



Visit a Woodland Indian Village Vocabulary List

Please note: most of these words are explicitly defined within the text that students will read.

Girdling: a method used by Woodland Indians to clear land for planting. They would burn through the bark and the outer layer of the tree, making it impossible for food and water to travel up the tree. The upper parts of the tree would die. Eventually, it would be easy to chop the tree down. Sometimes it even fell over by itself.

Canoe: a narrow open boat. Woodland Indians carved them from one large hollowed-out log. With canoes, they could travel much faster than on foot.

Palisade: a type of high fence created by driving long wooden rods into the ground. Woodland Indians sometimes built palisades around their most important villages.

Werowance: an important chief, the leader of the village.

Witchott: a one-room building used by one or more Woodland Indian families as their home.

Thatched: a type of roof made from plant material like straw or hay.

Saplings: young trees, usually a few feet tall and 1 – 4 inches in diameter.

Tanned: treating animal skins to turn them into leather.

Tanning: the process of making leather from animal skins.

Deer sinews: the tendons, or tough tissues that connect the muscles to the bones, of a deer. Sinews were dried and used to make the strings for bows and snares.

Tomahawk: a type of weapon (a small axe) used to fight.

Cockarouses (COCK-a-rouse-ez): an advisor to the werowance. Cockarouses helped make decisions about war.

Wisos (WEE-so): an advisor to the werowance. Wisos helped make decisions about village life like planting and harvesting.

Matchacomico (match-a-COM-i-co): a town council-type meeting. Elders, advisors, and the werowance attended the matchacomico.

Elders: people in the village who are the oldest and wisest.

Tayac (TIE-ack): the most powerful chief in the area.

Manito (MAN-i-tu): the most important Woodland Indian god.

Dogbane: also called "Indian hemp," fibers from this plant were often woven together as rope to tie together saplings to create the frame of a witchott.

Yucca: a type of plant used to make rope to tied together the frame of the witchott.

Algonquians (al-GON-kwinz): most of the Woodland Indians near the Chesapeake Bay were part of this large family of clans.

Yaocomaco (ya-KOM-i-CO): an Algonquian clan living in Southern Maryland who first welcomed the English colonists to the area.

Chiefdoms: a group of clans.

Piscataway (pis-CAT-a-way): the largest tribal group living on the Western shore of Maryland. The Yaocomico and other clans were part of this group.