

Paiute Water Bottle



Each month The California Museum will introduce a new artifact with accompanying information and questions, which will consist of three different difficulty levels to choose from. To be used as a sponge or opening activity, you can use the artifact of the month for your students to study, question and form ideas. You can also print the image and place it on each student's desk, have them work in teams or project the image for a class activity.

Use the provided questions to help your students learn more about the artifact and its importance to California -- or make up your own questions. Most importantly, have fun!

Be sure to check out our web site, CaliforniaMuseum.org, for other interesting and unique activities for your students.

Paiute Water Bottle



Paiute Water Bottle
Willow Shoots, split willow, dogbane cordage, red earth
Diagonal three-strand twining
Mono Co. ~ Inyo Co. c. 1890

A Paiute woman made this lightweight and durable water container basket in 1890. As you can imagine, baskets intended to hold liquids had to be woven very tightly. Before use, they also were covered in pine pitch sap and then rolled in dirt to create a watertight seal. Since there was not a lot of fresh water readily available for the Paiute people (who live on the dry eastern side of the Sierra Nevada Mountains), they needed to store water. This basket would be able to hold enough fresh water for one person for one day.

Unlike other American Indians, most California Indians did not make pottery. Although clay was available, instead they made baskets - beautiful baskets that were strong, versatile, lightweight and functional. Woven from raw materials found where California Indians lived, baskets were used for everything from cooking (envision a boiling basket of water!), storage of grains, serving food, trapping animals and fishing, to ceremonial purposes and carrying babies. This tradition, passed down from mother to daughter, played an essential role in everyday Native life.

When settlers came to California, they started to purchase baskets from the Indians. Eventually, beauty overtook function as California Indians started to create eye-catching baskets to sell to settlers. Making and selling baskets became a way for California Indians to support their families and they now are considered an art form, found in museums and art galleries.

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Elementary

- 1) What materials do you think were used to make this basket?
- 2) What was the function of this basket?

Middle

- 1) Why do you think Native Californians prefer baskets to pottery?
- 2) Name at least seven ways Native Californians used their baskets.

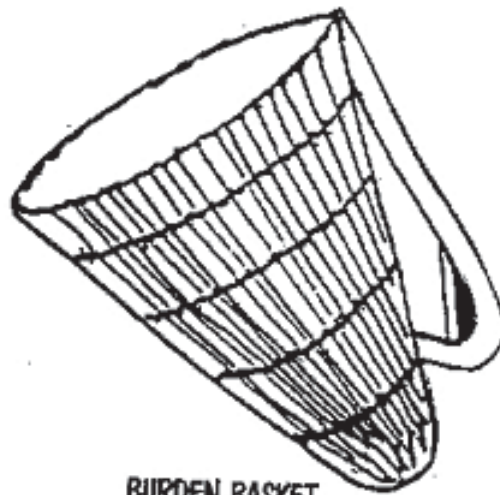
High School

- 1) Why would a smaller version of this basket be made?
- 2) How many of these baskets and in what sizes would a family of four need? Think about all the variables.

Color Some Other Types of Baskets!



WATER JUG



BURDEN BASKET



HATS



SEED GATHERER



TRAY



BABY CARRIER

