

Comparing American Indian and European Economic Systems

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: High School
Suggested Duration:

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 5, Benchmark 12. 4 Students will compare and contrast how values and beliefs influence economic decisions in different economic systems.

Understandings

- Students will understand that, in general, Europeans and American Indians have different perspectives regarding economics and environmental issues.
- 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 and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. (EU 3)

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?
- How do traditional values and beliefs impact economic and environmental practices?

Students will be able to...

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

Students will know...

- differing values and perceptions between American Indians and European Americans 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.



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2. Students will have to articulate a particular position and back it up with supporting evidence.
3. Reflection journals will be written by each student to document their own learning process.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

Share the following information with students – have them read and discuss their reactions.

Excerpt from ***Connecting Cultures and Classrooms: Indian Education K-12 Curriculum Guide: Language Arts, Science, Social Studies*** by Sandra Fox.

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. (page 79)

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. (page 80)

Prior to introducing the lesson please visit the Catlin classroom Web site for an excellent debate activity regarding American Indian and European worldviews. Have students complete the suggested classroom activities. “Debating the Land Lesson Plan.”

Students can also utilize the reference books sent out by OPI for more background information.

Extension Activity

Have the students research traditional and contemporary economic perspectives from Montana Tribal Nations utilizing *Montana Indians: Their History and Location*, published by the Montana Office of Public Instruction

Materials/Resources Needed

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

Fox, Sandra J. Ed.D. [Connecting Cultures and Classrooms: Indian Education K-12 Curriculum Guide: Language Arts, Science, Social Studies.](#) Helena, MT: Montana Office of Public Instruction, Spring 2006. (131-133)

[Montana Indians: Their History and Location.](#) Helena, MT: Montana Office of Public Instruction.

In the Light of Reverence. Independent Television Service and Native American Public Telecommunications. Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Rogow, Faith and Christopher McLeod. Marjorie Beggs (ed). [“In the Light of Reverence Teacher’s Guide.”](#) Ford Foundation, Grousbeck Family Fund, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Robert Friede, Jean Barker and Ann R. Roberts funding.

Montana Tribal Web sites

[Blackfeet Nation](#)

[Chippewa Cree Tribe of the Rocky Boy Reservation](#)

[Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes](#)

[Crow Tribe](#)

[Fort Belknap Indian Community.](#) Assiniboine/Gros Ventre

[Fort Peck Tribes.](#) Assiniboine, Sioux

[Little Shell Tribe](#)

[Northern Cheyenne Tribe](#)

Reference books sent to all Montana school libraries

Champagne, Duane (Ojibwe) (ed). *Native North American Almanac: A Reference Work of Native North Americans in the United States and Canada.* Detroit: Gale Publishing, 2001. This comprehensive volume provides historical and contemporary information about the Native peoples of North America. A broad range of topics including history and historical landmarks, health, law and legislation, activism, environment, urbanization, education, economy, languages, arts, literatures, media and gender relations makes this highly readable book essential for librarians and teachers

Davis, Mary B. (ed). *Native America in the Twentieth Century, An Encyclopedia.* 1996. All classroom teachers who are teaching anything about "Native Americans" should have this single-volume

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encyclopedia available and use it frequently. The emphasis is on Indian peoples today, and the involvement of a great many knowledgeable Indian people, close to much of what they describe, contributes greatly to accuracy and coverage of usually ignored matters.

Keoke, Emory Dean (**Lakota**) and Kay Marie Porterfield (eds). ***Encyclopedia of American Indian Contributions to the World: 15,000 Years of Inventions and Innovations***. 2003. With entries ranging from anti-asthmatic medications to zoned biodiversity, this meticulously researched volume is a comprehensive resource to the numerous inventions and innovations made by the indigenous peoples of North, Meso-, and South America. Containing over 450 entries, alphabetically arranged and fully cross-referenced, this indispensable reference book is a must for every classroom and library.

