massachusett Tribe” article (included)
- “The Removal of the Neponsets to Ponkapoag” article (included)
- “Life of the Indigenous Massachusett at Ponkapoag Plantation” article (included)

Vocabulary

- Sagamore – leader of a band of native people
- Sac’hem – leader of a tribe, or group of bands, of native people
- Praying Town – a village established by Rev. John Eliot as a place for Christianized native people to live
- Indigenous – native, local – also used to refer to the people native to North America
- Plague – a very contagious illness
- Missionary – a person who promotes Christianity in a foreign country
- Neponset – a band of people that are part of the Massachusetts tribe

DAY 1

Before Lesson

Group students into cohorts of four (or five, but not three) and introduce jigsaw activity and locations for students assigned different sources of information.

During Lesson

Each group becomes an “expert” on their own document and shares their findings with the class. Students will complete a table like the document below to both record their own answers, and then those of their classmates during the present/share stage of the jigsaw.

- Who or what group/organization is the source of this information?
- What does the source tell you about what happened to the Massachusetts people after the arrival of the English colonists?

Lesson Closing

Students determine, in their expert groups, what they want to share as the authority on their resource when they meet with their mixed groups the following day.

DAY 2

Student groups share the key information from their document. The class will build a consensus around what happened to the Massachusetts tribe. Explore the questions and conflicts of information as a practice of history – who writes it, whose story is privileged, why it’s important to read multiple sources, etc.

- Britannica identifies the Massachusetts tribe as no longer existing as a separate tribe, yet at least one band, the Neponset, maintain a website we used to gather information about the tribe’s history and has a site about the tribe today. Who is right? Why do you think so?
- Who is responsible for bringing illness to the Massachusetts? Is this before or after 1620 when the Pilgrims settle Plimoth? Why do you think this could be important to what happened to the Massachusetts people?
- How would you describe how European colonists treated the Native People of Massachusetts since their first encounters in the 1600s?

Source: Who or what group/organization is the source of this information?	Source: Who or what group/organization is the source of this information?
What does the source tell you about what happened to the Massachusett people after the arrival of the English colonists?	What does the source tell you about what happened to the Massachusett people after the arrival of the English colonists?
Source: Who or what group/organization is the source of this information?	Source: Who or what group/organization is the source of this information?
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“Massachuset”

BKids, <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Massachuset/353441>



An illustration shows an Englishman named John Eliot preaching to the Massachuset.

Universal Images Group/SuperStock

The Massachuset were Native Americans who lived along the coast of what is now Massachusetts. The state was named after the tribe.

The Massachuset lived in bark-covered homes called wigwams. Wigwams were large enough for several families. The Massachuset grew corn, beans, and squash. They also fished and hunted deer and other animals.

In 1605, French explorers arrived in Massachuset territory. The tribe welcomed the traders who followed. But many Massachuset died from smallpox and other diseases brought by the Europeans.

In 1646, an English [missionary] named John Eliot came to live with the Massachuset. He convinced many tribe members to become Christians. The Christian Massachuset moved to villages with Christian Indians from other tribes. The Indians in these villages became known as Praying Indians.

In 1675, neighboring tribes declared war on English settlers who were taking their lands. This war became known as King Philip's War. During the war neither side trusted the Praying Indians. The English raided the Praying Indians' villages and took some Massachuset captive. They sold some of the captives as slaves.

The surviving Massachuset scattered. Many found homes among other Indian tribes. By the 1800s the Massachuset no longer existed as a separate tribe.

“The History of the Neponset Band of the Indigenous Massachusetts Tribe”

The Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, <https://massachusettstribe.org/the-history-of-the-neponset>



Early settlements in New England and distribution of Indian Tribes

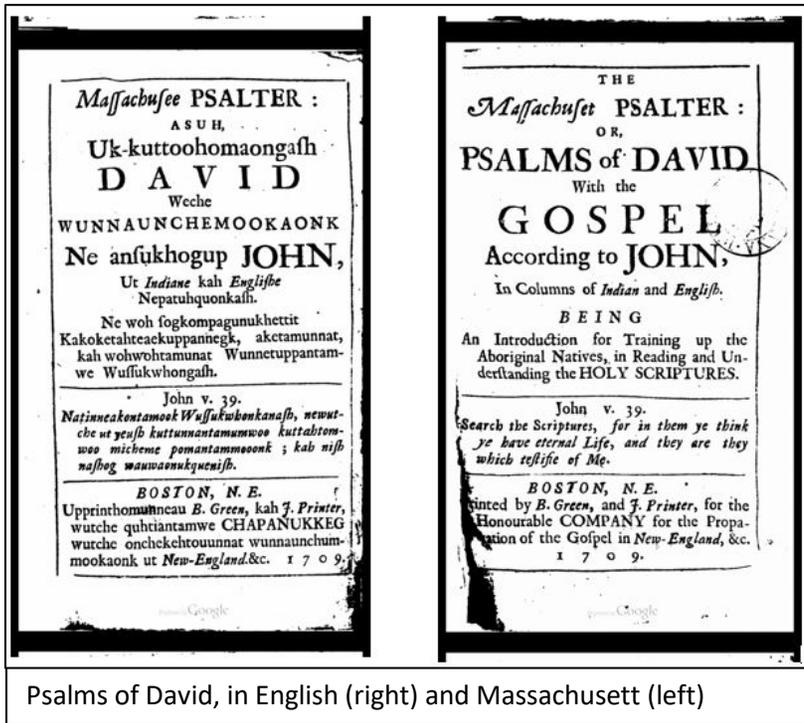
In a time before now, before the arrival European Traders or the English Settlers to the coasts of Massachusetts, The Confederation of Indigenous Massachusetts lived and thrived in what is now called the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For years beyond counting, Indigenous Massachusetts Villages spanned from Salem to Plymouth along the coast, and inland as far west as Worcester.

The Massachusetts People led by their Sac'hems, hunted, fished, worked their quarries, created their tools and sculpted their weapons. They planted vast fields of grain, corn, squash and beans, harvested, prepared and stored their harvests. In their villages, they celebrated, practiced their religion, built their homes, raised their families and enjoyed prosperity. One of the Massachusetts Tribes was the Neponset and their Sac'hem was Chickataubut, Principal Chief of the Massachusetts when the English sailed into Massachusetts Territory to settle.

Long before 1620, European trading ships traveled throughout New England trading goods with the indigenous tribes of New England. With them they brought diseases that were deadly to the indigenous people. Plagues traveled throughout the region devastating the tribes and dramatically reducing their numbers. In 1616 Just a few years before the arrival of the English settlers, a great plague swept the New England coast from Maine to Rhode Island, killing nearly eighty per cent of the Indigenous population. The Massachusetts Tribes and Villages were greatly affected. Their societies were disrupted, trade threatened and defenses against rival tribes to the north were reduced due to the losses of large numbers of their warriors. Whole villages were wiped out including Pawtuxant (Plymouth). Nanapashemet, Great Sac'hem of the Massachusetts People residing at or near Salem, was killed by rival tribesmen during this time. It was a time of great grief among the Massachusetts people. Just as the Massachusetts Indigenous population began to recover, the English invasion began.

“The Removal of the Neponset to Ponkapoag”

The Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, <https://massachusettstribe.org/the-removal-of-the-neponsetts-to-ponkapoag>



Psalms of David, in English (right) and Massachusetts (left)

In the years following the death of Chickataubut in 1633, thousands more of the English, looking for a new home, sailed across the Atlantic and onto the shores of Massachusetts Territory.

... [At] Neponset ... the English [missionary] John Elliot, author of the translated English to Massachusetts Language Bible, first preached the Christian Gospel to Kitchemekin and the Neponsets.

As the number of English settlers increased in and around the Neponset Settlements, so did their desire for ownership of Neponset lands. They had no desire to share their newfound land with the local indigenous folk (or “savages” as they called them). [The English murdered many Neponsets, and] by the year 1650 greatly outnumbered and outgunned the indigenous population. The Neponsets were cheated out of their lands at Neponset and forced over the blue hills to the area of the Neponset Territory known as Ponkapoag.

Having lost control of the Massachusetts Planting Fields (on whose crops many area Massachusetts bands depended), their quarries and easy access to the ocean, the Neponset families at Ponkapoag made due with fresh water fishing, hunting, trapping and cultivating smaller crops on land much inferior to the Massachusetts fields. ... John Elliot, fearing for the lives of what he referred to as his “Praying Indians” at Ponkapoag, advocated for them and partitioned the new British Government at Dorchester to create a “Praying Indian Town” at Ponkapoag separate from the English. Elliot prevailed. At a town meeting on December 7, 1657, the town of Dorchester agreed to send its representatives to lay out an Indian Plantation at Ponkapoag not to exceed 6,000 acres of land with several stipulations to go with it including guardians who were to look out for “the interests of the Indians.” Thus, the English Officials at Dorchester reduced lands hereto still under the control of the Indigenous Massachusetts at Ponkapoag to 6,000 acres.