

Lesson Title: Pyramid of Information on the Santa Fe Trail

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Tarkio R-1 School District  
Grade 8  
Class: American History  
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**Teaching Traditional American History Program**  
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Lesson Overview: Students will research four out of five groups of people (traders, missionaries, homesteaders, Native Americans, and Mexican government) who had a vested interest in the Santa Fe Trail in the 1840's. They will gather information about each group, (i.e.) language, customs, religion, and motives. Upon completion of the lesson/project, students will have a better understanding of the complexity of cultural exchange. Also, in the process of gathering information the students will be able to differentiate between general information and specific information.

Essential Questions: What is the difference between general and specific information?

What is meant by primary sources?

What is meant by secondary sources?

What is meant by cultural exchange?

What effects do we see today that reflects the coming together of different cultures in the Southwest region of the United States?

Objectives: After completing this lesson, the students will be able to:

- explain the different cultures that came together in the Southwest.

- explain how locating information helps to understand different cultures in different time periods.
- differentiate between general and specific information by using the pyramid model.
- organize and analyze information in a meaningful manner

The GLES to be addressed are Standard 7.G (Knowledge of the use of tools of Social Science Inquiry) and Standard 6.I (Knowledge of Relationships of the Individual and Group to Institutions and Cultural Traditions).

Assessment: There is a Rubric for Assessing a Cooperative Learning Activity published by Prentice Hall World Explorer that is an attachment.

Materials: Students are responsible for bringing the cardboard for pyramid construction.

Markers and tape

Access to the internet

Atlases, maps, and magazines

Textbook-American Pathways to the Present: Prentice Hall, c.2000.

Class time: 5 days; 45 minutes class periods

Teacher Input: Begin class by asking students to speculate on the dangers/hardships that early pioneers faced as they traveled west. What motivated the different groups? How did the Native Americans view the new immigrants? How did the government of Mexico view the new immigrants. Establish the concept of cultural exchange.

Teacher will lead a discussion on the idea of general information and specific information. Teacher will apply these concepts to the different groups of people who had a vested interest in the Southwest.

Teacher will use a timeline to explain the chronological events that took place in the Southwest.

Teacher will point out the consequences in our world today of these cultures coming together in the 1800's.

Teacher will divide the class into groups of 3-4 students. Each group will construct a 4-sided cardboard pyramid about 3'-4' tall. Each side of the pyramid will represent 1 of the 5 groups. Label each side accordingly. Students will then be directed to do research about each group. They will organize and analyze information to decide what is important to put on the faces of the pyramid. Students may add pictures to decorate each side or face of the pyramid. This is a cooperative learning project. Each group will be asked to defend their information.

Activities: Construct the pyramid

Locate, organize and analyze information to put on the pyramid

Scan magazines or use internet to locate pictures

Questions for Review:

Identify four groups of people who had an impact on the Southwest.

What did each group contribute to the culture we see today?

What is meant by cultural exchange?

What is a primary source?

What is a secondary source?

What is meant by general information as opposed to specific information?

Closure:

- Summarize the reasons different groups traveled to the Southwest.
- Summarize the difference between general and specific information.

- Speculate on what would have been the consequences if Mexico had retained possession of the Southwest.
- Summarize the importance of each group's impact on the world of yesterday and today.

Extension: Ask each student to use the idea of pyramid building of knowledge to any new assignment requiring research. Find general information about the subject, put it at the base of the pyramid and then more specific information as one goes up the pyramid.

| Rubric for Assessing a Cooperative Learning Activity |   |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  | Awesome   | Acceptable  | Minimal   | Unacceptable   |
| Process  | All group members participate enthusiastically; group members reflect awareness of others' views and ideas; each group member assigned a well-defined role; group members perform roles effectively | All group members participate on some level; group members show some adeptness at interaction; group members' roles not always clearly defined nor consistently performed | About half of group participates; group members show some ability to interact; group members given roles not consistently performed | One or two group members actively participate; little interaction, no effort made to assign or perform roles                         |
| Organization   | Logical format that is easy to follow; smooth transition from one idea to another; organization enhances effectiveness of project   | Presented in a thoughtful manner; signs of organization and most transitions easy to follow   | Somewhat organized; ideas not presented logically; transitions not always smooth  | Little signs of organization; format difficult to follow' awkward transitions; lack of organization lessens effectiveness of project |
| Research   | Conducts thorough research using a wide variety of sources  | Gathers information from several different sources  | Gathers information from only two or three sources  | Does little or no research   |
| Content  | All information is accurate   | Information mostly accurate; a few inconsistencies and inaccuracies   | Information somewhat accurate; several inconsistencies and factual errors   | Information completely inaccurate  |
| Creativity   | Original presentation unique approach that enhances the project   | Thoughtful presentation   | Presentation includes a few original ideas  | Presentation predictable; little creativity used   |

Prentice Hall World Explorer