

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Native American Totem Poles

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer the questions from the reading.



Totem poles are a tradition of Indian tribes from the Northwest Coast Region such as Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian. They are mostly carved from large red cedar trees. Because totem poles are made of cedar wood, and decay over time and the oldest totem poles have since rotted.

The meanings of each totem can be very different from one pole to another. Totem poles may tell the story of famous legends, clan ancestry, or historical events. Each figure represents a piece of the puzzle; together, the pieces record a story.

The colors used came from daily elements such as bark, berries, copper and clam shells. The most common color used was black. It was made by grinding soot, or charcoal and mixing it with pulverized salmon eggs.

The most common figures include the Raven, Eagle, Whale, Thunderbird, Beaver, Bear, Wolf, and Frog. Tradition provides that every person is connected with these different animals through life, acting as guides. Different animal guides come in and out of our lives depending on the direction that we are headed and the tasks that need to be completed along our journey.

When westerners first saw totem poles, they thought they were religious symbols and objects of worship. However, Totem poles were never objects of worship and later European explorers understood the totem poles to be more like billboards or signs; telling stories and honoring heritage. Totem Poles were usually left to rot in place when people abandoned a village.

1. Were totem poles used to worship? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which Indian region carved totem poles? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Each of the totems come together to tell a \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What type of tree are totem poles carved from? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the most popular color used to paint totem poles? \_\_\_\_\_

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**No**

**Northwest Coast Region**

**Story**

**Red Cedar**

**Black**