

Montana Indians: Oral Traditions and History

Comparing Cheyenne and Crow Star Stories

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: Grades Two - Three
Suggested Duration: Two 50-minute Class Periods

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

- (4) The history content standards for second grade are that each student will:
- (a) identify how people lived differently in the past than they do today;
 - (b) understand that there are twelve distinct and unique tribes within Montana whose people contribute to modern life; and
 - (c) identify different kinds of historical sources, including oral histories of American Indians.
- (4) The history content standards for third grade are that each student will:
- (a) identify tribes in Montana by their original and current names; and
 - (b) explain how perspective impacts the telling of historical events.

IEFA Essential Understanding 3 The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practices by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America.

IEFA Essential Understanding 6 History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell.

Understandings

- Each tribe has a unique culture and history, separate from other tribes’ cultures.
- Each tribe’s oral history and traditions include ways in which the tribe came to be – its origin.

Essential Questions

- What is history?
- What is “oral history?”
- Why is knowledge of your own history essential?
- Could you retell a story that was told by your great grandmother/great grandfather long ago?



Students will be able to...

- state that each tribe has its own language and culture.
- tell about tribal oral history traditions.
- compare two traditional star stories.
- practice active listening skills.
- retell a story.
- state information about tribal traditions and culture with others in classroom discussions.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Listen carefully to star stories from the Crow and Cheyenne.
2. Retell an oral history.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the unique oral traditions of the Crow and Cheyenne.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Students receive the assignment and expectations, including the list of vocabulary and concepts they are expected to know, the Essential Questions, Understandings, and the materials they need to complete their work.

Teacher and students should discuss the Essential Questions. These Essential Questions will guide their discussions and the whole class activity.

Teachers guide the discussion activities carefully, checking frequently for student understanding and misconceptions. Students are working on their broad understanding of history and how tribes keep their oral histories.

Students listen carefully; the purpose is to learn more, and where necessary, revise their ideas about tribal histories; they should know that tribal histories are kept as “oral histories”—passed down from generation to generation.

Students listen carefully to an oral history and can retell the oral history.

Students who are not able to complete all features of the assignment (they may have an IEP, for example) should perform based on their different needs and abilities.

Students will complete these activities in about two class periods; this should keep student engagement and learning high.

Traditional star stories are an excellent means of reinforcing active listening and speaking skills in addition to teaching important lessons about tribal traditions and values

Compare and contrast a Crow and Cheyenne story about the Big Dipper. How are the stories similar? In what ways do the stories differ? Is there a common connection or theme?

[Star Stories: Quillwork Girl and Her New Seven Brothers](#) – Cheyenne story of the Big Dipper

[Crow Star Story - Seven Stars](#) – Crow story of the Big Dipper

Common elements/themes:

- Common element is the number seven, 7 buffalo and 7 brothers.
- In addition to the seven, one other person is featured in each story, a young girl, and a young boy
- Crow story – young man was called Buffalo Boy
- Giant buffalo featured in both stories

Extension Activity

For another example of oral traditions show the [Apsáalooke Creation Story – Animated video from the Field Museum](#). The video is designed for younger students and features a Crow creation story.

Have students retell the story and share their interpretation and reaction. Ask them how many times they would need to hear the story to retell it exactly the way it was told to them. That is the oral tradition in practice – active listening and speaking to pass along stories that are thousands of years old. Pose the following question. Do you think these stories will continue to be told thousands of years from now? Why?

Crow origin story in written form [Apsáalooke Creation Story – Little Big Horn College](#)