

Paleo-Indians Indians

Archaeological evidence shows that people called Paleo-Indians were in the area of Utah Lake from about 12,000 to 8,500 B.C. They inhabited caves or brush and wood shelters. They gathered food either by hunting or by gathering, especially since they lived by an abundant lake.

Many archaeologists believe the damp, biologically diverse marshes along the shores of lakes and slow streams supplied the richest sources of food and shelter for these people. People living near marshes found plentiful supplies of plants, such as cattails, roots, and berries, as well as animals such as birds, rabbits, and fish to eat. They also hunted large prehistoric bison, mammoth, and camels.

Archaeologists have found pottery, projectile points, basketry, and grinding equipment in many places where these people lived. Paleo-Indians are even believed to have traded with other cultures. Obsidian from Utah was used to make the famous Clovis spear points found in New Mexico.

Pioneers

In 1847, shortly after the Mormon Pioneers arrived in the Salt Lake Valley, they began sending individuals to explore the surrounding areas. Favorable reports of the Valley of Utah Lake were well-known by the pioneers. Expeditions were sent to determine if the reports of plentiful fish in the Lake were true. It was not until 1849 when Fort Utah was built, the Mormon pioneers stayed and settled the valley.

They quickly took advantage of the abundance of fish. Using seines (large nets) made of cotton yarn or flax, pioneer fishermen caught thousands of pounds of Bonneville cutthroat trout, June sucker, Utah sucker, and chub.

In 1848, fishing companies were organized to collect fish for desperate settlers who were without provisions. That year, frost killed early sprouting crops. Then the crickets came. Swarms destroyed many crops that survived the freezing temperatures, and hundreds of the valley's early residents were close to starvation. Because of the plentiful fish in Utah Lake, hundreds of settlers did not suffer. Several families were fortunate to have friends who were also skilled fishermen.

Fremont Culture

From about 400 to 1300 A.D., the Fremont Culture lived in northern and eastern Utah. This group of people received their name from the Fremont River in south-central Utah. The Fremont Indians who lived in Utah Valley lived mostly along the Provo River in masonry structures. They were generally settled farmers who grew corn, beans, and squash in small plots along streams at the base of mountain ranges. They ate the plentiful fish from Utah Lake and its tributaries. Artifacts from these people include uniquely constructed baskets and moccasins, trapezoid-shaped clay figurines, and gray, coil pottery. They also used grinding implements.

Their most important food was fish. They fished Utah Lake and its tributaries with bone-tipped harpoons, basket traps, and nets. They used grooved balls as sinkers to hold down the bottom of their fishing nets. They also hunted the birds and animals that lived near the Lake.

Archaeologists are not sure what caused the Fremonts to disappear. The Fremonts may have died out from a drought, or new peoples, such as the ancestors of the Ute, Paiute, and Shoshone, may have forced them to leave. Some archaeologists believe the Fremonts mixed with the new people who were moving into the area and adopted a new way of life.

Archaic Culture

The climate warmed and became more arid and Utah Lake shrank in size. The plant and animal life also changed. The huge mammoths, bison, and camels became extinct. New groups of animals such as the American bison, elk, deer, antelope, and rabbits migrated into the area.

Along with the new animals came a different culture of people. From about 2,500 to 8,500 years ago, the Archaic Culture, or hunters and gatherers, lived around Utah Lake. They used milling stones to grind seeds. To catch fish, their nets were weighted with grooved rock sinkers. They hunted with small spear-like arrows, which were thrown with a device called an atlatl.

They made baskets and chipped tools from obsidian.

Utes

The group of Ute Indians who lived around Utah Lake was called Timpanogots. Timpanogots in the Ute language means “the people who live near the mouth of a rocky canyon through which water flows.” These Utes quickly learned the best time of year to get specific types of food. They would seasonally travel to different locations near and around Utah Lake to hunt wildlife and gather plants for food.

In the spring, they would live near the Lake so they could dig bulrush and other roots from the shores and tributaries of the Lake. They would gather eggs from birds nesting on the shores of the Lake.

In the late summer, they moved into the foothills and mountains where they caught small mammals. They harvested choke cherries, elder berries, service berries, and other fruits. They even caught crickets and grasshoppers, which they roasted in pits and then ground up on stone slabs. They would then mix this with berries, mold them into cookie shapes, and store them for later.

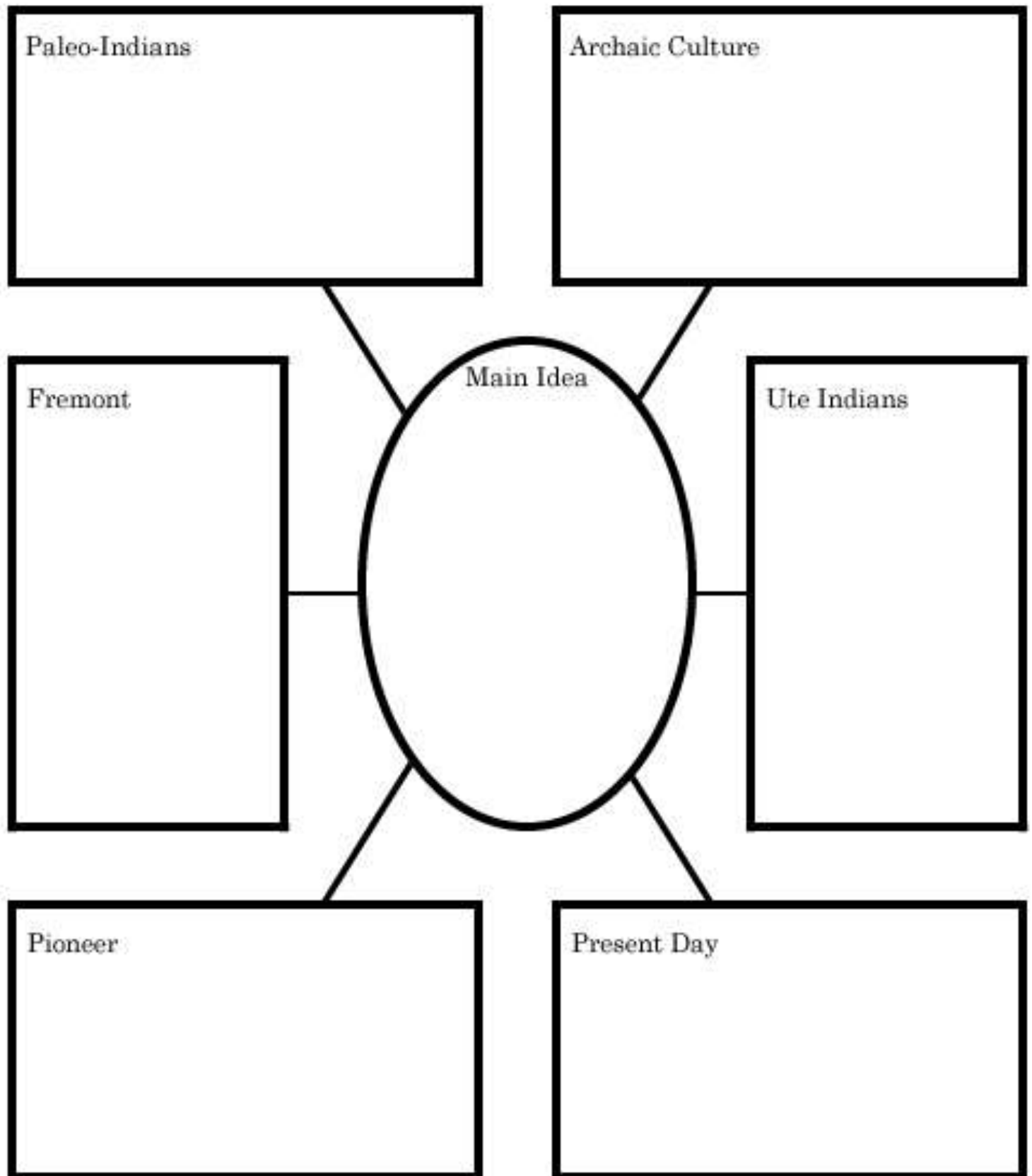
In the winter, they moved to lower elevations near the Lake where they had good access to fresh water, fuel, and food. They caught whitefish, which spawned in the winter. They hunted elk, deer, mountain sheep, and an occasional bison.

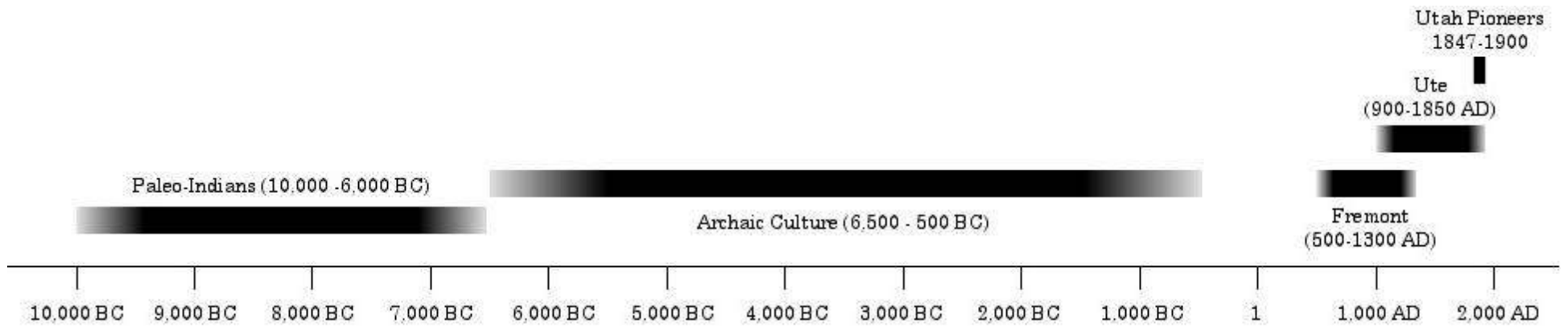
Their most important nutritional resource was fish from Utah Lake and its tributaries. They came up with many methods to fish. They used nets weighted with grooved stones during spawning seasons to capture the fish. Sometimes they built weirs or small dams, where they would frighten fish and club them to death. The fish that they did not eat would be dried and stored for the future.

After hundreds of years of living off the bountiful harvests of Utah Lake, the Utes had become one with the rivers, streams, and the Lake itself. Years later, when Mormon pioneers entered Utah Valley, the Utes taught the pioneers their best techniques of where, when, and how to fish.

Name _____ Date _____

People that Lived Around Utah Lake





Prehistoric Uses of the Lake

American Indians, from as early as 6,000 B.C., used fish from the rivers and streams that flow into Utah Lake as an important source of food.

Archeologists have found the remains from three major periods of use:

The Archaic Period (6,000-3,000 BC):

The Archaic cultures hunted large animals and supplemented their diets with fish from Utah Lake.

The Fremont Period (0-900 AD): The Fremont Indians relied on crops and small game but fish from Utah Lake were their main source of food.

The Utes (Timpagot's or fish eaters): The Utes primarily ate fish. They developed innovative fishing methods and could catch large amounts at a time.

The Way American Indians Caught Fish on Utah Lake:

Fish arrows (barbed heads)

Wood gorgets (detachable spear head with a line attached)

Brush wiers (a "cage" that fish were driven into)

Woven rush/willow dip nets



A Ute camp. Note the fish-drying rack on the left.