

How the Miss Navajo Competition Reflects the...

Summary

The student will be able to understand how the skills necessary to win the Miss Navajo competition reflect the ingenuity and culture of the Navajo people.

Time Frame

2 class periods of 30 minutes each

Materials

Teacher Materials

- [At a Glance: The Miss Navajo Pageant and Navajo Culture](#) (pdf)

Video: [We Shall Remain: The Navajo](#)

"Crowning Miss Navajo," *New York Times Magazine*, October 8, 2006, available online at <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20001008mag-phenomenon.html>.

Student Materials

- [Rosita Isaac's Miss Navajo Experience](#) (pdf)

Background for Teachers

The Miss Navajo Pageant, which began in 1952, demonstrates the ingenuity of the Navajo people. The Navajo Nation has adapted the Euro-American idea of a "pageant" into a competition that gives Navajo young women an opportunity to demonstrate traditional and contemporary skills and their understanding of Navajo language, culture, history, government, and contemporary issues. It is one important way the Navajo people are preserving their culture and transmitting it to new generations.

Instructional Procedures

Ask the students to think about what a pageant is. Have them write a paragraph or two about the qualities it might take to win a pageant and what winning a pageant represents.

Using the information provided in the teacher background, and/or if possible, video from the *Miss Navajo* documentary, introduce the students to the Miss Navajo pageant. Emphasize that the competition is based on knowledge and skills important in Navajo culture.

Give the students a copy of the "Crowning Miss Navajo" article and the Rosita Isaac Oral History.

Using these materials, have the students write an essay, or create an oral presentation, about what positive contributions such a pageant might have for both the young women participating in it and for the Navajo people as a whole.

Extensions

If possible, obtain a copy of the PBS Independent Lens Documentary *Miss Navajo*, and have the class view it.

Have students research one of the traditional skills tested in the Miss Navajo competition. Have them write a report about why that skill is important to the history, culture, and heritage of the Navajo people.

Have the students draw, and/or describe, a pageant crown that reflects their own, or Utah's, culture and heritage the way the Miss Navajo crown reflects the Navajo culture, including appropriate historical and cultural symbolism.

Assessment Plan

Discussion contributions

Writing assignments

[End of Unit Assessment](#)

Bibliography

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Miss Navajo. DVD. Directed by Billy Luther. 2006. Re-released, New York: Cinema Guild, 2007.

The University of Utah's [American West Center](#) (AWC) produced the curriculum materials in consultation with the [Utah Division of Indian Affairs](#), [Utah State Office of Education](#), [KUED 7](#), and the Goshute, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Ute nations.

Authors

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