

The Colonization Era – An Interview with Dr. James Loewen

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: High School
Suggested Duration: Two 50-minute class periods

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 4, Benchmark 12.6 Students will investigate, interpret, and analyze the impact of multiple historical and contemporary viewpoints concerning events within and across cultures.

Understandings

- 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 an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell. (EU 6)

Essential Questions

- Why is it important to examine historical events from multiple perspectives?
- Why would author James Loewen title his book "Lies My Teacher Told Me"?
- To what extent do myths or lies about American Indians get perpetuated in history textbooks?

Students will be able to...

- briefly describe some American Indian perspectives regarding early colonization.

Students will know...

- an introduction to the multiple American Indian viewpoints regarding issues associated with colonization.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Participate in class discussion and read and react to an article about how American Indians are usually portrayed in history textbooks.



Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Briefly introduce students to the topic of colonization. Lead a class discussion/brainstorming session to see what they already know. List out topics/issues on the board and discuss. Emphasize the point that colonization has had (and still does) a huge impact on how American Indians have been written about and portrayed in history textbooks. In almost all cases, tribal histories were filtered through a European American (usually male) cultural lens.

Tell students they will be reading an article from the Phi Delta Kappan, the second largest educational journal in the United States. The interview is with author Dr. James Loewen, who is well known for his national bestseller *Lies My Teacher Told Me*.

Ask students why would author James Loewen title his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*?

Has anyone ever read it or heard about the book? Can anyone think of specific examples in our country's history where American Indians have been lied about? Was it intentional or were people just working with limited knowledge?

Brainstorm a list of potential American Indian topics/events that may be interpreted from multiple viewpoints. Examples include: Columbus and "discovery," the roles of American Indians in the early colonial times, Pocahontas, influence Indians had on early colonial thinking, westward movement, Lewis and Clark.

Discuss the list with the class and then share the following guidelines with them before handing out the article.

Things to keep in mind as you study about a particular event in history:

- With regard to events such as Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery, Montana tribal histories offer differing points of view from those expressed in your American history textbook.
- Your history textbook and a tribal history each represents "point of view"; the point of view changes depending on whose story is being told.
- Identifying and respecting another culture's viewpoints of historical events is basic to your understanding of how histories can influence our ideas and points of view.
- Events from the past, and how they are viewed by tribes and by the U.S. government, still cause issues of concern today.
- The "discovery" of an area is not necessarily a discovery. Indigenous people had been in the area explored by the expedition for hundreds, probably thousands of years.

Distribute copies of the article to all students and have them read in class. Allow at least 10-15 minutes for reading the article.

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Ask students to write up a one-page reaction paper to the article. Did they learn anything new? Did this conflict with what they have been previously taught? Do these perspectives differ from what is in your history textbook?

After students have had a chance to read and discuss the article have them write up a one-page reaction paper to article.

Lead a class discussion on the major issues covered in the article.

List on the board new information gained as a result of reading this article.

After the whole class discusses the article, allow students time to add to or revise their one-page reaction papers.

Tell them their one-page reaction papers will be due at the beginning of the next class.

Extension Activity

Have students work in small groups to look at all the references regarding American Indians. Ask them to pay particular attention to issues of bias. Have them examine the terminology in the textbook. Groups could report their research results to the rest of the class. If examples of bias or misinformation are found have them write the textbook publisher asking them to consider rewriting the section.

Resources Needed

Jetty, Mike. “**History Through Red Eyes: A Conversation with James Loewen.**” *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 88, No. 03 (November 2006): 218-222.

Additional Recommended Resources

Loewen, James W. ***Lies My Teachers Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong.*** New York: The New Press, 1995. 372 pp. ISBN:1-56584-100X

Supahan, Sarah. ***Points of View vs. Historical Bias: Recognizing Bias in Texts about Native Americans – An Integrated Thematic Unit.*** Klamath-Trinity Joint Unified School District’s Indian Education Program, Indians of Northwest California. Available through www.oyate.org