



Montana
Office of Public Instruction
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent

opi.mt.gov

Social Studies Model Lesson Plan

Colonization and American Indian Perspectives

Grades 7-8

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals:

Social Studies Standard 2, Benchmark 8.6 Explain how and why events (e.g., American Revolution, Battle of the Little Big Horn, immigration, Women’s Suffrage) may be interpreted differently according to the points of view of participants, witnesses, reporters, and historians.

Original lesson written by Jennifer Holladay for *Teaching Tolerance* – adapted with permission from author.
<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/thanksgiving-mourning>

Understandings:

- History told from an Indian perspective frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell. (Essential Understanding # 6)
- European diseases greatly impeded the Indians’ abilities to defend their homelands.
- Relationships between Europeans and Indians varied from place to place and among European groups (Spanish, French, English, Dutch).

Essential Questions:

- What have you learned about the first Thanksgiving?
- Why is it important to look at issues from multiple perspectives?
- What are some of the reasons American Indians might have a different view regarding how Thanksgiving has been traditionally taught and celebrated in our schools?

Students will be able to...

- examine how diverse groups can perceive shared experiences differently.
- make inferences and draw conclusions based on written information

Students will know...

- for some Native Americans, Thanksgiving is no cause for celebration, but instead serves as a reminder of colonization's devastating impact on indigenous peoples.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks:

1. Students will review commentary from indigenous writers about Thanksgiving.
2. Students will write letters of thanks.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities:

Suggested Procedures



Colonization and American Indian Perspective (continued)

Ask students to describe the origin of the Thanksgiving holiday. Write key words and images on the board. If necessary, draw out elements of the origin story that relate to Native Americans. Where did students learn these stories? What ideas or values do students think of when they celebrate Thanksgiving? Examples students may give: thanks, charity, generosity, being good neighbors, welcoming and appreciation.

As you distribute the reading materials, verbally share information from the "Perspective" section (see Teacher Background).

Allow students time to read the materials. As a class, discuss:

- Reflect back on the values of Thanksgiving students described at the start of the activity. Did the Pilgrims uphold these values in their treatment toward the Indians? Why?
- What was new to you in the authors' descriptions of the first Thanksgiving? Why do you think these details are sometimes omitted from popular culture's take on Thanksgiving?
- Why does Keeler refer to Native Americans as a "very select group of survivors"? Is her characterization consistent with James's perception? Why?
- Wamsutta James' speech inspired some Native Americans to boycott Thanksgiving and instead observe a National Day of Mourning. Keeler takes a slightly different approach. Which approach makes the most sense to you? Why?
- Keeler sees present-day Thanksgiving celebrations as a tool for healing. What are ways this can happen? Does the Day of Mourning advance or hinder healing? Why?
- In what ways are James' and Keeler's perspectives gifts to our nation?

As a closing activity, ask students to write letters to Wamsutta James and/or Jacqueline Keeler thanking them for sharing their perspectives. Encourage students to identify specific things they have learned from James and/or Keeler and to explain how this new knowledge impacts their own understanding of Thanksgiving.

Although James passed away in 2001, teachers can send student letters to the United American Indians of New England, which oversees the National Day of Mourning, at 284 Amory St., Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Letters to Keeler can be sent in care of the American Indian Child Resource Center, 522 Grand Avenue, Oakland, CA 94610.

Materials/Resources Needed:

Holladay, Jennifer. "Thanksgiving Mourning." A lesson plan on the *Teaching Tolerance* website <http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/thanksgiving-mourning>

James, Wamsutta Frank B. (**Wampanoag**). The Suppressed Speech of Wamsutta James from the United American Indians of New England, to have been delivered in Plymouth, MA, 1970. <http://www.uaine.org/wmsuta.htm>



Colonization and American Indian Perspective (continued)

Keeler, Jacqueline (**Dineh/Yankton Dakota-Sioux**). Thanksgiving: A Native American View *Pure Water Gazette* <http://www.purewatergazette.net/nativeamericanthanksgiving.htm>

Swamp, Chief Jake (**Tekaranianeken**). *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*. Illustrated by Erwin Printup, Jr. New York: Lee & Low Books, Inc., 1995. 21 pp. ISBN: 1-880000-54-0

Teacher Background:

Perspective

Much of the mythology that surrounds Thanksgiving focuses on the peaceful, cross-cultural exchange between the "Pilgrims and Indians." While it's true that the Wampanoag and the Planters shared in a harvest celebration, within fifty years, the Wampanoag would no longer be a free people. For some Native Americans, Thanksgiving is no cause for celebration, but rather serves as a reminder of colonization's devastating impact on indigenous peoples.

In this activity, students will review two written works by Native American authors. The first -- a speech written by Wamsutta James in 1970 -- gave birth to the National Day of Mourning, which is observed on Thanksgiving by some indigenous people. To them, Thanksgiving is "a reminder of the genocide of millions of their people, the theft of their lands, and the relentless assault on their culture." The Day of Mourning, on the other hand, is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection, as well as a protest of the racism and oppression that Native Americans continue to experience.

The second document is an essay by Jacqueline Keeler, a member of the Dineh Nation and the Yankton Dakota Sioux; she works with the American Indian Child Resource Center in Oakland, Calif. Unlike some of her Native peers, Keeler celebrates Thanksgiving. And unlike most non-Native Americans, she does so through a distinctly indigenous lens.