

## Native American Childhood

Ohiye S'a, whose English name was Charles Alexander Eastman, was a member of the Dakota tribe of Native Americans. A writer and doctor, he was the first to write about tribal life from the Native American viewpoint.

Born in Minnesota in 1858, Eastman wrote *Indian Boyhood* in 1902. It tells about the first fifteen years of his life. Below is a passage from *Indian Boyhood*.

### X. Indian Life and Adventure

#### I: Life in the Woods

To me, as a boy, this wilderness was a paradise. It was a land of plenty. To be sure, we did not have any of the luxuries of civilization, but we had every convenience and opportunity and luxury of Nature. We had also the gift of enjoying our good fortune, whatever dangers might lurk about us; and the truth is that we lived in blessed ignorance of any life that was better than our own.

As soon as hunting in the woods began, the customs regulating it were established. The council teepee no longer existed. A hunting bonfire was kindled every morning at day-break, at which each brave must appear and report. The man who failed to do this before the party set out on the day's hunt was harassed by ridicule. As a rule, the hunters started before sunrise, and the brave who was announced throughout the camp as the first one to return with a deer on his back, was a man to be envied.

#### Answer the following questions about the passage.

1. How was the wilderness a paradise for a boy?

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2. What was one of the customs the tribe had for hunting season?

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3. What does Eastman mean by "blessed ignorance"?

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*Charles Alexander Eastman in European clothing.*



*Ohiye S'a in Dakota clothing.*

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*Charles Alexander Eastman in European clothing.*



*Ohiye S'a in Dakota clothing.*

### Answer the following questions about the passage.

1. How was the wilderness a paradise for a boy?

**Actual student's answers will vary. Example of correct answers:**

**The wilderness provided everything the tribe needed.**

2. What was one of the customs the tribe had for hunting season?

**Every morning each brave must report to the hunting bonfire.**

3. What does Eastman mean by "blessed ignorance"?

**The people of the tribe were happy because they had no other lifestyle to compare theirs to.**