

Potawatomi Prairie (Historical Fiction)

The Potawatomi tribe lived in this area several hundred years ago. The Potawatomi shifted their homes and had different sets of chores in different seasons. In summer, the families all relocated to one large village, while, in winter, they set up separate, smaller camps. This page describes a typical year for a Potawatomi family a couple hundred years ago.

Summer

We use large poles to build our new house in the communal village. My mother and I use a shoulder bone from a deer to plow our fields and set our seeds. It is very difficult work, but we need to do it so we will have lots of food in the fall. We get to see our friends and the entire extended family, and there are so many things to see and do in the summer, which makes it my sister's favorite season – it is really a fun time. My mother also likes it because being with our big family means there are people to help with the work and other people to talk with. There is a lot of work to do, but everyone helps and there is company.

Autumn

We have lots of food: big squashes and pumpkins and corn too. Every day, I am able to harvest even more beans. We dry the big gourds to eat in the winter, when we will have less food and when it will be too cold to want to search for more. My father found salt from a salt spring and we are using it to dry the meat. This is so exciting because we sometimes run out of meat before the winter ends or it starts to go bad and we cannot eat it. I search for nuts and berries from the forest. Sometimes, I eat them when I find them, but I try to bring most of them home and we dry those too. Soon we will move to our winter site.

Winter

We saw deer and raccoons and knew this would be a good place for hunting, so that will help us have meat this year. We set up a wigwam, which will be our house for the winter months. We stuck one end of tree branches in the ground and then tied them together in the middle. In the winter, we cook inside and we had to remember to leave a gap for the smoke from the fire to get out. We pasted bark on the outside of the wigwam to insulate the wigwam and to help keep the heat inside. Today, it is cold and it just snowed. My father says that he will be able to see the tracks of elk in the snow and can more easily hunt them now. He will soon go to hunt and my mother says that afterwards we will have lots of food, but also lots of work; we will have to cut the meat from the animal and separate the skin to make blankets and rugs. If we don't have enough food in this place, we may move our camp to another place, with more animals.

Spring

In the spring, we can always find my favorite food, which is syrup. We make a hole in a tree and then the sweet juice comes out of the tree. My father made a fishing net from deer sinew and will go out to fish soon. He tied shells to the bottom of the net and when they fill with water, it sinks to the bottom of the stream. This summer, my brother will get to fish, too. He has a line and a hook, which he uses to fish in the lake. Since we get fish in the winter only when we go out and cut through the ice, fishing is mostly a spring and summer job. I like fish and like to watch my father and my brother standing by the lake or the stream. My father likes the spring best. He says it is a time of hope because we start to see all the things that went to sleep in the winter waking up again. He hears the birds sing and sees the plants start to grow again. I like spring, too because soon we will see the flowers.

What is the theme of this story?

Underline the parts of the story that show that is the theme.