

Title

U.S. History Winter Count.

Grade Level

Middle School, High School.

Duration

Teaching the lesson might take a few days for students to thoroughly understand the concept and significance of the Lakota Winter Counts. You would have to start off by introducing Winter Counts and explaining them. To reinforce the concept, it may be beneficial to show actual examples. If this is an upper level class, then it could be beneficial to take the students to a museum that has a Winter Count exhibit. If this is a Middle School class or a lower level class and traveling isn't in the budget, visual aids could be a great learning tool. Pictures online or in books would help emphasize the Winter Counts. You could also have a Lakota native come in to the classroom and teach first-hand knowledge about the Winter Counts and its historical significance to the Lakota culture. This lesson, however, could last all year long. You, as the teacher, would introduce the lesson, and then give the assignment, having it due at the end of the year—sort of a semester project.

Goal

Students will learn to grasp a better understanding of a historian's job. As they do the assignment, they will become historians themselves. They will organize events into historical significance and then determine which events they will place on their Winter Count. Students will grasp a better understanding of determining what events are more practical and significant.

Objectives

Teachers: You will teach about the Lakota Winter Counts so that students will grasp what they are. Then, you will assign each student a certain time period. You can vary the length of time so that each student has the same amount of years to research and create a winter count. Also, as a class, pick out a design for the Winter Count – spiral, square, however the class decides. Once the Winter Counts are turned in, then you put them together and have one big Winter Count. The focus for the events could be up to your discretion. You could have the students focus mainly on United States History or World History or History in general. It is up to your discretion. Students will be able to pick out major/significant events and will retain the explanation/significance longer and easier. Also, not one winter count will be the same because each student will have a different time and it will be based off of their opinions. The importance of events will be solely up to the discretion of the student. Students will then also be able to successfully pick out one event from their time period and create a research paper and hand it at the end of the semester.

South Dakota Standards

N/A.

Cultural Concept

The cultural aspect will be linking Lakota history and ways with that of U.S. history. It will show students a different way of keeping record than by using a book or chart or map.

Cultural Background

Winter Counts are very accurate accounts of historical events. The Winter Counts were created on hides, cloth, or carved on a pole. Some were also painted on paper. The Lakota Winter Counts are the native Lakota's calendar. Each year has a representative pictograph. The year lasts from the first snowfall to the first snowfall of the following year. Lakotas used a record keeper who was in charge of knowing the story behind the event for the year and he was also responsible for drawing the pictograph. The community tribe was responsible for picking that year's single event. Later on, the years on the Winter Counts were added along with brief explanations. With all the pictographs, a collected history became clear.

Student Activities

- Depending on the grade level and possibility of funding, you could go to a Native American museum that holds a Winter Count exhibit to use as a reinforcement tool.
- Another idea is to get the students in groups and give each group a Lakota Winter Count to research on and explain the events going on. Before you have the students get started you could show them where each winter count was for (i.e. if the Winter Counts are hundreds of miles apart but have same events detailed, what does that mean?) Once the groups have researched their particular Winter Count, they could present their findings to the class. As a teacher, you could collect everyone's findings and prepare a booklet for them to keep.
- You could also invite a Native Lakota and have him work with the students on their Winter Counts.

Resources

Internet, libraries, books, movies, museums, Smithsonian Winter Count online exhibit

Assessment

If you do decide to make this a year-long project, you could weight them as two different projects. Traditionally, the Winter Count is the most important piece, so that might be the project that counts heavily towards a student's grade. The paper would be graded as any other term paper you would assign, and the format would be what you would normally use.

References

- Burke, C. E. (2007). Waniyetu Wowapi: An introduction to the Lakota winter count tradition. In C.S. Greene & R. Thorton (Eds.), *The Year The Stars Fell: Lakota Winter Counts at the Smithsonian* (pp1-11). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- DeMallie, R. J. and Parks, D. R. (2001). [Excerpt from tribal traditions and records]. In W. Sturtevant (Series Ed.) & R. J. Demallie (Vol. Ed). *Handbook of North American Indians: Vol. 13, part 2, plains* (pp. 1068-1073). Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

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