



CRITICAL VIEWING Deer run through Tuolumne Meadows in California's Yosemite National Park. What details in this photo represent North America as a "land of plenty"?

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What does *plenty* mean to you? For the first people who lived in North America, the concept of plenty revolved around food. Hunting, gathering, and growing food took up a lot of their time. Lucky for them, they lived in a Land of Plenty.

As you have just read, North America is one of the most geographically varied places in the world. It has towering mountain ranges, wide, grassy plains, rocky coasts, and gentle valleys. Networks of powerful rivers support rich soil. Countless species thrive in every part of the continent. For thousands of years, North America's varied environments have provided people, both ancient and modern, with lush natural resources. Whether bison on the Great Plains, berries from a rain forest, elk in the Rocky Mountains, or fish along the coasts, the first residents had plenty to eat.

In addition, Native Americans across the continent developed ways to produce even more food. In the southwestern deserts, they raised crops like corn, beans, and squash. In the eastern woodlands, they devised a slash-and-burn method to create land on which to farm. Native Americans knew a great deal about the world around them, and they understood the delicate balance of taking from nature in moderation and with respect.

How might the concept of plenty have defined people who lived in North America in the past?