

Analyzing Diverse Land Use

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: Grades 7 and 8
Suggested Duration:

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 2, Benchmark 8.3 Analyze diverse land use and explain the historical and contemporary effects of this use on the environment, with an emphasis on Montana.

Understandings

- The ideologies of native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs (EU 3).
- Europeans and American Indians had different perspectives regarding environmental issues that often resulted in cultural misunderstandings and conflicts.

Essential Questions

- In general, how did American Indians perceive their relationship to the natural world?
- To what extent did this perspective lead to cultural conflict with European Americans?

Students will be able to...

- analyze and discuss American Indian and European perspectives on the use of the environment.

Students will know...

- differing values and perceptions between American Indians and European Americans regarding the land lead to many cultural misunderstandings.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Students will read articles and gather background information as preparation for a class debate.
2. Students will have to articulate a particular position and back it up with supporting evidence.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

Prior to introducing the lesson please visit the Catlin classroom website for an excellent debate activity regarding American Indian and European worldviews. Have students complete the suggested classroom activities. This on-line lesson has a wealth of information regarding American Indian perspectives on the environment. “Debating for Land Lesson.” [Campfire Stories with George Catlin: An Encounter with Two Cultures](#)

Have the students read and discuss their reactions to the following information.

Excerpt from *Connecting Cultures and Classrooms* – OPI K-12 Curriculum Guide:

While most European societies were ruled by monarchies, most Indian societies were egalitarian in nature. Although not all native governing systems were egalitarian, leadership within most Indian groups was a shared responsibility. In very few places in the Americas could a single leader speak for an entire tribe and expect their decision to be followed. Rather, the more typical form of Indian government embodied concepts such as decision by consensus, representative government, clan structures represented in government, separation of powers, and limited systems of checks and balances. Some tribes/cultures lived under governing systems that included women in roles as leaders.

European and American Indian economic systems were based on fundamentally conflicting views of how land and natural resources should be exploited. Following biblical injunction, European economic systems were based on “dominion over nature.” American Indian economic systems, on the other hand, were based upon building an awareness of ecological relationships and managing natural resources without depleting them. The European world view feared the natural world (including man’s nature) and viewed it as something to be subdued. Thus, forests with their wild animals were cleared for farmlands and quickly over-harvested to near depletion. For example, by 1086, England was only 20 percent forested – of that, only 2 percent was virgin forest. There were enormous alterations in the European landscape by the 15th century. European attitudes toward animals were markedly different from those of American Indians. For example, Europeans pursued activities such as sport hunting, bear baiting, cockfights and bullfights – some of which are considered barbaric today. In contrast, hunting practices among Indian societies involved respect for the life of the animal being hunted. American Indian societies viewed natural resources – including wildlife – as sacred.

Materials/Resources Needed

“Debating for Land Lesson.” [Campfire Stories with George Catlin: An Encounter with Two Cultures](#)

[Indian Land Tenure Foundation Lesson Plans](#) These deal with American Indian land issues. This site also has excellent background information.

