

Lesson Plan

Objectives

Students will understand the following:

1. The traditional and modern theories about the origins of the first inhabitants of North America.
2. The lifestyles and survival strategies of Native Americans who lived long ago in the students' own geographical area.
3. The manner in which evolving modern theories of human migration are changing the way we look at history and cultivating awareness of racial and cultural stereotypes.

Materials

For this lesson you will need:

- Books and magazines about Native Americans from your school or local public library
- Primary resources (treaties, correspondence, artifacts, contacts for local speakers) and other related materials from your local historical society or the National Park Service – <http://www.nps.gov>
- Large map of North America
- Current and historical maps of your geographic region
- Materials for making posters, models, dioramas
- Optional, but helpful: computer(s) with Internet access; word processing software; creativity software such as Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft PowerPoint, and HyperStudio (see procedure number four, Presentations, for additional suggestions)

Procedures

1. KWL Chart

Divide a piece of large chart paper into three sections: What I Know; What I Want to Know; What I've Learned. The last column will be filled in later. Ask students what facts they know about Native American tribes that lived in their geographic area, and enter their responses in the first column. As you proceed to the second column, explain to the students that they are going to perform some detective work by investigating the lives of the Native American peoples who lived in your area long ago. In addition, they are going to attempt to discover how those people may have migrated to your area. The amount of information available to your students may vary according to the region in which they live, but clues to the past can be found if they look carefully. Have the students brainstorm possible resources that might be useful in their search. Keep your KWL chart posted in the classroom so students can add what they learn from their research to the third column.

2. Cooperative Grouping

Divide the students into groups. Each group will investigate a different aspect of the tribes that lived nearest to you, including lifestyle, clothing, food acquisition, social relationships, religious beliefs and practices, and shelter. At least one group should investigate the traditional and current theories about the migration of people to North America. To ensure equal participation by all group members, have each member pick a job, such as reader, note taker, computer keyboarder, Internet searcher, or reporter to class.

3. Research

Using the print, online, and primary resources available, the students will gather information to share with their classmates about their particular topic. Make sure students take notes with documentation of each resource used so that appropriate citations can be made later. If specific information on tribes in your immediate area is not available, direct students to the best available sources for tribes in your greater region.

4. Presentations

Once information is gathered, students can select a project to present their findings. Here are some suggestions:

- Build housing/village models, dioramas, or three-dimensional relief maps.
- Write and illustrate informative posters.
- Create a pamphlet that describes and illustrates each aspect of the life of Native Americans in your area.
- Mark and label the migratory routes of Native American tribes and dates for various migration theories on a large map of North America or create an informative poster or annotated time line. If there are contradictory theories, students can present both sides and discuss which seems the most likely. Have students attempt to determine when the first Native Americans settled in your area. Was there one group or several waves?
- Create a “museum” of artifacts that relate to the research. Depending on what students can find, the museum can be an actual shelf or table set up in the classroom or a virtual museum composed of relevant visuals found on the Internet and CD-ROMs combined with student annotation.

To add a technology component to the student projects, students can undertake one of the following:

- Make an illustrated PowerPoint or HyperStudio presentation.
- Write and produce a one-act play that showcases the research findings.
- Write a storybook to teach younger students about Native American life or migration using creativity software (KidPix, KidWorks Studio, or Ultimate Writing and Creativity Center for younger students; ClarisWorks or Microsoft Publisher for older students).

Journey Into Mohawk Country

- Publish a mock historical newspaper that reports on Native American migration on the North American continent. (Any of the software mentioned above would be useful for setting up the newspaper.)

Make sure to provide plenty of time for students to present their research and projects to the rest of the class. You may wish to extend their audience by inviting other classes to visit your classroom or by planning a night for families to visit.

5. Follow-up Discussion

The questions that follow will help students understand the issues underlying their research and examine ways in which American culture's assumptions about and stereotypes of Native American life have had an impact in the past and the present. Students can discuss or debate some of the conflicting theories about the earliest North American migrations as well as the political and social issues involving Native Americans. Subjects such as treaty disputes, discrimination against Native Americans, insensitive treatment of Native American burial grounds, and the practice of using tribal names for sports teams can provide stimulating discussions. If they had the opportunity to rewrite history, how might your students have treated the Indians differently? Ask them to predict what the outcome today might have been if we could rewrite history. Perhaps your students' newfound understanding from their research and discussion will help them to have an impact on the future.

Adaptations

As a class, examine ways in which the American culture's assumptions and stereotypes about Native American life have impacted the past and the present. List some of the issues that arise in your discussion, which may include:

- Conflicting theories about the earliest North American migrations
- Disputes about Native American treaties
- Discrimination against Native Americans
- Insensitive treatment of Native American burial grounds
- The practice of using tribal names for sports teams

After your initial discussion, ask students to choose one issue to research further. Have them write a brief summary of the issue, considering the impact it has on the Native Americans. How would they solve the issue?

Discussion Questions

1. How did the Native Americans in your area adapt to the local environment? Compare and contrast their adaptations in the past with the adaptations citizens in your environment might have to make today. Discuss ways in which each culture has adapted the most to nature and ways in which each has tried to make nature adapt to it. Which is the best course? What evidence can you supply to support your evaluation? On what cultural values are you basing your assessment?

Journey Into Mohawk Country

2. If there were no electricity or other sources of power, how prepared would you be to survive? How could you find food? Build shelter? Survive the winter? What are the five most important resources you would like to have at home if you were to have an extended power outage? Justify your choices.
3. Why do you think the practice of naming sports teams after Native American tribes persists in American society, even though many Native Americans have expressed their displeasure about it? Why do you think they object to the practice? Should society change, or should the Native American minority accept the wishes of the majority?
4. On occasion, archaeologists have dug up the remains of ancient Native Americans. Should scientists be allowed to study these remains? Native Americans feel such remains should be immediately reburied according to Native American customs. Scientists worry that if remains are reburied, they deteriorate and lose their value for present and future scientific study. Are there other options for treatment of these remains? Would it make a difference to you if these were the remains of your ancestors? Why? Defend your point of view.
5. Given the treaties the U.S. government has made with Native Americans, should they as a people have some rights that are different from those of other Americans? Defend your point of view with facts.
6. Decide whether Native American tribes should be compensated for the broken treaties, damage, and disruption they have suffered since Europeans arrived in America. Defend your view.