

Title

Sacred Spaces

Grade Level

English, Grades 9-12

Theme

Sacred Spaces

Duration

2 days, plus extra days for drafting/peer editing/etc.

Goal

Students will understand the importance of sacred spaces to both the Lakotas and themselves.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Define *sacred*
2. Identify sacred spaces within short stories, Lakota culture, and personal culture
3. Support opinions with evidence from the text or video
4. Synthesize information from the readings and their personal culture in a culminating essay

South Dakota Standards

1. W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
2. RL.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
3. RL.9-10.6 Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
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Cultural Concept

Sacred spaces, specifically *Pe Sla*, are central to the culture and religion of the *Oceti Sakowin Oyates*.

Cultural Background

The Black Hills, known by Lakotas as *HeSapa*, the heart of North America, has long been a sacred space for the Lakotas as it is home to their origin story. *Pe Sla* lies at the heart of the Black Hills, and is known as the Heart of All Hearts. According to Rhea Turning Heart of the Oglala Oyate, *Pe Sla* “is the most sacred site of all the sites that the *Oceti Sakowin* hold dear” (Roberts, 2012). It is here where an important part of the Star Knowledge stories is believed to have occurred. When *Tapun Sa Win*, the pregnant human wife of Star Man (the North Star), became homesick for her family on Earth, she braided a rope out of roots and fabric in an attempt to climb down from the sky. The end of her rope was still quite a distance from the surface of the Earth. Eventually, *Tapun Sa Win* grew weary, and she fell (CAIRNS, 2014a, p. 4). Lakota oral tradition states that several Lakota boys found *Tapun Sa Win*’s body in the space which we now know as *Pe Sla*. *Tapun Sa Win* died from the fall, but in the process had given birth to her son. The boys brought the baby back to their village, where he was raised by an older woman. She named him *Wicahpi Hinhpaya*, or Fallen Star. *Wicahpi Hinhpaya* grew at an extraordinary rate, and within a few years, he wished to return home to the sky. Before he left, *Wicahpi Hinhpaya* promised to remember his Lakota relatives, particularly through medicines and in times of natural disaster (CAIRNS, 2014b, p. 6). Because of the location’s history, *Pe Sla* is a sacred space for the Lakotas for prayer and ceremonies (Hearst, 2014).

Until the late 1800s, *Pe Sla* was part of Lakota land. The treaties of 1851 and 1868 protected the lands. In the late 1800s, the United States’ government violated those treaties and claimed the Black Hills as federal lands. In

2012, the *Oceti Sakowin* was able to purchase back almost 2,000 acres of the Pe Sla lands that were taken from them (Schilling, 2012).

Student Activities

Day Wanji

1. Students will brainstorm about the idea of *sacred* through individual journaling. (approx. 3 minutes) As a pod of 4-5, students will create a working definition for *sacred*. (approx. 3 minutes) Pods will have 1 minute each to share out with the whole class. Individually, students will take 1 minute to revisit their working definition, changing and adapting as necessary.
2. Each pod will read a different short story, preferably out loud together in some fashion. After reading, each person will be responsible for one of the following questions citing evidence from the text:
 - a. Identify the sacred space and describe it using as many details as possible.
 - b. Identify the sacred space and create a visual representation using as many details as possible.
 - c. Explain to whom the space is sacred, and why it is sacred to them.
 - d. Explain why others may recognize the sacredness of the space.
 - e. Explain why others may **not** recognize the sacredness of the space.Share responses within the pod, and add to each question. (approx. 25 minutes)

3. Pods will report out to the large group in the form of mini presentations with some sort of visual

Day Nunpa

1. View the first third of *In the Light of Reverence*, and record thoughts about the following questions citing evidence from the video:
 - a. Who decides if a place is sacred?
 - b. How should we as human beings treat our own personal sacred spaces?
 - c. How should we as human beings treat the sacred spaces of others?(approx. 25 minutes)
2. Read "Save Pe'Sla," an informational text on the cultural and religious importance of Pe Sla to the *Oceti Sakowin*, and record answers to the following questions citing evidence from the article:
 - a. Where is Pe Sla located? Be as specific as possible.
 - b. What does its name mean? What is the significance of its meaning?
 - c. Explain the significance of the sacred space to the Oceti Sakowin.
 - d. Analyze the public auction advertisement. What very likely would happen to the sacred space of Pe Sla if the auction were to take place?
3. Students will next individually brainstorm spaces that are sacred to them. They should pick one that they can describe well and provide some sort of visual representation.
4. Students will write an essay in which they address the following:
 - a. a detailed physical description of the space
 - b. a thorough explanation of why the space is sacred to them
 - c. reflective thoughts on how others may view their sacred space
 - d. an examination of what the sacred space would be worth to them (ie. What would you be willing to pay for your sacred space? *Can* you put a value on it?)
 - e. reference the readings

Resources

1. Short stories that deal with sacred spaces (5 copies of each)
2. A copy of the film *In the Light of Reverence*
3. Class set of the information text "Save Pe'Sla"

Assessment

Students will use self-assessment, group evaluations, and oral presentations, and will produce a written final paper.

References

Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies. (2014). Fallen Star and Bear Lodge. In *Tender Reverence: Explorations of the Lakota Universe* (pp. 6-7). CAIRNS.

Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies. (2014). Red-Cheeked Woman and Star Man. In *Tender Reverence: Explorations of the Lakota Universe* (pp. 4-5). CAIRNS.

Hearst, S. (Director). (2014). *Lakota Star Knowledge: Explorations of the Lakota Universe* [Motion picture on DVD]. The Journey Museum Learning Center.

Roberts, C., & Turning Heart, R. (2012, September). Save Pe'Sla: The Heart of All That Is. Retrieved July 23, 2014, from <http://www.manataka.org/index.html>

Schilling, V. (2012, November 30). Tribes Reach \$9 Million Goal and Purchase Sacred Site of Pe' Sla. Retrieved July 23, 2014, from <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/>

Developer

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