



## Stone Axes

Native Americans of the Chesapeake region used wood from trees to create many of the objects used in their daily lives. This included frames for their homes, dugout canoes, and the defensive walls built around some towns. To cut down large trees, Native people would first build a fire around the base of the tree, which softened the wood. They would then chop down the tree using a stone axe. Axes were often made from basalt, a mineral found in the mountains and traded down the rivers to tribes living on the Chesapeake Bay.



To fasten the blade to the handle, some axes had grooves that had been pecked into the stone where strips of deer skin or sinew could be used to lash everything together. Other axes, like the one shown above, did not have grooves and fit into a hole that had been carved into the axe's handle. To make the blade, the Indians would scrape the basalt against a harder stone to form a sharp edge. The axe was then polished by rubbing it against rough stones, much like people use sandpaper to polish wood today. Axes came in all shapes and sizes. Large axes were used to fell the biggest trees, while smaller axes were used to remove branches or cut down saplings. For thousands of years, the stone axe was one of the most important tools used by tribal communities in the Bay area.



## Stone Axes

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read the text on the previous page, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. Name three objects that were made from wood in Native American towns.

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2. Why did the Indians make fires around the bases of large trees?

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3. What is basalt?

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4. How was a grooved axe fastened to the handle?

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5. How was a non-grooved axe attached to the handle?

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6. How did Native people make the sharp blade of an axe?

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