

**Shifting Power on the Plains Fort Robinson and the American West**  
**Landmarks of American History and Culture**  
**Lesson Plan by Lisa Carpenter**

The intent of this lesson plan is to have kindergarten students gain a better understanding of recounting Native American history through pictures. Specifically, through the use of Winter Counts. A Winter Count is a pictorial record depicted on a hide (typically deer hide or buffalo hide). Each image is intended to depict one year and recalls a memorable or widely known event of that year.

Teaching students about the importance of Winter Counts and how they were used in Native American society will not only show students the practical importance of picture and their function when telling a story, but, will also allow teachers' to incorporate a new perspective about the Great Plains and how it is connected to learning and daily lives.

One of the first things students learn during Writer's Workshop in kindergarten is that pictures tell a story. Students are taught how to use stories from their lives and relay the information through the use of pictures, making sure to include important details. In the following lesson, we will learn about what Winter Counts are, how they were used, and connect them to how people (students, authors, people from everyday lives) use pictures to tell a story.

Topic:

Writer's Use Pictures to Help Tell Stories

Objective:

In this lesson, we will teach students how pictures are used to tell a story.

Materials:

- ∞ Paper
- ∞ Crayons
- ∞ Pencils
- ∞ [Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Lakota Winter Counts Online Exhibit](#) – This link will give teachers an understanding of what Winter Counts are, several online images and descriptions of Winter Counts are provided. It also includes video interviews with six Lakota men and women who have personal connections to the tradition of keeping winter counts.

Connection:

*Put the lesson in context of students' ongoing work. Explicitly name what will be taught today.*

- ∞ State the goal for today.
  - “Writers, we have been telling stories from our lives to each other and we have been drawing pictures to tell our stories. Today, I want to teach you a little bit about Winter Counts.

### Teaching:

- ∞ Explain how winter counts were used by the Lakota to remember important events that happened in their community throughout history.
- ∞ Explain that the pictures appear in the order in which they happened (first, second, third, etc.)
- ∞ One person was typically in charge of keeping track and recording these important events.

### Active Engagement:

- ∞ Using the online examples, discuss with students some of the important events that are depicted in several of the winter counts. (You will be able to zoom in on the pictures. Some include translated descriptions of the images)
- ∞ Discuss with students:
  - How we knew what the event was about
  - How did the author share the story using pictures
  - The details noticed in the descriptions

### Link:

*Restate the teaching point using key phrases or ideas and encourage students to apply this to learning today.*

- ∞ Restate the main point of the lesson.
  - “Writers, today and every day when you write, you too can use pictures to tell your story just like the Lakota did to remember important events in their community’s history.

### Independent Writing:

- ∞ Students: *Independent time will be used for students to illustrate their self selected topics*
- ∞ Teacher: *As you meet with students, and they tell you about their stories, ask them what they will need to put in their stories to reflect some of the important information they have orally discussed. Asking questions like, "Does your friend have feet?" This will encourage them to fill in the missing parts of their illustration.*

### Sharing:

- ∞ You may select some students to share their stories with the entire class. It can be an echo of the mini lesson. It may not be possible to have every student share.

### An Extension:

- ∞ To extend this lesson:
  - Create a class winter count. As a group, collectively decided on important events as they happen. Students will each create an image depicting that event. Collect them and display one example of each event on a larger winter count. As the unit progresses, continue to add new images. Independently, students can write their accounts of what happened during that time to accompany the illustration. This is also an activity that can utilize shared pen writing. Make it into a class mural or hand on the wall as a story. It is a great use for familiar

reading, shared reading, or read around the room as students will be so familiar with it.

- Have students create a winter count based on important events from their lives. Students will illustrate an important event that happened during a specific time frame. Collect them in the order in which they were created. At the end of the event, display student's collective work. They can compare their work to classmates and discuss similarities or differences.