

Utilizing American Indian Resources from the Library of Congress

Are you looking for primary resources to support your ongoing Indian Education for All efforts? Check out these excellent resources from the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress offers free classroom materials to help teachers effectively use primary sources from the Library's vast digital collections in their teaching.

A sample lesson plan for how to utilize these resources is included in this document.

Historical and primary documents – including letters, newspaper articles, treaties, journals, photographs, census reports, cartoons, and government documents – reflect the social, political, and cultural contexts in which they were created. Close examination of these resources can reveal the biases and prejudices of their creators and historical contexts. These documents can be used in the classroom to examine the prevalence of certain biases at particular eras in American history and to investigate how such views influenced public policies, institutions, and people's lives.

Educators can teach students how to assess primary and historical documents for bias by asking students to examine critically the language, perspective, values, and objectives present in these documents as well as to identify what has been omitted, denigrated, or de-valued. By investigating historical biases, students can make connections between the biases prevalent at a certain era (as revealed in historical documents) and the events they precipitated. Students will develop a greater awareness of how biases have shaped American society, policies, and institutions and understand the subsequent impacts on American Indians. Understanding the development and impacts of historical prejudices and other biases in the United States is a critical part of acquiring a more accurate and comprehensive picture of our national history and our present circumstances.

Resources Available from the Library of Congress

Teaching with Primary Resources

Native Americans

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/native-americans/>

Gather information on American Indian leaders and culture. Study essays, music, maps, and images related to the treatment and portrayal of American Indians by European explorers and settlers. Examine treaties dating from 1778 to 1842 along with images and documents relating to assimilating American Indians through education.

Using Primary Sources

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>

This resource encourages readers to look critically and thoroughly at primary documents and assess them with multiple criteria in mind, including presence of stereotypes and biases, creator's intentions, and context of the primary document. This is for educators and all grade levels.

Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tool

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>

This presents a non-technical approach for undertaking an interpretive analysis of a variety of document types and media; however, it does not directly address the presence of stereotypes, biases, or potential misinformation.

Document Analysis Worksheets (National Archives)

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/>

This includes worksheets for text documents, photographs, cartoons, posters, maps, artifacts, motion pictures, and sound recordings.

Office of Public Instruction Resource

Evaluating American Indian Materials and Resources for the Classroom

The purpose of this document is to help teachers, librarians, and curriculum directors evaluate classroom materials for stereotypes, inaccuracies, omissions, and biases about American Indians that are so prevalent in American literature, films, and educational materials, so these educators can make informed decisions when selecting instructional materials.

Lesson Plan Example

Movement Patterns Leading to Interdependence and/or Conflict

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: Grades 7-8
Suggested Duration: One-Two 50-minute class periods

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 4, Benchmark 8.6 Students will explain how and why events may be interpreted differently according to the points of view of participants, witnesses, reporters, and historians.

Understandings

- History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives conflicts with what most mainstream history tells us. (EU 6)
- Students will understand that for some tribal nations the westward movement was more of an invasion from the east.

Essential Questions

- Why do we examine historical events from multiple perspectives?
- How did the arts play a role in shaping our national identity?

Students will be able to...

- evaluate historical references for issues of bias and perspective.

Students will know...

- images can be a powerful force in influencing our thoughts and beliefs about American Indians.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Students will develop and practice oral and written communications and expand critical thinking skills by analyzing the painting *American Progress* by John Gast.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

This lesson would work well as you study the topic of westward expansion.

Have the following question written on the board/overhead when students enter the classroom: "What is destiny? Define it in your own words." Give students approximately five minutes to write their own definition of destiny and lead students through a brief discussion regarding the concept of destiny.

Ask students about the term "manifest destiny" – What does this mean? Have a student look up a definition in a dictionary and read it to the class.

Display a picture of the 1872 painting *American Progress* by John Gast.

Ask students to analyze the painting using the following questions as a guideline.

1. What do you see in the painting? Describe everything you see.
2. What is happening in the painting?
3. What groups are represented?
4. Why do you think the artist titled the painting *American progress*?
5. Art is sometimes said to be a reflection of our culture. How does this painting reflect or reinforce ideas regarding westward expansion?
6. Imagine you are an American Indian artist – how might you paint this picture depicting an American Indian viewpoint? What would you change or revise? What would you title the piece of artwork?

Have students in small groups or individually draw a picture from an American Indian perspective. Give them approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the in-class drawing. (If a student does not want to make a picture ask for a detailed written description of what his/her painting would include). During the next class, the students could discuss their pictures/word descriptions.

Materials/Resources Needed

[American Progress](#) by John Gast – Image available from the Library of Congress

Extension Activities

Conduct a similar evaluation of images about the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Below are links to two examples of images about this famous battle. Have students use the Library of Congress website to access different depictions and analyze them using the suggested discussion questions.

[*General Custer's Death Struggle. The Battle of the Little Big Horn. by H. \(Henry\) Steinegger*](#)

[*The Custer Fight by C.M. Russell, 1903*](#)