

National Endowment for the Humanities - Shifting Power on the Plains: Fort Robinson and the American West
Lesson Plan: Historical Perception and Crazy Horse's Death

Overview of Lesson Plan: In this lesson, students are asked to consider the question of how and why people perceive places and events in different ways. Fort Robinson illustrates a perception of the Shifting Power on the Plains through the very evolution of its existence. This lesson will combine art and first-hand accounts of the death of Crazy Horse to underscore the power, historical perception, and place.

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Suggested Time Allowance: 5 Days

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Define the word "perception" and understand historical perspective.
2. Explore their own perceptions of the world around them including time and place.
3. Will analyze the values held by specific people who influenced history and the role their values played in influencing history.
4. Will analyze the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history.
5. Will analyze the effects specific decisions had on history and study how events might have been different in the absence of those decisions.
6. Will research the death of Crazy Horse through primary sources to examine the power of perception in history.

Resources / Materials:

-pens/pencils
-paper
-colored pencils
-selected readings from The Death of Crazy Horse: A tragic Episode in Lakota History, Compiled and edited by Richard G. Hardorff
-Lakota Winter Counts Online Exhibit: Smithsonian photographs and artifacts, a documentary about Sioux history & culture, video interviews with Lakota people, and Teachers' Guide.
wintercounts.si.edu/

Activities / Procedures:

DAY ONE –

1. Take the students outside to a location such as the football field away from people. Have the students sit on the ground. Pass out blindfolds to the students. Instruct the students that they will be wearing the blindfold for 10 to 15 minutes during which time there will be no talking. Tell the students that their goal is to use their senses other than sight to experience the environment. Remind the students to listen, breath, and feel what is around them.
2. Have the students remove the blindfolds and immediately journal their experiences prior to talking with other students. Lead the students in a discussion of what they felt and how they perceived the environment without the sense of sight.

DAY TWO –

1. Use the Smithsonian site and discuss the importance of Winter Counts to the students and a perception of the Lakota world seen through their eyes.
2. Have the students individually list an important event that occurred for each year of their lives. (You might limit the number of birthdays etc. – make the students look for important events)
3. Have the students create their own Winter Count using the list of events they made.

DAY THREE –

1. In preparation for today the teacher should have compiled a list of important events (matching the students year requirements) using the class textbook as a resource. Have some of the students volunteer to share their Winter Counts. Then put up the teacher/textbook compiled list and discuss the similarities, differences and speculate on why they are or are not the same. Ask the students how “perception” can influence history.

DAY FOUR –

1. Separate the students into pairs or small groups. Tell the students that they are going to explore the death of Crazy Horse and determine what happened. Distribute to each pair or group copies of the individual manuscripts relating the death of Crazy Horse (using selected readings from [The Death of Crazy Horse: A Tragic Episode in Lakota History](#), Compiled and edited by Richard G. Hardorff). Official documents and newspaper accounts should also be distributed. Have the students read these accounts, and with their partner or group, attempt to determine what happened to Crazy Horse during the last few days of his life and death.
2. Tell the students that they will report their findings at a “board of inquiry” the following day.

DAY FIVE –

1. Have each pair or group report their findings about the death of Crazy Horse.
2. Discuss whether we know what happened or not. Why is it important this important to understand and does this affect the way we look at history?

Evaluation / Assessment:

Students will be evaluated based on journal responses, Winter Count, participation in class and group discussions.

Extending the Lesson:

Have the students write about what they have learned from this activity, and relate this new knowledge to a broader discussion of how cultural perceptions of places can affect political situations. Are there any political debates in the United States, Canada, or Latin America that relate to cultural or religious perceptions of places?