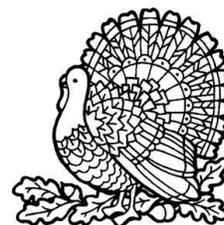


THANKSGIVING UNIT



INFORMATION PACKET

NAME _____

Gifts from the Indians

Like many American children, you could begin your day by slipping your feet into moccasin-type slippers similar to those worn by North American Indians over 500 years ago. Next comes your warm robe made of a cotton fiber grown by the Indians before Columbus reached the new world. Your day has just begun, and so has your use of the many contributions of the Indians of the Americas.

The hot chocolate you drink at breakfast comes from cocoa, which the Indians grew and introduced to the white man. There is a good chance the fruit you eat will be one of the more than eighty domesticated plants first used by the Indian. Before many meals are finished, you will have eaten the Indian's corn, potatoes, pumpkins, turkey, tomatoes, squash, many kinds of beans, and other vegetables and fruits. If you snack on peanuts or chew a piece of chewing gum, you can also thank the Indians.

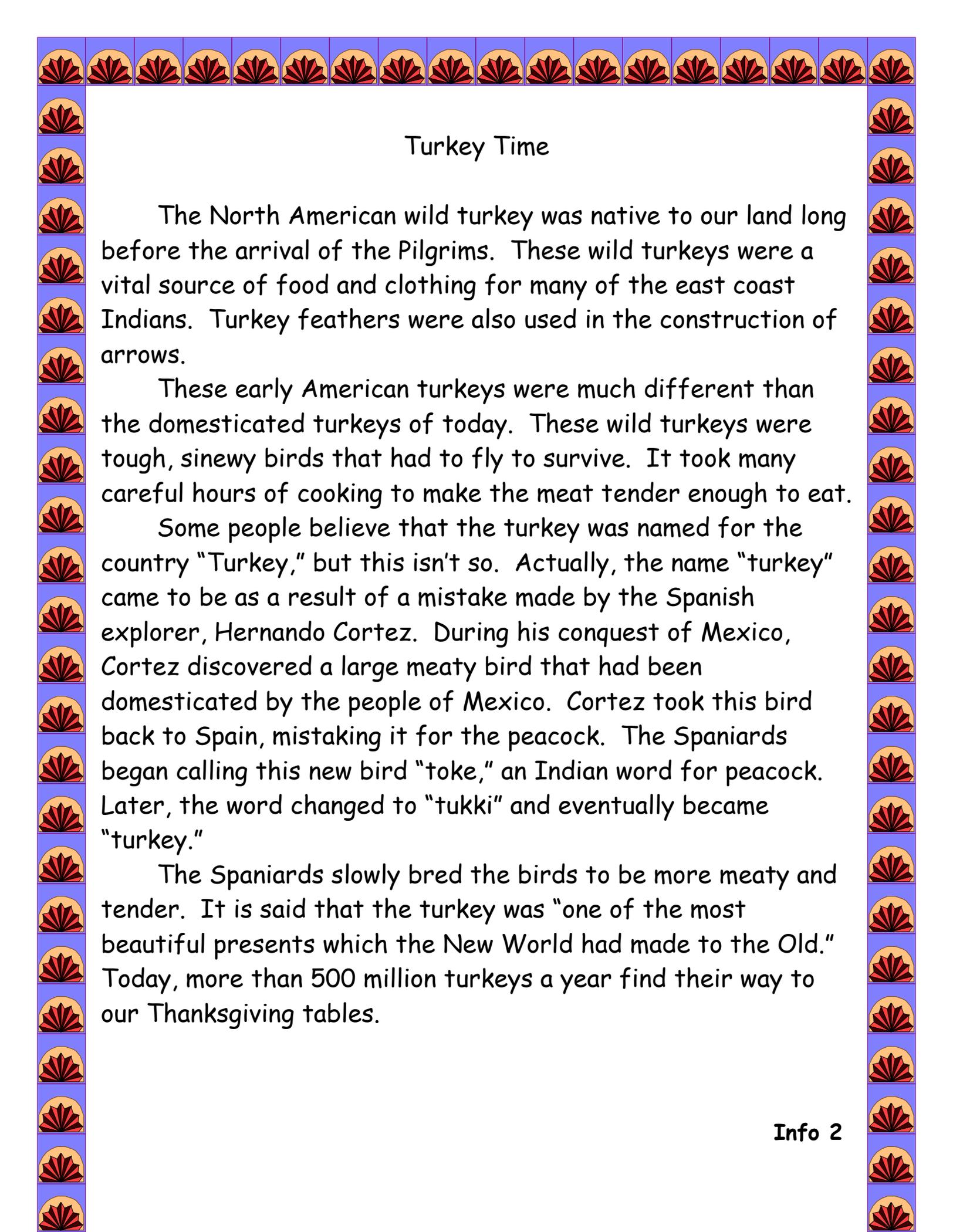
The poncho or parka style you pull on as you leave the house is another gift of the American Indian. It is possible that you may step out into one of thousands of American communities with an Indian name. Many of the lakes, rivers, and mountains of your state are still known by the names given them by Indians years ago. During your geography lesson at school you will discover that nearly half the states of our country have Indian names.

Recess would not be as much fun without the Indian's rubber ball. And, of course, the ball itself becomes more fun when used in many games, such as basketball, borrowed from the Indians. The Aztecs of Mexico and the Maya of Central American played their basketball with an interesting difference. The hoop or ring was turned straight up and down, and the ball was thrown through from the side.

After recess, as you study early history and government of the United States, you will again see the influence of the American Indian. Benjamin Franklin and other leaders of the colonies often spoke of their respect for the League of the Iroquois. The League united the five Iroquois tribes of New York more than thirty years before the settlement of the first colony at Jamestown in 1607. Many historians believe that the Constitution of the United States shows the influence of the democratic ideas and organization which held these tribes together and brought them peace.

If you should have to miss school because of a dental appointment, things won't be nearly so painful because of novocaine, just one of nearly sixty drugs given to the modern world by the Indian.

So, after your busy day is over and you have turned off the light, it might be nice to say a little "thanks" to the remarkable Indians.

The page is framed by a decorative border consisting of repeating turkey feather motifs. Each feather is depicted in a stylized, fan-like shape with a red and black color scheme, set against a light blue background. The border runs along all four edges of the page.

Turkey Time

The North American wild turkey was native to our land long before the arrival of the Pilgrims. These wild turkeys were a vital source of food and clothing for many of the east coast Indians. Turkey feathers were also used in the construction of arrows.

These early American turkeys were much different than the domesticated turkeys of today. These wild turkeys were tough, sinewy birds that had to fly to survive. It took many careful hours of cooking to make the meat tender enough to eat.

Some people believe that the turkey was named for the country "Turkey," but this isn't so. Actually, the name "turkey" came to be as a result of a mistake made by the Spanish explorer, Hernando Cortez. During his conquest of Mexico, Cortez discovered a large meaty bird that had been domesticated by the people of Mexico. Cortez took this bird back to Spain, mistaking it for the peacock. The Spaniards began calling this new bird "toke," an Indian word for peacock. Later, the word changed to "tukki" and eventually became "turkey."

The Spaniards slowly bred the birds to be more meaty and tender. It is said that the turkey was "one of the most beautiful presents which the New World had made to the Old." Today, more than 500 million turkeys a year find their way to our Thanksgiving tables.