



Grade Level: 9-12  
Subject: ELA

# Exploring Native American Identities and Stereotypes

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- History
- Identity
- Lifeways
- Language

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to analyze and evaluate the use of literary devices in the assigned text, demonstrating their understanding of the author's intent and message.
- Students will be able to construct a strong and coherent argument in a written essay, citing evidence and examples from the text to support their interpretation.
- Students will be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills by identifying underlying themes and motifs in the text, and exploring their relevance to contemporary society and personal experiences.

## CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

- Connecting to the lives of students
- Higher level thinking: analyzing
- Preserving and honoring cultural history
- Student talk, working together and individually

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed on their participation in whole-class activities and discussions, and their proficient completion and thoughtfulness of creative responses.

## Overview

In this lesson, students will explore the numerous Native American identities and the misconceptions and stereotypes that Indigenous Peoples have had to contend with. The lesson will begin with a discussion on the various identity markers and cultural practices that contribute to Native American identity, while also examining how media, literature, and popular culture have perpetuated problematic stereotypes such as the "noble savage" or the "drunken Indian." The class will discuss the ways in which such stereotypes originated and how they have impacted Native American communities.

## MATERIALS

- Index cards for discussion prompts
- [Native Identity & Stereotypes Handout](#)
- Stereotypes & Identities YouTube Videos:
  - [6 Misconceptions About Native American People | Teen Vogue](#)
  - [Indigenous People Review Native American Characters In Film & TV](#)
- Access to computers/laptops or tablets for research & project development

## LOGISTICS

- Where does this activity take place?  
**Classroom**
- How are the students organized?

**Whole Class**      Teams: 3-5  
**Pairs**                      **Individually**

## TIME REQUIRED

**2, 90-minute sessions**

## STANDARDS

### Oregon Common Core State Standards: ELA-LITERACY

**9-10.RL.1** Analyze what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially; cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support the analysis.

**9-10.RL.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details. Provide an evidence-based summary of the text.

**9-10.RL.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze word choice and the impact on meaning.

**9-10.RL.5** Analyze the impact of author's choices concerning how to structure and develop a text, such as how to order events within it to advance the plot or theme, manipulate time, and situate within a social, cultural, and/or historical context.

**11-12.RL.1** Analyze what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain; cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis. Identify areas where the text leaves ideas unclear or unexplored.

**11-12.RL.2** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account. Provide an evidence-based summary of the text that includes analysis.

**11-12.RL.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative and technical meanings; analyze the impact of word choice on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings.

**11-12.RL.5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

## Background for Teachers

Native American stereotypes are often negative and perpetuated in mainstream media and culture. These stereotypes often paint Native Americans as primitive, uneducated, and violent people who engage in stereotypical activities such as hunting, fishing, and war. Another common stereotype is that all Native Americans are the same, with no diversity between tribes or individuals. This is entirely untrue as there are over 500 different federally-recognized tribes in the United States alone, each with its own history, culture, and traditions. Additionally, many Native Americans live in modern society and work in diverse fields, yet they are often reduced to the stereotype of a "traditional" Native American. These stereotypes are not only inaccurate but also harmful as they can lead to discrimination, marginalization, and disrespect towards a diverse and rich culture. It's essential to challenge these stereotypes and instead, learn about the complex realities of Native American people and their experiences.

## VOCABULARY

- **Stereotype** - a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing
- **Identity** - the fact of being who or what a person or thing is

## Opening

- Distribute index cards or slips of paper to each student.
- Ask students to jot down any words, phrases, or images that come to mind when they think about Native Americans.
- Collect the cards and randomly select a few to read aloud for discussion.

## Activity

### Day One

#### **Introduction (10 minutes):**

1. Engage students in a discussion about Native American identities and stereotypes. Encourage them to share their initial perceptions based on the warm-up activity.
2. Emphasize the importance of understanding and challenging stereotypes to promote respect and accurate representation.

#### **Reading and Analysis (35 minutes):**

1. Provide students with access to the Native Identity & Stereotypes Handout.
2. Divide them into small groups and assign each group a different text.
3. Instruct students to read their texts carefully, highlighting or annotating instances that portray Native American identities or stereotypes.
4. Bring the class back together and have each group present their findings, discussing their interpretations and observations.
5. As a class, create a chart on the board, categorizing the instances into "Identity Features" and "Stereotypes."

#### **Media Analysis (20 minutes):**

1. Show students the Stereotypes & Identities YouTube Videos (2 videos)
  - a. 6 Misconceptions About Native American People | Teen Vogue:  
[https://youtu.be/GHdW\\_LVfn28](https://youtu.be/GHdW_LVfn28)
  - b. Indigenous People Review Native American Characters In Film & TV :  
<https://youtu.be/DBBFWH4oSmM>
2. Engage students in a short discussion by asking questions such as: "What stereotypes do you notice in the media portrayal?" and "How might these representations impact Native American communities?"

### Day Two

#### **Review and Reflection (10 minutes):**

1. Begin by reviewing the previous day's discussions and the chart on the board.
2. Ask students to reflect individually on the impact stereotypes may have on Native American individuals and communities. Provide them with guiding questions to stimulate thoughtful responses.

#### **Group Discussion (30 minutes):**

1. Divide students into small groups and prompt them to discuss their reflections from the previous activity.
2. Encourage them to consider potential consequences of stereotypes and ways in which they can challenge or address negative perceptions.

## Activity cont.

### Day Two cont.

#### **Creative Response (30 minutes):**

1. Instruct students to create a creative response to challenge a specific stereotype related to Native American identities.
2. Allow time for students to choose a stereotype, research the origins behind its development, and the efforts that are being made to eliminate and/or change this view.
3. This can take the form of a written piece, such as a poem, short story, or letter to a school newspaper, or a visual representation, such as a poster, brochure or artwork.
4. Allow time for students to work individually or in pairs to complete their responses.

## Closure

- Provide students with an opportunity to share their creative responses with the class.
- Conclude the lesson with a whole-class reflection on the importance of respecting and accurately representing Native American identities.

## Extension

- Ask students to research and present on contemporary Native American figures who challenge stereotypes or advocate for accurate representation.
- Plan a film or book club centered around works by Native American authors or filmmakers to further explore and challenge stereotypes.

## Notes/Other

Jan Michael Looking Wolf's or Grand Ronde Canoe Family audio tracks can be played as background music while students are working. These audio tracks can be found on Spotify or Apple Music.

Jan Michael Looking Wolf: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)

Grand Ronde Canoe Family: [Spotify](#) and [Apple Music](#)

## Appendix

- Native Identity & Stereotypes Handout:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fOxuvwmvclgR5NorHRdU5coYG\\_NrbHmU/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fOxuvwmvclgR5NorHRdU5coYG_NrbHmU/view?usp=drive_link)
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