


Supernatural Helpers

AIM  To understand the use of ceremonial objects.



Mary was required to go through a ceremony to get her husband back. There are many different kinds of ceremonies which are important to Indian people.

Indian people show a deep respect for mother earth, for the beauty of the nature that surrounds us. They know that without our fellow creatures there is no life. Indian people believe that the creatures of the world have a closer relationship to the creator than man does.

SEEKING AID FROM A PLAINS MEDICINE MAN

There are times in every person's life when there is a need to seek help or encouragement from others or from a creator. Many tribes have certain ways to follow when asking for help. On the plains this is done by seeking a vision or approaching a medicine person. In order to receive such a vision or assistance, it is believed that a person must be free of all bad thoughts and desires.

Medicine people perform, teach and remind the people about the proper rites and ceremonies. They provide council and advise persons in their spiritual needs. Some powerful medicine people have been known for their prophetic dreams or their ability to interpret dreams. Persons of such abilities or powers had to use their powers often to help their fellow man.

SEEKING AID FROM A COASTAL SHAMAN

A shaman was believed to have supernatural powers. The tribes of the Northwest coast had both men and women shamans who it was believed received their powers from supernatural beings. The beings spoke through the shaman. Among the Haida and Tlingit a powerful shaman had many spirit helpers. For each he wore a special mask.

Shamans served the tribe by, not only curing the sick, but by foretelling events. Even war parties included a shaman who could warn them of danger. He could also tell where whale were to be found or could even influence the run of fish.

CEREMONIAL OBJECTS

The objects that were used by the old woman to help Mary get her husband back can be called ceremonial objects. They were used with a special ceremony and were considered powerful.

The masks of the coastal Shamans are also ceremonial objects.



Discuss these questions in your family groups.

- Do you own or know of an object that you think has special powers? What is it? Why do you think it has special powers?
- Do you treat this object differently than other things you own? In what way?
- Is this object decorated in a certain way?
- Is this object used in a ceremony? If this object is used in a ceremony, how would you feel if strangers came and took pictures of it or the ceremony?
- How would you feel if strangers found this object and put it on display in a museum?