**Lesson Five The People (Early Americans)**

At daybreak on the morning of Friday, August 3, 1492, An Italian adventurer named Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain to find a new way from Europe to Asia, his aim was to open up a shorter trade route between the two continents. In Asia, he intended to load his three small ships with silk, spices and gold, and sail back to Europe a rich man.

Columbus first sailed south to the Canary Islands, then he turned west across the unknown waters of the Mid-Atlantic ocean, ten weeks after leaving Spain, on the morning of October 12, he stepped ashore on the beach of a low sandy island, he named the island San Salvador – Holy Savior, Columbus believed that he had landed in the indies, a group of islands close to the main land of India, for this reason he called the friendly brown-skinned people who greeted him “Los Indios,” “The Indians”.

In fact, Columbus was not near India, but islands off the shores of a new continent. Europeans would soon name the new continent “America” and recently have these Indians, as Columbus named them, been described more accurately as “Native Americans” or “Amerindians”.

There were many different groups of Amerindians, those north of Mexico, in what is now the United States and Canada, were scattered across the grasslands and forests in separate tribes, these tribes followed very different ways of life, some were hunters, some were farmers, some were peaceful, others warlike. They spoke over 300 separate languages, some of which were as different from one another as English is from Chinese.

Europeans called America the “new world “, but it was not new to the Amerindians, their ancestors had already been living there for maybe 50.000 years when Columbus arrived. Scientists believe that the distant ancestors of the Amerindians came to America from Asia during the earth’s last ice age. They crossed the bridge of ice that joined Asia to America, across what is now the Bering Strait. Hunters from Siberia crossed this bridge into Alaska, from Alaska the hunters moved south and east across America, following herds of Caribou and buffalo, as the animals went from one feeding ground to the next.

For many centuries early Amerindians lived as wandering hunters and gatherers of food, then a more settled way of life began.

**Amerindian Tribes of North America**

1. **People living in highland areas of what is today Mexico**

These people found a wild grass with tiny seeds that were good to eat. They became America’s first farmers, they cultivated the wild grass with great care to make its seeds larger, eventually it became Indian corn, or Maize. Other cultivated plant foods were developed and by 5000 BC Amerindians in Mexico were growing and eating beans, squash and peppers.

1. **The Pueblo people of present day Arizona and New Mexico**

They were the best organized of the Amerindian farming peoples. They lived in groups of villages, or in towns which were built for safety on the aides and tops of cliffs. They made clothing and blankets from cotton which grew wild in the surrounding deserts. For food they grew crops of maize and beans. Irrigation made them successful as tanners. Long before Europeans came to America the Pueblo were building networks of canals across the deserts to bring water to their fields.

1. **The Apache (neighbors of the Pueblo)**

These never became settled fanners. They wandered the deserts and mountains in small bands, hunting deer and gathering wild plants, nuts and roots. They also obtained food by raiding their Pueblo neighbors and stealing it . The Apache were fierce and warlike. and they were much feared by the Pueblo.

1. **The Iroquois (in northeastern North America)**

They were a group of tribes\_ a “nation. The Iroquois were skilled farmers. In fields cleared from the forest they worked together growing beans. squash and twelve different varieties

of maize. They were also hunters and fishermen. They used birch bark canoes to carry them swiftly along the rivers and lakes of their forest homeland. The Iroquois lived in permanent villages, in long wooden huts with barrel-shaped roofs.

The Iroquois were fierce warriors. They were as feared by their neighbors as the Apache of the western deserts were feared by theirs, Around their huts they built strong wooden stockades to protect their villages from enemies

1. **The Sioux (Dakota)**

Many miles to the west. on the vast plains of grass that stretched from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, there were another warrior nation . This group called themselves Dakota, which means “allies.” But they were better known by the name which other Amerindians gave them \_ Sioux, which means “enemies.”

The Sioux grew no crops and built no houses. For food, for shelter and for clothing they depended upon the buffalo. Accordingly, the Sioux were moving after the buffalo, as the latter wandered across the western grassland. Everything the Sioux owned was designed to be carried easily. They lived in tepees made of the Buffalo skin.

1. **People of the northwestern coast of North America**

The life style of the people of North America’s northwest coast was different again. They gathered nuts and berries from the forests, bur their main food was fish, especially the salmon of' the rivers and the ocean. The abundance of food gave the tribes of the Pacific coast time for feasting, for carving and for building.

The Amerindian peoples of North America developed widely varied ways of life. All suited the natural environments in which the tribes lived, and they lasted for many centuries. But the arrival of Europeans with their guns, their diseases and their hunger for land would eventually destroy them all.