

Overview

During this course I became aware that as a student I have so much more to learn about the state and area I have lived in since I was born. The history, people, places and cultures that I was able to gain knowledge of not only made an impact on me but I will be able to take those thoughts and ideas and shift them to my students.

One item that immediately caught my attention was the winter count. My lesson plan focuses on the visual sources and storytelling that are used to interpret and tell the traditions and cultures of the Plain tribes, focusing on the Lakota. I have chosen winter counts and Paul Goble's books as resources for this lesson. I am intending this unit be used for third grade. Adjustments could be used to use this for other grades, below or above. In third grade, our reading curriculum focuses on traditions, viewpoints, interpreting and author's purpose. I intend this unit to extend throughout the school year and each month return to the winter count project the students will be making.

I will introduce the project with a discussion on storytelling and Native Americans. I think it is important to get students' background knowledge and their understandings first. After our discussion, we will discuss that there are numerous tribes today all around the United States. For this project, we will be focusing on the Plain tribes, mainly the Lakota. I will show the students the website, <http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html>, read the information on the winter counts, and look at visuals on the winter count. Our project as a class will be to make a "3rd grade count" using visual to tell their own story each month.

The second part of this project will be to introduce students to the strong oral traditions and stories from the Native American cultures. I have chosen Paul Goble as my resource for this. Each month, as we add to our winter count, we will be reading a book of Goble's and discussing and interpreting the content of the book.

At the end of the year, I will expect students to have a deeper understanding of the traditions and aspects of the Lakota and Native American cultures. They will learn not only the history of a group's past but also be motivated to learn about these individuals present and future.

The area that we live in has a vast and unique history. As cliché as this might come across I found it very compelling when I read a quote. Sitting at the table at the workshop was a mug, the mug "Nebraska National History Day 1999" read: Discovering the Past to Inform the Present and Shape the Future. This is why as an educator it is important to continue to accomplish this message with our students.

Laura Deans
Lesson Plan: Winter Counts

Opening

To begin the lesson, talk to students about traditions. What are they? Does anyone have any? Then move the discussion to how we tell stories. Record their responses.

Read Paul Goble's The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses. Have a discussion about the story in this book. Inform the students that they will be learning about how some Native Americans tell their history and traditions through storytelling. They will be learning about the way the Plain Indians tell their history through winter counts.

This will be a good place to stop and have an open discussion with students about Native Americans. I want to address that the term "Indian" or "Native American" does not generalize all into one group. I would like to display a map that shows the various groups around the country and to address the active presence of these groups today (schools, pow wows, reservations, authors, artist, etc).

Display a visual of the winter count. I have a post card to show. Have the children discuss what they see and how this could tell a story. Explain that the Plains tribes used this form of storytelling. We will be focusing on the Lakota. Pull up the website <http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html>. This is a fantastic resource. Read the information from the website. There are three sections, read "What are Winter Counts?" first, then "Who are the Lakota?", and last view the winter counts. This website lets you zoom in on the visuals that represent a year. Show the visual first and let students use their inference skills to determine what they think the visuals means or represents. When the students are finished read the explanation that is next to the visual. View multiple images.

After going through the website, share with students that they will be doing their own story telling with visuals. Pass out a big piece of tan construction paper. Tell students that each month they will be drawing a visual of something that was important or impacted them that happened that month. It could be at school or outside of school. To reference the winter count tell students they may start their visual in the middle and make a spiral as we add to it or they can do it in a linear line. Find a place to hang their accounts.

Each month read another Paul Goble story and have a discussion. Go back to the website and look at more visuals from the winter count. Pass out their paper and have them add another visual to represent that month. At the end of the school year they will have a unique memento of their time as a third grader and will have learned about important traditions and culture of the Lakota.

Resources

Website: <http://wintercounts.si.edu/index.html>

Postcard

Paul Goble Books:

The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses, Buffalo Woman, Dream Wolf, Her Seven Brothers,
Adopted by the Eagles, Storm Maker's Tipi, The Boy & His Mud Horses,
Iktomi and the Coyote: A Plains Indian Story, I Sing for the Animals, and Star Boy