

**Early Peoples Activity Sheet:  
The Polynesians**

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**The Polynesian expansion across the Pacific (c.700-1756)**

1. **Origin and spread of Polynesians**
2. Which group of people are Polynesians descendants of?
3. Who are the Austronesians?
4. How was the Lapita Culture formed?
5. Approximately how long ago did the Lapita people start exploring other islands?
6. Where did the Lapita people settle?
7. The settlers on which islands were the ancestors to all Polynesians?
8. Which peoples are no longer considered to be part of Polynesia and why?
9. Look at the map on page 10. From which islands did Polynesians spread from?
10. When were the Hawaiian Islands discovered and settled upon?
11. According to legend, how did the Polynesians discover New Zealand?
12. Why did Polynesians risk death to explore and settle other islands?

1. **Life in the Pacific**
2. How were Polynesians able to settle and survive on the islands with so little native food plants?
3. Name the two types of islands in Polynesia.
4. Which type of island has the best environment?
5. Why did the environment in New Zealand force the settlers to develop a different way of life to other Polynesians?
6. How was Polynesian society divided?
7. Who was eligible to become Chief?
8. How were clans ranked?
9. List, in order, the social classes on larger islands.
10. What is mana?
11. What evidence exists of how chiefs displayed their power?
12. Health and Medicine:

* What was the general state of health of Polynesians?
* What was the most important of all medicinal plants and what was it used to treat?

1. **Culture**
2. Why did Polynesians tattoo their bodies?
3. Describe the different tattoo styles found on different islands.
4. Did women have tattoos?
5. Why did Polynesians dance?
6. What movements were considered the most important in Polynesian dancing?
7. What type of instruments did Polynesians play?
8. Give some examples of Polynesian sports?

1. **Warfare**
2. Why did chiefdoms and clans go to war?
3. How many soldiers did James Cook witness leaving Tahiti to raid Moorea?
4. Why did many of Hawaiian Chief Keoua’s supporters change sides when one-third of his army was lost in a volcanic eruption?
5. How did warriors defend themselves in battle?
6. What were taboos?
7. How were prisoners of war treated?
8. What type of weapons did Polynesians use?

1. **Beliefs**
2. What was the most important Polynesian religious belief?
3. Who did the gods give more mana to?
4. How could a chief increase his mana?
5. How did people protect their mana?
6. What were taboos?
7. To protect the chief’s mana, what taboos surrounded them?
8. What would happen if people broke these taboos?
9. Who could enter temples and sacred places?
10. How did Polynesians use taboo to conserve resources?
11. In Hawaii, what could those who broke taboo do to rectify themselves?
12. Who did Polynesians believed created the world?
13. In what ways did Polynesians worship their gods?
14. What did Polynesians believe happened to the dead?
15. Why were festivals held?
16. What was the Makahiki festival?
17. Identify the three stages of Mahakiki festival?
18. Explain what happened at funerals?
19. Why was it important to conduct proper funeral rituals?

1. **Canoes**
2. How did Polynesians use canoes?
3. What is an outrigger and what does it do?
4. What features did voyaging canoes have?
5. How long were voyaging canoes and how many people could they carry?
6. How were the canoes powered?
7. What did Polynesians use to make sails?
8. How did Polynesians make sure their canoes were watertight?
9. How did Polynesians navigate across the seas?
10. How did Polynesians chart the waves?

1. **Family life**
2. What was considered the normal family unit throughout Polynesia?
3. Who was the head of the household?
4. What kind of parents were Polynesians?
5. Who looked after the children in the family?
6. Why would Polynesians adopt children?
7. What type of education did children receive?
8. What did an adult ceremony involve?
9. What was ‘fattening’?
10. How old were men and women when they married?
11. What taboos were there relating to marriage?
12. In the case of a divorce, how would the family be structured?
13. **Making a living**
14. What jobs would men perform?
15. What jobs would women perform?
16. How did Polynesians make a living?
17. Who were the “experts”?
18. How was wealth measured in Polynesian culture?

1. **Houses**
2. Describe a family home in Polynesia.
3. Why did men and women eat separately?
4. What other buildings were found in a village?
5. What materials were used to construct shelters in Polynesia?

1. **Clothing**
2. What type of clothing did men and women wear?
3. What were clothes made from?
4. What was the most common type of clothing in Tonga, Samoa and Hawaii?
5. Name some of the accessories people wore in Polynesia?

1. **Food**
2. What types of foods did Polynesians eat?
3. What were the two most important foods in a Polynesian’s diet?
4. How did Polynesians prepare their food?
5. What foods were taboo to women in Hawaii?

1. **Easter Island**
2. When did Polynesians discover and settle on Easter Island?
3. What are moai?
4. Why were the moai made?
5. How many people is it thought were needed to construct one moai?
6. Explain how society on Easter Island was divided.
7. What happened to the population that lived on Easter Island?