Northwestern Native American families traditionally place totem poles in front of their houses. Totem poles are tall wooden posts\(^1\). Some of the tallest totem poles are over one hundred feet high. Totem poles are used to tell the history of the family.

Totem poles are colorful. They have faces carved and painted on them. The faces are carved to look like people, animals, or plants. Each face represents a special part of the family’s past.

When totem poles are erected\(^2\), the whole tribe throws a grand feast. These celebrations are called potlatches. People are invited from near and far. The hosts of the party give out fine gifts to the guests. It’s important to give out a lot of gifts. The more you give, the more wealth\(^3\) and power you are seen to have.

Food at the feast might include whale meat, salmon, and halibut. These are all foods that the Northwest tribes hunt.

---

1. **posts**: tall round or square poles usually made of wood or metal
2. **erected**: put up
3. **wealth**: riches
1. A face on a totem pole would most likely represent
   a. a friend
   b. a family pet
   c. a king
   d. a great-grandparent

2. Much of the Northwest Tribes’ food comes from
   a. the ground
   b. other tribes
   c. hunting in the woods
   d. the sea

3. A **potlatch** is
   a. something that keeps pot lids closed
   b. a kind of totem pole
   c. a character that might be carved onto a totem pole
   d. a feast held in honor of a new totem pole

4. According to the passage, what would make a person appear wealthy?
   a. Wearing a lot of expensive jewelry
   b. Buying a lot of fine things
   c. Giving away a lot of presents
   d. Killing a lot of animals

5. Based on the passage, it is likely that
   a. totem poles are easy to make
   b. different symbols on totem poles have different meanings
   c. people do not like to celebrate the raising of totem poles
   d. each family has the same totem pole
6. What is the main idea of this passage? Be sure to cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

7. Why might a totem pole have faces carved on it?

______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Food at the feast might include whale meat, salmon, and halibut _______ these are all foods that the Northwest tribes hunt.

   a. because
   b. but
   c. even though
   d. despite

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

When totem poles are erected, the whole tribe celebrates by holding a grand feast.

Who?  the whole tribe

(does) What?   ______________________________________________________

When?  __________________________________________________________

How?   ___________________________________________________________

10. **Vocabulary Word:** wealth: riches

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence:  ___________________________________
Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 630

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: This passage describes how totem poles are used by Northwestern Native American families as a way to tell their family history. It also describes how these people celebrate the erection of a new totem pole.

1. A face on a totem pole would most likely represent
   a. a friend
   b. a family pet
   c. a king
   d. a great-grandparent

2. Much of the Northwest Tribes’ food comes from
   a. the ground
   b. other tribes
   c. hunting in the woods
   d. the sea

3. A potlatch is
   a. something that keeps pot lids closed
   b. a kind of totem pole
   c. a character that might be carved onto a totem pole
   d. a feast held in honor of a new totem pole

4. According to the passage, what would make a person appear wealthy?
   a. Wearing a lot of expensive jewelry
   b. Buying a lot of fine things
   c. Giving away a lot of presents
   d. Killing a lot of animals

5. Based on the passage, it is likely that
   a. totem poles are easy to make
   b. different symbols on totem poles have different meanings
   c. people do not like to celebrate the raising of totem poles
   d. each family constructs the same totem pole
6. What is the main idea of this passage? Be sure to cite evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Suggested answer:** This passage describes the purpose and characteristics of totem poles and how they are created by Northwestern Native American tribes. Evidence to support the main idea may include: Northwestern Native American families use totem poles as a way to tell their family history and display their wealth. Totem poles are tall, colorful poles that have faces carved and painted on them. Each face represents a part of the family’s past.

7. Why might a totem pole have faces carved on it?

**Suggested answer:** The totem poles can tell the story of a family, so it may include the faces of people in the family to tell the story.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Food at the feast might include whale meat, salmon, and halibut _______ these are all foods that the Northwest tribes hunt.

a. because 
b. but 
c. even though 
d. despite 

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

When totem poles are erected, the whole tribe celebrates by holding a grand feast.

Who? the whole tribe

(does) What? **celebrates**

When? **when totem poles are erected**

How? **by holding a grand feast**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** wealth: riches

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.