

American Indians in a Changing World



Unidentified American Indian youth, ca. 1870 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01363)

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TEACHING LITERACY
TH THROUGH HISTORY



American Indians in a Changing World

BY MARY HUFFMAN

UNIT OVERVIEW

Students will examine and analyze photographs of, poems by, and documents about American Indian experiences as European Americans migrated across the United States. They will use the knowledge gained through their analysis to write their own songs, poems, and letters. While the unit is intended to take three class periods, it is possible to complete the material in a shorter time frame. For example, you can set up three document centers around the classroom. After being introduced to the necessary analytical skills, the students can be split into three groups and sent to a document center to complete the activities there, switching to a new document center after a designated period of time. This will shorten the three-day unit to two days.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to

- Analyze primary sources, including photographs, poems, and texts
- Complete activities that focus on higher-order thinking questions about the resources and the American Indians they portray
- Complete writing assignments based on the lessons

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How is the relationship between American Indians and where and how they live conveyed in their poetry?

How did westward expansion affect Native cultures and freedom?

How did the changing relationship between the US government and American Indians influence American Indian lives?

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 3

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3: Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.6: Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.9: Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.1.B: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.2.B: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1.C: Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.2: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

American Indian History: An Overview

by Joseph Bruchac (Nulhegan Abenaki)

Rather than seeing Native American history as a part of American history, it may be more logical to see it the other way around. Native American history goes back for countless generations before the arrival of the new settlers and the history of the United States is inextricably linked with that of its Indigenous peoples.

The first European colonies depended on assistance from the original nations here before them. Many things from Native cultures became building blocks for the new American nation. Such foods as corn, beans, and squash, now important parts of American agriculture, were developed by American Indian agronomists. American democracy owes a considerable debt to the League of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois. Their democratic, highly successful confederacy was cited by Benjamin Franklin as a model for the thirteen colonies to follow and the Constitution was influenced by the example of the Iroquois League.

However, American Indian nations were not treated as equals. The Europeans who came to North America were members of one Christian faith or another. Native Americans were not Christians. A 1493 papal decree, the “Doctrine of Discovery,” stated that any lands not inhabited by Christians were

available to be discovered and claimed. That became one basis for justifying the western expansion of the United States and was cited in the US Supreme Court decision in the 1823 case *Johnson v. MacIntosh*.

In the American South, the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles became known as the “Five Civilized Tribes,” adopting many aspects of European culture, including Christianity. However, it did not prevent the state of Georgia from forcing them off their land onto what became known as the Trail of Tears.

There are two primary approaches the United States has taken toward American Indians. The first has been to kill them or remove them—sometimes by treaties forcing them to sell or cede land, sometimes by outright military force. The second approach has been to treat them as children, controlled by a paternalistic federal government.

Beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century, Native American children were sent to trade schools such as the Carlisle Indian School, founded in 1879. The stated objective was to “kill the Indian and save the man.” All aspects of Indigenous life, including tribal languages, were to be erased by a “civilizing” education that would result in the eventual eradication of all Native cultures. Indians were to be absorbed into the larger nation as “useful,” second-class citizens serving the White majority. However, despite this new approach, American Indians were not granted citizenship until 1924, and it is no exaggeration to say that all Native Americans today still suffer from the trauma of the boarding schools, with the last residential school closing in 1973.

Despite the overwhelming odds against them, American Indians have shown great resilience. Most of the original 500 or more Native nations that were here prior to Columbus still remain in the United States, although their land base and many aspects of their cultures have been greatly diminished.

In the twentieth century, especially in the period following World War II, American Indians began to gain more tribal autonomy. Some of the lands taken from them were restored to tribal control. No longer were their religious practices or their languages forbidden by law. Schools in their communities formerly run by the federal government entered the control of tribal nations. Although things are far from perfect, Native Americans in the twenty-first century are on a much more equal footing with the rest of our nation.

Joseph Bruchac is an Abenaki scholar and poet. He has a PhD in comparative literature from Union Institute of Ohio. The winner of the 1999 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers' Circle of the Americas, he is the author of more than 120 nonfiction and fiction books for adults and children, including Keepers of the Earth (with Michael Caduto), Breaking Silence, The Wind Eagle and Other Abenaki Stories, and Jim Thorpe, Original All American.

LESSON 1

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to examine and analyze several historical images of and a modern song about American Indians. The students will identify through observation what is explicitly stated, reflect on the information gathered, and demonstrate their understanding of American Indian experiences as portrayed in the sources by writing their own song.

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to

- Observe and analyze historical images
- Listen to and read, and then analyze lyrics to a song
- Write a song based on their understanding of the primary and secondary sources examined

MATERIALS

- Primary Sources: Images from the Gilder Lehrman Institute
 - o “Wat-Che-Mon-Ne, an Ioway Chief,” wearing a peace medal, lithograph published by D. Rice & A. N. Hart, Philadelphia, ca. 1855, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01993.04
 - o Unidentified American Indian youth, ca. 1870, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01363
 - o Group of five American Indian women with young girl and baby, photograph by William H. Jackson, Washington DC, 1871, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03095.95
 - o Crow Indian prisoners Crazy Head, Knows His Coos, Jeff Bull, The Bank, Looks with His Ears, Big Hail, Carries His Food, and The Rock after an uprising, guarded by soldiers with rifles, photograph by W. B. Finch, Montana, 1887, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC04591
- Activity Sheets
 - o Image Analysis
 - o Song Analysis
 - o Original Song

- “American Indian Rap” by Smart Songs
 - o Video on youtube.com
 - o Lyrics from Genius.com
- Overhead projector, Elmo projector, or similar device
- Optional: Magnifying glass

PROCEDURE

1. Hand out the magnifying glasses if you are using them, and tell the students that they are now archivists about to study historical images. Using the magnifying glasses, they will be able to closely examine and gather information from the images provided.
2. Distribute the photographs and the Image Analysis and activity sheets. Each student should get two copies of the Analysis page as they will be looking at two images.
3. NOTE: Many photographs from this period were staged. It was common for photographers to mix costumes and props with no regard for the cultural origins of the people or the objects. As a result, such photographs provide at least as much information about the point of view of the photographer and the audience as they do about the people being photographed.
4. Model the image analysis activity with one of the photographs of American Indians. Display the photograph for the whole class to see and have the Image Analysis worksheet available for display as well. As you fill in the answers to the first section, refer back to the photograph and describe each step in your thought process out loud.
5. Complete the second section with the help of the students. Make sure that the students point out where they found the evidence to support their answers. They will fill in their own copies of the worksheet during this activity.
6. The students will analyze the second image individually or in groups. You may choose the images they work on or allow them to choose one. Each student must complete their own activity sheet.
7. Once the students have completed the activity, play “American Indian Rap.” This video is meant to be an early learning tool about American Indian cultures, not a comprehensive statement on the complicated American Indian experience.
8. Distribute the Song Analysis and Original Song activity sheets and the lyrics to “American Indian Rap.” Have the students read the questions to themselves before you play the song again.
9. Students will complete the activity sheet based on the video and the lyrics.
10. You may assign the original song activity for homework. The students will use the information they learned from the two photographs they analyzed to write their own lyrics for an original song.
11. You may choose to collect all the activity sheets to use for formative assessments.
12. Wrap Up: As an exit ticket, have the students write a brief paragraph identifying something new they learned about American Indian cultures from either the images or the song.

LESSON 2

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to read and analyze a selection of American Indian poems. Through reading and analyzing the poems and writing their own poems, students will demonstrate their understanding of American Indian history and culture as expressed by the poets.

OBJECTIVE

The students will be able to

- Read and analyze American Indian proverbs and poems
- Write their own proverb or poem based on what they learned

MATERIALS

- Excerpts from Native American poems
 - o A Navajo Proverb from Guy A. Zona, *The Soul Would Have No Rainbow If the Eyes Had No Tears and Other Native American Proverbs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 40.
 - o “The Song of the Stars” in Charles G. Leland, *The Algonquin Legends of New England or Myths and Folk Lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Tribes* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1884), 379.
 - o Excerpt from “Long Division: A Tribal History” by Wendy Rose (Hopi/Miwok), in Wendy Rose, *Long Division: A Tribal History, Poems* (New York: Strawberry Press, 1976), [5].
 - o Excerpt from “Calling Myself Home” (1978) by Linda Hogan (Chickasaw), published in Linda Hogan, *Dark. Sweet. New & Selected Poems* (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2014), 7.
 - o Excerpt from “The Blanket around Her” by Joy Harjo (Creek), in Joy Harjo, *What Moon Drove Me to This?* (New York: I. Reed Books, 1979), 10.
 - o Excerpt from “The Makahs,” by Sandra Johnson Osawa (Makah), published in Andrea Lerner, ed., *Dancing on the Rim of the World: An Anthology of Contemporary Northwest Native American Writing* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 159.
- Poetry Analysis activity sheet
- Overhead projector, Elmo projector, or similar device

PROCEDURE

1. Model the poetry analysis activity with the excerpt from one of the American Indian proverbs or poems. Distribute two copies of the Poetry Analysis activity sheet to each student. Display the poem you have chosen for the whole class to see and have the Poetry Analysis activity sheet available for display as well. As you fill in the worksheet, refer back to the proverb or poem and describe each step in your thought process out loud.
3. Students may now work individually or in pairs. Each student or pair will choose one of the remaining poems to analyze. Students must complete their own worksheets.
4. After reading and analyzing the two excerpts from American Indian proverbs or poems, the students will write their own original one-stanza, six- to eight-line poem based on the same theme as the poem they just analyzed, but changing the tone or perspective. Ask the students to include the name of the proverb or poem they are basing their work on.
5. You may collect the activity sheets and student poems to use for formative assessments.
6. Wrap Up: As an exit ticket, have the students explain something new that they learned from the poems about American Indian culture.

LESSON 3

OVERVIEW

Students will be asked to analyze two historical documents on the same topic from two different time periods. By reading and analyzing the primary sources, students will learn about some of the social and economic effects westward expansion had on American Indians, including displacement, armed conflict, and assimilation. To demonstrate their understanding of the documents, they will complete an activity and write a short letter in response to one of the texts.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Read and summarize primary source texts
- Write a letter in response to the primary source

MATERIALS

- Primary Sources from the Gilder Lehrman Institute
 - o Excerpts from a letter from Thomas Jefferson to William H. Harrison, February 27, 1803, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC07171
 - o Excerpts from a Treaty between the US and the Cherokee Nation, August 6, 1846, The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01233.05
- A Changing World: Critical Thinking Questions
- Overhead projector, Elmo projector, or similar device

PROCEDURE

1. Model the document analysis activity with Thomas Jefferson's letter outlining his policy toward American Indian tribes. Hand out copies of the document Critical Thinking Questions. Display the excerpts from the letter for the whole class to see and have the Critical Thinking Questions available for display as well.
2. "Share read" the document with the class. This is done by having the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners.
3. Model the answers to the Critical Thinking Questions with the class, asking them to talk through their answers to the questions as you did in the previous lessons.
4. Distribute the excerpts from the 1846 treaty and another copy of the Critical Thinking Questions. The students may work individually or in groups. All students must complete their own activity sheet.
5. The students will then write a letter in response to one of documents. They should directly address the people, events, and conflicts/problems represented in the document. Tell the students to write the title of the document they are responding to on their papers.
6. You may collect the activity sheets and the students' letters to use for formative assessments.
10. Wrap Up: Have one or two of the students read their response to the class. They should express their emotions in their voice as they read their letter.