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Shifting Power on the Plains: Fort Robinson and the American West
Landmarks of American History and Culture
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The Displacement and Re-Education of Native American Children

A one-page explanation of the content objective of your lesson and how it reflects something you learned in the course. In short, why have you created this lesson and what new perspective about the Great Plains will it reflect?

The standards and objectives from which this lesson derives come from Lincoln Public Schools, 4th grade Social Studies Standards and Objectives. Specifically, the objective and outcome of this lesson will be to ensure that students understand:

New claims for Nebraska land created conflict with original Native settlers . (BQ#3)

Some focused understandings within this lesson are: -

- 1. All Native American Nations were forced from their homelands to live on reservations*
- 2. Cultures were threatened and lives were changed*

The title of my lesson will be “The Displacement and Re-Education of Native American Children.” The reason I picked to enrich this lesson of Indian boarding schools is because I feel it has a powerful connection to issues that some students face even today. In 4th grade, many students are starting to figure out their own thinking and face life choices of whom they will be and what they will choose to believe.

In this lesson we will focus specifically on the Genoa Indian School. We will discuss the hardships of having to go to the school. We will examine the repercussions of forcing the children to dress in certain ways, learn English, cut their hair and, adopt a new culture, etc.

The reason why I wanted to discuss this topic is due to some of the issues that were brought up during our week session in Fort Robinson. We discussed the adoption and adaption to other cultures and the problems that still remain today because of forced reservation life. What I feel really impacted me regarding the Indian schools was the gentleman on the “We Shall Remain” video discussing the boarding schools.

Until that time, I had heard of the hardships of Indian schools, but I hadn’t heard a first-hand account. Riding to the Pine Ridge Reservation and watching the older man cry in the video was moving. To see that even at his age he still had hurt from the schools, gave me a new perspective on how Native Americans view the popular white culture. This was especially powerful while riding through Pine Ridge and taking in what the American government had done.

For students to catch a glimpse of these hardships, I will have them watch the ‘cartoon’ portion of the “We Shall Remain” video that addresses the Indian Schools. We will watch this in conjunction with the textbook pages on Genoa. My aim is to discuss and to focus on how cultures were threatened and lives were changed.

This lesson ties into two main themes of the Fort Robinson workshop. First, the role of human migrations shaped and directed the power shifts on the plains. Secondly, we focused on the adaptation and persistence of native inhabitants of the plains amidst changes brought forth by U.S. colonialism.

Lesson Plan: The Displacement and Re-Education of Native American Children

Social Studies Objective: New claims for Nebraska land created conflict with original Native settlers. (BQ#3)

Focused Understandings

- 1. All Native American Nations were forced from their homelands to live on reservations*
- 2. Cultures were threatened and lives were changed*

Assessment:

Students will be formally assessed through a reflection piece of letter writing.

Modifications:

- For above-level students, enrichment will be provided after the main lesson with further research opportunities
- Below-level students should have no trouble with this lesson regarding the reading and movie, however the teacher may want to provide assistance during the letter writing (dictation may be needed – or perhaps just key words written down.)

Materials Needed:

The Nebraska Adventure . Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2005. 193-195. Print.
“We Shall Remain: America Through Native Eyes.” Episode 5 – Created by PBS

C.O.R.E. LESSON PLAN

Connect:

Ask Students– “Who’s been to summer camp before? What did you do? Where did you go?” “Did you ever have to go to camp when you didn’t want to?”

Establish a connection with students to draw them into the lesson. The summer camp doesn’t have to be it. You could use moving in with a godparent or someone that you didn’t want to (I’d probably have to use the latter due to our Title 1 population). Regardless, bring something to mind where a child was forced to go or attend in order to make a deeper connection.

“Even if you haven’t been to camp, imagine if you were forced to go somewhere you didn’t want to. The people made you all look the same, they wouldn’t let you believe in what you wanted to (ex. Church, Synagogue, Temple), and they wouldn’t let you speak English!” Who would want to ditch that camp? Anyone wanting to stick around?

“Well, actually, camps like these have happened quite often around the world – there’s one specifically close to us in Nebraska where this happened.”

Organize:

-Have students open to page 193 in the Nebraska Adventure and read the pages describing Genoa Indian school.

-Create a quick Pros and Cons list on the board to generate effects of the school (this should be done quickly just so that students remain connected to the material, this gives them the opportunity to use critical thinking briefly).

Have students watch the cartoon part of "We Shall Remain" that addresses the Indian Boarding School experience.

Reflect:

Immediately upon the movie ending have students take out a piece of paper have them write a letter to their folks pretending that they were in Indian boarding school. Have students write down what they think children at that time would have said.

When students are done, make sure they read their letter to one or two neighboring students. When they are done, give them a little time to discuss their reactions to the film and to the entire lesson today.

(OPTIONAL) Lastly, if there is enough time students could write another letter from the perspective of the people running the schools (whites). This perspective should be discussed too. What is their perspective on the schools? Do they truly want to help the Indians? How do their perspective differ?

Closing question/statement: "When you go home today and your folks ask you what you learned today in school, instead of saying _____ (let the kids fill this in by saying "nothing"), lean towards your neighbor and tell them three things you could tell your folks about the Indian boarding schools."

Extend:

For gifted students or to provide more enrichment for students that are interested, let them focus on Japanese camps in California (we discuss this later in the year with reading). With discernment, one could learn more about Jews in Germany, or have students look into current events (Rwanda, etc).

Also, students may want to look into American Indian reservation life today. Provide students with nearby reservations to get them interested.