

Native Americans: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 4-5

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: 1 to 2 class periods

Program Description

When European settlers came to North America, it was inhabited by tribes of people with strong cultural traditions and ties to the land. What happened to those important customs? *The Cherokee Trail of Tears* – Discover what 4,000 Cherokee died for when the U.S. government forced them to resettle 850 miles from home. *The First Alaskans* – See how the Venetie community preserves hunting, fishing, and dancing traditions that are more than 100 years old. *The Nez Perce* – Witness how American expansion cost the Nez Perce their home in the majestic landscape of the rugged Northwest.

Onscreen Activities

Segment 1, The Cherokee Trial of Tears

- Activity: Think about a time when you had to leave your home or leave a close friend. Then write a story or a journal entry describing how you felt and how the experience changed you.

Segment 2, The First Alaskans

- Activity: There are many native Alaskan people in addition to the Athabaskans. Try to learn about as many of them as you can. Form groups to map locations, describe foods, create clothing and build model shelters. Create a class display of as many indigenous Alaskans as possible.

Segment 3, The Nez Perce

- Activity: Create a dictionary of Native American names. List as many tribal names and famous Native Americans as you can. Then research each name on the list. Combine all of your findings into one Native American reference book for your class.
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Discuss how games reflect a culture's beliefs, priorities, and aspects of everyday life.
- Learn about a few games and toys of Native American children.

- Analyze basic elements of a selected Native American tribe in order to apply them to the creation of an original board game that can be played by today's children.

Materials

- *Native Americans* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Monopoly
- Reference materials, including print and Internet resources, about Native American tribes or nations
- Materials for creating a board game, such as construction paper, scissors, markers, rulers, and tag board

Procedures

1. Open the Monopoly board, and ask your students to identify different parts of the game. Talk about the different tokens (such as the race car and top hat), the play money, the houses, and the different places. Ask them to hypothesize why the game's creator, Charles Darrow, might have chosen these items and places for the game. Discuss the goal of the game (to make money, obtain property). How do the items and goals of the game reflect life in America? (Consult the Official Monopoly Game Site at <http://www.hasbro.com/monopoly/pl/page.history/dn/default.cfm> for additional historical information.)
2. Explain that games and toys are a part of many cultures, both past and present. These games can reflect a culture's beliefs, priorities, or general aspects of everyday life. For example, most Native American play was focused on learning skills to prepare children for adult responsibilities. Toys were often miniature replicas of tools, and play imitated adult tasks. However, some Native American games were strictly for fun and chance. To illustrate a Native American game, explain the moccasin game to your class: An object, such as a stone or bean, is hidden under one of two moccasins. The goal is to guess which moccasin is hiding the object. What do we learn about Native American culture from objects used in this game?
3. Introduce any other Native American games you choose as time allows. The resources available at NativeTech: Native American Technology and Art at www.nativetech.org/ may be useful.
4. Tell students that they will be studying a Native American tribe (Cherokee, Nez Perce, or the Athabascans of Alaska), then creating a board game highlighting aspects of life in that tribe. Be sure they understand they are not creating a game that may have been played by that tribe – since they did not play board games – but instead creating a board game for today's children that teaches about that tribe.
5. Next, discuss how a board game might be able to convey information about the culture they studied. Use the following questions and their current knowledge of Native American groups to spark discussion:
 - What could a game board show about life in a Native American tribe or nation?
 - What kinds of tokens might be used to reflect information or ideas about the tribe?



- What would be an appropriate “reward” during the game—like the play money in Monopoly?
 - Your game might include positive events that move a player forward, or negative events that set a player back. Think of a few examples of positive and negative events that were common in Native American tribes. (Such events might be “catching many fish” or “bad draught.”)
 - How could the game objective and rules tell something about life in this tribe?
6. Divide the class into groups of two or three, and assign each group a Native American tribe. Have them use the reference materials to learn about their assigned tribe and answer the following questions:
- HISTORY: What were some major events in their history?
 - ENVIRONMENT: Where did they live? What was their environment like? Describe their location and the geography. What were some of the natural resources?
 - SURVIVAL: What foods did they eat? What kind of clothing did they wear? What kind of homes or shelter did they live in?
 - EDUCATION AND FUN: How did they learn important skills for adulthood? What kinds of arts and crafts did they learn? What kind of games and sports did they play? What kind of music and instruments did they play?
7. Next, challenge your students to create a board game that reflects what they've learned about their assigned tribe. Have them describe the different elements below to explain how their game will work.
- GAME BOARD ELEMENTS (The board should show as many important things about the tribe as possible.):
 - GAME PIECES (Use natural items that would be common among your tribe, such as colored corn kernels or painted pinecone pieces.):
 - GAME OBJECTIVE (The objective should be something that would be important to a member of your tribe.):
 - NUMBER OF PLAYERS:
 - HOW PLAY PROCEEDS:
 - HOW PLAY ENDS:
8. Now have each team build their game and write directions on a piece of paper. If there is enough time, you may want to have them design boxes, too, so that the games can become part of your classroom resources for indoor recess or center time.
9. When the games are completed, have teams exchange their games with two other teams and play each other's games.

Discussion Questions

1. Before you began this lesson, what images came to mind when you hear the term *Native American*? Now that you've learned about a few different tribes, what images come to mind? What are some common misperceptions of Native Americans?
2. Think of two Native American tribes you've learned about. How are they similar? How are they different?
3. What can games show about people, places, and cultures? What are some games that might show something about popular culture in the United States today? What do they show about life in the United States?
4. List 10 things you would want to learn about a group or culture to help you understand it better. How would you describe your own culture using those 10 things?
5. Why do you think many Native American games encouraged children to learn adult responsibilities? How is learning such as this beneficial? What would you enjoy learning in this way?
6. What is the purpose of reservations for Native Americans in the United States today?
7. What are some of the best ways of remembering, preserving, and appreciating Native American cultures?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Student actively participated in the group project; showed strong research skills, finding several relevant facts in all four categories; designed a creative game board and selected appropriate game pieces that clearly reflected life in their tribe; developed clear directions and objective for the game; demonstrated a clear understanding of their Native American tribe.
- 2 points: Student participated somewhat in the group project; showed on-grade research skills, finding some relevant facts all four categories; designed a satisfactory game board and selected game pieces that somewhat reflected life in their tribe; developed complete directions and objective for the game; demonstrated some understanding of their Native American tribe.
- 1 point: Student participated minimally in the group project; showed weak research skills, finding few relevant facts in less than four categories; designed a game board and selected game pieces that did not reflect life in their tribe; developed incomplete or confusing directions and objective for the game; demonstrated little for no understanding of their Native American tribe.

Vocabulary

custom

Definition: A usage or practice common to a particular group of people.



Context: The customs and behaviors of some of the American frontier people were foreign to the Cherokee.

indigenous people

Definition: Some of the indigenous peoples of Alaska were the Athabascans, who had made many adaptations to their native environment.

Context: Native; living naturally in a particular region.

nation

Definition: A tribe or federation of tribes (of American Indians).

Context: The Cherokee nation consists of a number of tribes situated throughout the southern United States.

reservation

Definition: A tract of public land set aside for use by American Indians.

Context: Although land was set aside solely for Native American tribes, these reservations did not often prove sufficient to support the Indian lifestyle.

tribe

Definition: A social group comprising numerous families, clans, or generations that share the same language, customs, and beliefs.

Context: The Nez Perce tribe of Idaho originally lived in a territory of over 17 million acres of what is now Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- History – K-4 History: Understands the people, events, problems, and ideas that were significant in creating the history of their state.
- History – K-4 History: Understands the history of a local community and how communities in North America varied long ago.
- History – United States History: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.
- Geography: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.



The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Time, continuity, and change
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