

Shifting Power on the Plains: Fort Robinson and the American West (Explanation)

Lesson Title: History Behind a Name

Created By: Stephanie Fowler

Explanation:

Throughout this course, I have learned how important it is to teach about the whole American history experience, not just what is “easy” to teach or the most familiar. For America to be where it is today, not just one viewpoint or perspective was experienced. However, in the education field, many stories favor one side over another, thus creating biased students or uninformed minds. After participating in this class and having a better understanding of the native perspective on the Great Plains, I plan to include a more rounded approach and viewpoints within my classroom.

Within many schools of today, science and social studies are being cut to include more exposure to math and reading. My goal then is to find ways to include history in a cross curricular approach. With this in mind, I found the book *A Boy Called Slow* by Joseph Bruchac upon my travels during this class. This book is a biography of Sitting Bull and the obstacles he had to overcome to earn his name of Sitting Bull and the respect of his family and tribal members. I plan on using this book when teaching the characteristics of a biography, which is also a state standard that is addressed on the state reading assessment. While teaching the fundamental elements of a biography, I can incorporate native culture and the lifestyle of the Great Plains, even before the idea of settlers, which for many students, were the first people in America. I think that this type of thinking for education is critical because of the lack of exposure students have to history, especially in the younger grades. By incorporating children’s literature with a cross curricular tie to history, students can learn both the required reading objectives, but also gain a better understanding of American history.

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Objective: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- * Be familiar with the components of a biography
- * Understand how Sitting Bull received his name
- * Research their own name and the history in how they received it
- * Have a better understanding of the Lakota traditions and how it affected the life on the Great Plains

Materials: Children's Book: *A Boy Named Slow* by Joseph Bruchac (1994)

* Summary: This book is a biography of Sitting Bull's childhood and how he was originally named Slow, but by overcoming obstacles and challenges within in his culture, he was able to earn his new name of Sitting Bull. This author does a great job of presenting Lakota traditions in a way that a younger audience can understand. This book also lends itself to extension activities that can further investigate and learn the lifestyle of the natives on the Great Plains.

Introduction: Start by asking students if anyone knows what a biography is. What biographies have you read before? What do you learn from a biography? Then ask students if they have heard of a Native American by the name of Sitting Bull. Create a KWL chart of the topic of Sitting Bull.

K= What you know	W= What you want to know	L= What you learned

Lesson: After students have had a short introduction to Sitting Bull, read the story *A Boy Named Slow*. Explain to students before reading that in the Lakota tradition, a person is given a name when they are young that describes them. However, throughout their life, they have opportunities to earn another name, demonstrating their dedication to their tribe or family. Then ask them how they would like it if they were given the name Slow. How would you try to prove yourself to earn a new name during this time period? Then begin reading. Use

the following questions for comprehension focus as well as the elements of a biography.

- * Why was the boy called Slow?
- * How could a child earn a new name?
- * How do they describe horses in this story? Why do you think horses were so important for survival for the Lakotas?
- * Describe the use of the buffalo.
- * How did the boy earn a new name?
- * How do you know this story is a biography?

Activity: Discuss as a whole group how Sitting Bull received his name. How did this name change affect his spirit? Now, students will have the opportunity to discover the history behind their name. Have students brainstorm how they think they received their name, either from information they have been told, or through predictions. Then have students complete this as homework, asking their relatives the history behind their name. When students return the next day, have them write a biography about how they received their name. As students are discussing, you can compare and contrast how names are given today, versus names that were given to the natives.

Closure: Have students share their biographies as a discussion group. Then a class biography book can be made to use in the classroom library. After sharing has been completed, add to the L on the KWL chart about what they have learned about the history of names and the native culture.

Extension Activity: If students are unable to find out about their history of their name, or if they finish early, they can write a biography on a pet that they have had or have. This way they are still getting the information and elements of a biography and can still participate with the history behind a name discussion.