

COMMON CORE CURRICULUM MAPS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS


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Clues to a Culture

This six-week unit focuses on clues to Native American nations/cultures as revealed through pairings of literature and informational text.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION



How does literature provide clues to a culture?

[Standards Checklist](#)

OVERVIEW

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This unit begins with students collectively defining and discussing the word “culture.” Next, students compare nineteenth century America from the Ojibway point of view in *The Birchbark House* to depictions in texts such as *Little House on the Prairie* and *If You Were a Pioneer on the Prairie*. In order to glean the similarities and differences across nations, students read trickster stories and informational text, as well as listen to music and examine art from a variety of Native American cultures. Class discussions should reinforce awareness of how someone's perspective can effect how they view events and people. Authors and poets have often portrayed perspective in literature; therefore, it is essential to remain open to changing one's understanding of perspectives during this unit and for the rest of the year. This unit ends with an open-ended reflective essay response to the essential question.

FOCUS STANDARDS

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These Focus Standards have been selected for the unit from the Common Core State Standards.

- **RL.5.1:** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **RI.5.1:** Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **RI.5.7:** Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- **RF.5.4:** Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- **RF.5.4 (c):** Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.
- **W.5.1:** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- **SL.5.3:** Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.
- **L.5.1:** Observe conventions of grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- **L.5.1 (c):** Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions.
- **L.5.1 (d):** Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.
- **L.5.4:** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 5 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- **L.5.4 (c):** Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation and determine or clarify the precise meaning of key words and phrases.

[Common Core State Standards, ELA](#) (1.5 MB)

SUGGESTED STUDENT OBJECTIVES

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- Define “culture.”
- Compare fiction and nonfiction books about Native American nations to pioneer times in America.
- Create a multimedia presentation on a Native American nation of choice.
- Write responses to a variety of literature and poetry.
- Find similarities and differences in trickster tales from various cultures.
- Participate in group discussions.

SUGGESTED WORKS

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(E) indicates a CCSS exemplar text; (EA) indicates a text from a writer with other works identified as exemplars.

LITERARY TEXTS

Note: The list of Native American nations below is illustrative—not comprehensive; please choose a local nation to examine in a similar manner.

Stories

- *The Birchbark House* (Louise Erdrich) (E)
- *Little House on the Prairie* (Laura Ingalls Wilder and Garth Williams) (EA)
- *Knots on a Counting Rope* (John Archambault, Bill Martin, Jr., and Ted Rand)
- *Dreamcatcher* (Audrey Osofsky and Ed Young)
- *Walk Two Moons* (Sharon Creech)
- *Guests* (Michael Dorris)
- *A Boy Called Slow* (Joseph Bruchac and Rocco Baviera)
- *Julie of the Wolves* (Jean Craighead George and John Schoenherr)
- *Island of the Blue Dolphins* (Scott O’Dell)
- *Sign of the Beaver* (Elizabeth George Speare)

Trickster Tales

- *Trickster Tales: Forty Folk Stories from Around the World* (World Storytelling) (Josepha Sherman)
- *How Rabbit Tricked Otter: And Other Cherokee Trickster Stories* (Gayle Ross and Murv Jacob)
- *A Ring of Tricksters: Animal Tales from North America, the West Indies, and Africa* (Virginia Hamilton and Barry Moser) (EA)
- *Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest* (Gerald McDermott)
- *Coyote: A Trickster Tale from the American Southwest* (Gerald McDermott)

Poems

- “Dream Catchers” (Ojibwa, Traditional)
- “You are Part of Me” (Cherokee, Lloyd Carl Owle)

Speeches

- “I will fight no more forever” (Chief Joseph the Younger [Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-keht], October 5, 1877)

Additional Sources

Native American Indian Legends and Folklore (Native Languages of the Americas)

INFORMATIONAL TEXTS

Informational Text

- *A History of US: The New Nation, 1789-1859* (Book 4) (Joy Hakim) (E)
- *A History of US: First Americans, Prehistory-1600* (Book 1) (Joy Hakim) (E)
- *If You Were a Pioneer on the Prairie* (If You...Series) (Anne Kamma and James Watling)
- *Black Frontiers: A History of African-American Heroes in the Old West* (Lillian Schlissel)
- *If You Lived with the Cherokee* (If You...Series) (Peter and Connie Roop and Kevin Smith)
- *If You Lived with the Sioux Indians* (If You...Series) (Ann McGovern and Jean Syverud Drew)
- *You Wouldn’t Want to be an American Pioneer! A Wilderness You’d Rather Not Tame* (You Wouldn’t Want To... Series) (Jacqueline Morley and David Antram)
- *The Nez Perce* (Scholastic, A True Book) (Stefanie Takacs)

Informational Text (Read Aloud)

- *Sequoyah: The Cherokee Man Who Gave His People Writing* (James Rumford)

ART, MUSIC, AND MEDIA**Art**

Apache:

- Edward S. Curtis, *Apache Still Life* (1907)
- artist unknown, *San Juan, A Mescalero Apache Chief* (no date)
- Noah H. Rose, *View of two Native American Apache women outside their cloth-covered wickiups in a camp in Arizona* (1880)

Hopi:

- *wooden Hopi Kachina doll* (1925)
- *Hopi Girl with Jar* (no date)
- Edward Curtis, *East Side of Walpi* (1921)

Haida:

- *Haida mask* (1879)
- Bill Hupe, *Dedication Potlach: The Honoring of Ancient Traditions* (2006)
- *Indian Village Alaska* (1897)

Music

- Thomas Vennum, *Ojibway Music from Minnesota: A Century of Song for Voice and Drum*
- Native American music (for a local nation)

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES AND ASSESSMENTS

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Class Discussion

What is meant by the word “culture”? For which elements does one look when learning about a culture? Write your ideas down on a Post-It note and “**Give one, get one.**” (*Teacher Notes: Answers may include: language, social organization, customs/traditions, arts, religion, symbols, etc.*) Let’s create a class chart of elements to look for, and we will look to find examples in texts read during this unit. (SL.5.1a, b, c, d)

Literature Response

The Birchbark House by Louise Erdrich is described as a realistic and sympathetic portrayal of a Native American culture during the period of westward expansion. Compare pioneer life as presented from Omakayas’ perspective in *The Birchbark House* with Laura’s perspective in *Little House on the Prairie* by Laura Ingalls Wilder or *If You Were a Pioneer on the Prairie* by Anne Kamma and James Watling. Choose an event in the story and write about what surprised you the most about Omakayas’ experience. (RL.5.1)

Literature Response

The title of Sharon Creech’s book *Walk Two Moons* comes from the Native American phrase, “Don’t judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins.” What have you learned about the Native American nation studied? Turn and talk with a neighbor about this prompt before responding in your journal. (RL.5.1)

Multimedia Presentation

Read all you can about a Native American nation, drawing on information from multiple print or digital sources. Write a short informative/explanatory piece about your nation of choice, quoting accurately from the texts. Publish it and present it in a multimedia format to the class. (RI.5.1, RL.5.1, RI.5.7, RI.5.8, W.5.2a, b, c, d, e, RF.5.4b, c, L.5.1a, b, c, d, L.5.2a, b)

Poetry Response

Sharon Creech uses sound imagery, often linked to personification, throughout her novel (*Walk Two Moons*). Find an example of how these literary techniques were used to increase the feeling of being part of the story, mark it with a Post-It note, and share it with a partner. (RF.5.4c)

Opinion Statements

Consider the speech of Chief Joseph the Younger (“I will fight no more forever”). In your opinion, do you think he needed to be consoled or encouraged to go on? Write your position on a Post-It note, and your teacher will divide the class based on your position. Share ideas with classmates who are of the same opinion. Then, individually write your response in your journal. Work with classmates to revise and edit your opinion statement to make sure your position is supported. Publish your position on a classroom blog to encourage additional conversation. (SL.5.3, W.5.1a, b, c, d, e, W.5.6, L.5.1a, b, c, d, L.5.2a, b)

Class Discussion

We will discuss how trickster stories can reveal insights into a culture different from your own. What did you learn about the nation from the trickster story we’ve just read? What does a story/poem reveal about a culture that reading

solely from an informational text does not? Write your ideas down in your journal prior to class discussion. (RL.5.9, SL.5.3)

Class Discussion

Why do tricksters ignore conventional cultural behavior? Why are these characters often personifications and not human? What impact does culture have on the tale? Talk with a classmate to share ideas and then write your favorite ideas down in your journal prior to class discussion. (RL.5.9)

Word Study

As an individual and as a class, keep an index card file of words studied (e.g., tribe, tribute; nation, nationality, nationwide, culture, cultural, etc.). Keeping the words on index cards will help you when we sort words by prefix, suffix, root words, meaning, etc. How do the prefixes and suffixes help us understand the meaning of the words while changing the part of speech? (Note: This will be an ongoing activity all year long.) (RI.5.6, L.5.4a, b, c)

Music/Art Appreciation

Discuss how art and music can provide an insight into a culture. From which do you prefer to learn? Why? Your teacher may ask you to write your own response on Post-It notes, on a white board, or in your journal before discussing as a class. (SL.5.1a, b, c, d)

Reflective Essay

Write an essay response to the essential question ("How does literature provide clues to a culture?") Your teacher may give you the opportunity to "Give one, get one" before writing your response. (W.9a, b, W.5.4, W.5.7, L.5.1a, b, c, d, L.5.2a, b)

Essay/Art Connection

View the works from one of the selected tribes. What can we learn about this tribe through viewing these images? Ask the students to write an essay describing what they have learned by viewing the objects.

Extension/Art Connection

Divide students into small groups and have each group select one tribe under study. Students will be given original images of the objects, clothing, and housing of the tribe. Have students locate other images to add to this group. Image collection will lead into a more involved research project, to include an essay and presentation to the class.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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[November is National American Indian Heritage Month](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.5.9)

Note: Engage your students in an exploration of Native American heritage through a study of Native American pourquoi tales.

[Native Americans Today](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RI.5.7)

Note: In this lesson plan, teachers use photo essays and other texts to introduce students to Native American children and their families, thereby countering the idea that Native people no longer exist.

[Culture Clues Expedition](#) (National Geographic) (RI.5.7)

Note: Students use visual clues to determine the cultural make-up of their own community.

[Teaching Point of View with *Two Bad Ants*](#) (ReadWriteThink) (RL.5.6)

Note: This lesson provides students with the opportunity to use illustrations and text to develop an understanding of the point of view of the characters.

[Life of a Navajo Weaver](#) (ArtsEdge, The Kennedy Center)

[Native American Chants and Movement](#) (ArtsEdge, The Kennedy Center)

[Countries and their Cultures](#) (EveryCulture.Com)

Native American Art (David Penny)

Note: This book demonstrates how clothes, baskets, Navajo weavings, Hopi kachina dolls, jewelry, quillwork, pottery, carvings and ceremonial objects fit into various Native American societies.

TERMINOLOGY

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- personification
- perspective
- point of view
- sound imagery

- trickster tale

MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

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This unit teaches:

- **History/geography:**
 - Native American cultures (e.g., Great Basin and Plateau, Northern and Southern Plains, Pacific Northwest, etc.) and famous Native Americans (e.g., Chief Joseph the Younger)
 - Life in the American west (e.g., the transcontinental railroad, pioneers, wagon trains, etc.)

This unit could be extended to teach:

- **History/geography:**
 - Where different Native Americans tribes lived (e.g., Great Basin and Plateau, Northern and Southern Plains, Pacific Northwest, etc.), and how the shelters, clothing, and artwork varied based upon geography
 - Conflicts between Native Americans and European settlers (e.g., American Government Policies, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Sand Creek Massacre, Little Big Horn: Wounded Knee, etc.)
 - Native American nations or famous Native Americans (e.g., Tecumseh, Osceola, Sacagawea, Sequoyah, etc.)
 - Westward Expansion before the Civil War (e.g., Lewis and Clark, Daniel Boone, Wilderness Trail, Erie Canal, Pony Express, etc.)

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