

Sacred Images - Development of Cultural Understanding

Summary

Students will develop appreciation and respect for the uniqueness of Native American culture. They will identify the contributions of Native American culture to Utah. They will learn about the four ways to evaluate rock art.

Time Frame

4 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

Materials

Book

- *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art*
- *Intrigue of the Past*
(Smith, Moe, Letts, Paterson 1992)

Background for Teachers

Students will be given a handout that contains excerpts from *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art* which describes four distinct ways to evaluate rock art. These include spiritual/mythological, historical, cultural/ceremonial and universal. These methods of interpretation are not separate entities; they are interrelated and overlap.

Spiritual/Mythological - This includes transcendent experiences, dreams, and spiritual practices.

2.

Mae Perry, Northwest Shoshoni, p. 23 "My grandfather's name was Dabootzi, which means cottontail rabbit. And he was the best storyteller. He was really amazing. And it was through him we learned about rockwriting...He told us about this thing called Puhadibop. Puha means a spiritual type of power; dibop means writer; somebody that wrote Puhadibop. He told us these writings are not done by Indians. They are done by beings with spiritual powers and they tell us stories of all kinds-- stories of their travels, their beliefs. But{he cautioned} don't let anyone tell you they are done by humans because they are not. They are done by somebody greater than a human. 'Look at some of these writings,' he said. 'They are {placed} high up in the mountains where no man can reach. Only these spiritual beings can go that high.'

Reverend Quentin Kolb, Northern Ute, p. 25 "What struck me was that there was an eerie feeling about many of these figures. They were very tall and ghostly, which was impressive and scary...I felt they represented spirits or forces within the community that had been responsible for the pictures being there in the first place. In other words, I felt they were supernatural."

Clifford Duncan, Northern Ute, p. 47 "Some of these symbols were not put on the rock by human hands. A spiritual being came into this world and put them there for those who want to connect themselves with that spiritual world."

Historical - includes documenting, preserving, and recounting the journeys of the people. It includes the oral tradition with the rockwriting, a written tradition.

4.

Wilfred Numkena, Hopi, p. 50 "To us what is known as rock art is not art. It is a documentation of spiritual events that happened at various sites. It's also a documentation of what clans migrated throughout various regions that are embraced by the Hopi migrations. So when we as Hopi come upon a so called rock art site, we recognize the images on the panels because a majority of the symbols there we still use... With regard to the Hopi migrations, each group or family that migrated was instructed to document through images on rock panels who they are, why they settled there, where they went, and to give indication of important events, spiritual and secular that took place at the site."

Roland McCook, Northern Ute, p.109 "When I was a kid, I saw rock art created during the {last} warrior period. It was probably put there soon after the 1881 removal of the Ute's from Colorado. It showed Indians on horseback, trains coming from Price, Utah and Grand Junction, Colorado. This was all really new to the people so they would draw it on the rocks."

Herchel Talahoma, Raymond Puhuyesva, and other elders of the Hopi Tribe, p. 52

"Representing a man and a woman--symbolically humanity -- along with two ears of corn, this panel denotes the essence of the Hopi life plan. It says that the role of the male and the female is the perpetuation of human life, and, that in order to fulfill this, humanity has to show utmost respect for the natural environment so that nature, in return, can support life through such blessings as corn...On the left side of the panel is the symbol of the Reed Clan -- the quail, and the Greasewood Clan -- the roadrunner. This confirms traditional knowledge that these clans migrated through the region."

Cultural/Ceremonial - includes the places to go to acquire connection to the spiritual (fasting, vision quests, etc.)

6.

Mae Perry, Northwest Shoshone, p. 83 "Many of our people went to the rock writings for medicine. If somebody had been sick a long time and wanted to be healed, people took him to the rock writings and left him there. This person would ask for the spirit to come and heal him. A lot of times they would get that blessing and be healed."

Darrell Gardner Sr., Northern Ute, p. 18 "I can't speak for everybody. But I was taught that when you go to these sites for your medicine, you thank the Grandfathers, the creator, for that power there, and ask them for some help along the way, on your trail, and thank them if they give you something, and thank them if they don't give you something...There are certain spots on this earth where you can get that. I guess, over the last few thousand years we've found those spots that have a little more going for them. And those are the ones we've picked to fast at."

Larry Cesspooch, Northern Ute, p. 103 "And {what turned it around} for me was realizing that the people who put these stories on the rocks are no different than me when I produce a video. They were storytellers in their own right. But they used the rocks. And just as I pray over a production before I start, asking that it be something positive, they probably did the same thing. I saved a bit of my sandwich and a few chips, and, after I finished eating, I went out to pray and talk to them...I gave {the chips and sandwich} as an offering."

Universal - These symbols belong to all human beings. We are on some level all connected. The founders of psychotherapy, especially Carl Jung, speak of the collective unconscious and shared humanity with global connections.

8.

Melvin Brewster, Northern Paiute, P. 76 "All I know is that in the course of my job {as a BLM archeologist} I would do anything to honor this area's tribes and these images. But I also honor the needs of whites who are sincerely drawn to these sites. I honor them because of what some old people told me. They said 'Those petroglyphs are there to heal people. When these white people go to them, they become happier. Some white people spend there whole lives looking at

them, and it makes them feel better. It makes their lives more meaningful. So even though they are white, those rocks are healing them.' So I don't consider these people a threat. Their interpretations may be out of this world. But the rock art is making them happy, making their lives meaningful: in a way, curing them."

Larry Cesspooch, Northern Ute, p. 112, "In the case of the rock writing, the {ancient} storyteller didn't find any rock and start to work. He knew what he was going to say, then found the right rock. And I believe in finding this rock he would as {the Creator} for direction. Like any of us, we'd be driving along the road and say, 'It's right here somewhere. I sense it's right here and where I should do this.' You go to the next cliffs and rocks and suddenly realize -- right here, this is the one. Then you would tell your story on that rock. But the thing to remember is that these rocks are no different that us human beings. They have a purpose, too, and that rock said to him: "I am the one." And the storyteller had to be open to that. The same way he received his stories, he had to be aware of that... But what I would suggest is that you talk with them, ask them to help you tell their story,..And that's where the impact of this experience is. And as long as you ask for something positive, that's what you will get."

Student Prior Knowledge

Review the rock art lesson Rock Art: Identify Geographic Characteristic of Utah prior to teaching this lesson. This give give the students background information for this lesson.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Through the study of rock art students will learn about the four ways of interpreting Native American rock art leads to a greater understanding of their culture and the history of Utah.

Instructional Procedures

Activity: Developing Cultural Understanding Through Analysis of Native American Rock Art

Students will be taught four interrelated methods for evaluating rock art from the excerpts from *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art*.

Students will examine various photographs of rock art and analyze the rock art from each of the four perspectives. They will answer the questions: Who created the rock art? Why was it created and for what purpose?

Students will break up into small groups of five and each group will select one of the four ways of interpreting the rock art.

Each group will research why this viewpoint is correct.

Each group will spend a class period defending their position in front of the class. This will take a format like a debate.

Activity: Identify the reasons it is important to preserve Native American Rock Art

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Using the four examples described above: spiritual, historical, ceremonial/cultural, and interpretive, why is it important for us to preserve the rock art? Give spiritual reasons, historical, ceremonial and universal.

Authors

[JOYCE KELEN](#)