

AIH-14: Changes to American Indian Cultures

Summary

Students will understand American Indian cultures and changes caused by European exploration in North America

Group Size

Small Groups

Materials

Online Videos

Many Tribes

[56k Modem](#) | [Broadband](#)

Background for Teachers

This is the first of three lessons in the Eighth Grade American Indian History Lesson Plan Unit:
AIH-14: Changes to American Indian Cultures

- [AIH-15: Colony Settlement & American Indian Involvement](#)
- [AIH-16: Effect of Revolutionary War on American Indians](#)

Culture Discussion Ideas by Brenda D. Francis, M.A.

Questions for students:

What do you think culture is?

Define material and non-material culture for the class, explaining differences and giving examples.

Definitions:

Material culture: Items you can touch and/or see. Clothing, shelter, food, books, medicine, written records, tools, art, etc.

Non-material culture: Items you cannot touch and/or see and which, if not recorded in some way, would be lost to archeologists in the future. Religion, language, and oral traditions.

Culture must always have a date; you cannot discuss culture without attaching a date to it, because the culture of a given group of people changes with time. This becomes obvious with the discussion points below.

Discuss the following:

Name some things that you think are part of modern American material culture. [answers may vary from Nike or Skecher shoes, to pizza, hamburgers, apple pie, American Flag, blue jeans, the Internet, Star Wars, etc.]

Name some things that are non-material American culture. [prom night, Halloween, English language, religion, etc.]

Name some items, material or non-material, which are not associated generally with American culture. Note that it may not be impossible to find examples of these in the United States, but that they are very uncommon here, and are likely to be associated with other cultures and/or other countries. [bagpipes, communism, Buddhism, boomerang, Afrikaans or Arabic language, etc.]

Name some cultural items from America's past (ask the students to name items from a specific time period, such as Colonial, American Revolution, Civil War, Depression, etc.). Talk about how different the culture from that time period is versus the culture today.

What is American Indian culture? [There answers may vary widely and will most likely be inaccurate, stereotypical, or outdated. Answers may include Indian (or Navajo) tacos, powwows,

drums, teepees, hogans, buffalo, moccasins, braided hair, feathers in a headband, buckskin dresses, loincloths, scalping, beadwork, etc.]

Lead a discussion with the students about American Indian culture—that it was not and is not the same across the continent. When European explorers came to the American continent, there were literally hundreds of tribal groups whose material cultures varied widely, dependent upon the environment in which they lived, the natural resources available, etc. The non-material cultures were also very different from one another. There were hundreds of languages and dialects spoken on this continent, many oral traditions, and different religions and creation stories.

This is the point of the Panel Discussions. When the students are divided into research groups, they will learn about the different cultures that were present on the American continent and be able to present what they learned from their research. They should be able to provide examples of American Indian cultures, both material and non-material. From their research, the students should learn that the modern American Indian cultures are still quite diverse from one another, and that many of the cultural items associated with American Indians are actually limited to very specific tribes and/or areas of the country. The students should also understand that the American Indian cultures from 200 years ago were drastically different from what we see today, just as American culture has changed dramatically since Colonial times.

Student Prior Knowledge

Introduction:

People walked upon the face of the land known as the United States of America long before it was a country. Some archeologists estimate that the first inhabitants arrived 40,000 years ago, and others 13,000 years, before the present day. Many American children are taught about Christopher Columbus discovering America and the First Thanksgiving at Jamestown. Yet, this is not the correct history. As so the history now unfolds.

The Indians that inhabited the lands of the Americas learned of this great land by experience. They were eclectic biologists and scientists in their own right. They knew of the waters, the trees, and the various animals. They tilled the earth, grew food, and walked the paths through this great land. It was their homeland. They were the first people to inhabit this land. Their history is one of pride, sacredness, and knowledge of the land. Learning this history requires a look into their past, their trials, and the story of the days when others came to their land and began to change the face of their world forever. However, some of their traditional cultural values, ethics, and sacred beliefs exist to this day.

This unit is an attempt to help children understand the first people of this land and develop an even greater appreciation for their diversity, culture, and the generations whose hands helped forge this land and were pivotal in the building of this nation.

Some general information about American Indians:

Today there are many terms that describe the people who first inhabited this land. There is conflict about what to call these people. Part of the problem is that they are not one people, but many. Traditional names translated from their native languages generally mean "the People." Yet, they are called Native Americans, American Indians, First People, aboriginal and Indigenous People, and by a very general term "Indian." The word "Indian" is wrongly used, in its application as a term, which collectively designates tribal groups as "one people." Christopher Columbus' erroneous geography and impression that he had landed among the islands off Asia led him to call the peoples he met "los Indios." His casual use of the term "Indios" in his letters introduced the New World to European populations; thus, similar words in other European languages evolved, such as the French "Indien," the German "Indianer," the English "Indian." Subsequent usage of the term "Indian" for the New World's inhabitants evoked descriptive

words as "savages," "infidels," and "heathens." However, Europeans had limited contact with groups of people with such diverse cultures and languages.

Initial establishment of the imagery of the "Indian," like the word itself, came from the pens of Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci. Such imagery and stereotypes have prevailed to the present through inaccurate written accounts and Hollywood movies. Each Indian tribe has its own language, which is different from those of other tribes; its own history and origins; its own customs (social and spiritual); its own traditional dances; its own styles of clothing; its own foods; its own values; its own culture; its own spiritual beliefs and practices; its own life styles; and its own tribal governments. Most tribes also have an extended family system.

Indian tribes are not one people, although many tribal philosophies and concepts are similar—e.g., nearly every tribe's beliefs have reference to a Supreme Being; refer to the earth as "Mother Earth" and sky as "Father Sky"; have a belief that all things in creation must have balance and harmony; and have respect for all animals, sea life, and birds, and for all things.

There were 560 federally recognized Indian tribes and bands, as of January 2000, in the forty-eight mainland United States of America. Alaska has the Aleuts, Eskimos, and Athapascan tribal groups that number 229. But there are perhaps 300 more Native Entities in Alaska which, while eligible to receive services, are not federally recognized as tribes/nations.

Indian tribal groups also exist in Canada, Mexico, Central America, and South America. Tribes of the Caribbean were mostly destroyed by diseases that the Europeans brought, and the remaining Caribbean tribal peoples intermarried with the French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and black slaves.

There are 378 treaties which the U.S. government entered into with Indian tribes, the first being the treaty with the Delawares (September 17, 1778) and last the agreement with the Columbia and Colville (July 7, 1883).

There are 292 reservations, rancherias, and pueblos. These land areas are held in trust under the United States Department of Interior.

Today there are many new findings about the Indians. Science is linking peoples and their migrations as far away as Siberia. Someday these links to the past may open up explorations of where the native peoples really came from. Does the theory of the Bering Strait link peoples of two continents? Do the glaciers of Alaska hold secrets? What about connections with the people of South America? We are now in the process of interweaving cultures, people, and evidence that in the near future might establish these connections.

Instructional Procedures

Essential Question 1: How were American Indian tribes/nations different from each other?

Students are divided into teacher-chosen groups to study and research an American Indian tribe or nation in order to become culturally knowledgeable about their assigned tribe. Students will then become a panel of experts. The cultural identifiers should be pre-Columbus. Cultural identifiers include, but are not limited to, food, shelter, societal structure, clothing, weaponry, language, population size, geographic location, government structure, religion, and traditions.

Online Videos

Many Tribes

[56k Modem](#) | [Broadband](#)

Sources:

Waldman, Carl. *Atlas of the North American Indian*. New York : Checkmark Books, 2000.
Chapter 3, "Indian Lifeways"; see especially the following subtopics:

The Indian Culture Areas, pp. 32-35
Arts and Technology, pp. 52-60
Clothing and Ornaments, pp. 60-61
Transportation, pp. 61-64
Intertribal Trade, pp. 64-66
Religion, pp. 66-68
Sociopolitical Organization, pp. 75-76
Languages, pp. 76-80

Lepoure, Jill. "First Encounters", pp.33; "The Great Debate", pp.75, *Encounters in the New World: A History in Documents*.

Essential Question 2: How did European encroachment affect American Indian land and population? Show and discuss population and movement as shown on maps and charts.

Source:

Waldman, Carl. *Atlas of the North American Indian*. New York : Checkmark Books, 2000.

See maps located on the following pages:

- p. 198: Growth of United States by region and appropriation of Indian lands.
- p. 200: Indian land cessions in the United States by region and date.
- p. 201: Indian land cessions in the United States by tribe.
- p. 202: Indian reservations of the West in 1890.
- p. 222: Contemporary Indian lands in the United States .

Essential Question 3: Why did American Indian lands decrease?

Assign source material for groups to do presentations. Divide class into five groups, each researching the same sources but looking for evidence of their factor. Five factors are: religion, greed, gold, conquest, trade

Sources:

Portilla, Miguel Leon. *The Broken Spears*. Beacon Press, 1992.

- [Native Americans](#)

<http://www.americanwest.com/pages/indians.htm>

- [Spanish Exploration and Conquest of Native America](#)

<http://www.floridahistory.com/>

- [American Indian Heritage and World View](#)

<http://www.jqjacobs.net/writing/intgrstd.html#conquest>

- [Genocide of the American Indian Peoples](#)

<http://free.freespeech.org/americanstateterrorism/usgenocide/IndianPeoples.html>

Essential Question 4: How were American Indian cultures affected by European contact and encroachment?

From teacher lecture notes and a student search of listed resources or those individually found on the internet, students will create a slide show, collage, or other visual representation of their research related to the above question.

Sources:

Waldman, Carl. *Atlas of the North American Indian*. New York: Checkmark Books, 2000. See pp. 66-70 of Chapter 3, "Indian Lifeways."

Utter, Jack. *American Indians: Answers to Today's Questions*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2001.

Lecture notes regarding Culture: Culture Discussion Ideas

Essential Question 5: How were Utah's American Indian tribes affected by European contact?

Teacher lecture and discussion with students.

Sources:

Cuch, Forrest, S., ed. *A History of Utah's American Indians*. Utah State University Press, 2000.

See pp. 18-26 of *Setting the Stage: Native America Revisited*.

Trimble, Stephen. *The People*. School of Research Press, 1993. See pp. 330-350, "The Coming of the Mormons," "Salvaging Homes."

- [Hanksville](#)

www.hanksville.org

(Go to Nations) see Ute, Goshute, Paiute, Shoshone, Navajo

- [Canku Ota](#)

<http://www.turtletrack.org/>

(Go to Canku Ota) information on Goshute

Essential Question 6: How did the Spanish entrance into Utah affect the American Indian tribes living here?

Teacher can begin the discussion with students about the statue of the American Indian at the Utah State Capitol Building and why he was chosen. Have students begin individual research prior to the class discussion with an assignment from the teacher. The question can also be rephrased: "Where has the statue of the American Indian been moved, and why? "

Refer students to:

- [Hanksville](#)

<http://www.hanksville.org/>

Search the web for Spanish influence on Utah Tribes.

- [Utah State History - History to Go](#)

http://historytogo.utah.gov/utah_chapters/american_indians/utahsfirstpeople.html

Assessment Plan

Essential Question 1: Assessment

Class asks questions of the panel of students who have become culturally knowledgeable on each assigned tribe/nation.

Essential Question 2: Assessment

Show on a [map](#) the changes in Indian-held lands by 1492, 1700, 1850, and the present day.

Essential Question 3: Assessment

Group presentation of five factors which led to decreases in Indian land (from Indian perspective).

Essential Question 4: Assessment

Multi-media presentation (which can be any of the following: slide show, poster, role-playing, collage, art work, virtual reality museum, timeline chart).

Essential Question 5: Assessment

Teacher-led discussion/review with Utah emphasis.

Essential Question 6: Assessment

The students will be able to write an essay or give an oral report on one of the five Utah tribes and how the Spanish affected their lives.

Bibliography

Utah State Office of Education

Social Studies Enhancement Committee

American Indian History

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