

Montana Small Schools Alliance
HONORING MONTANA'S FIRST PEOPLES

UNIT: Picture Writing

AUTHOR: Sandy Stitt, Susan Graveley

SCHOOL AND COUNTY: Helmville School in Powell County

GRADE LEVEL: 3-8

DURATION: 2 weeks

INDIAN RESERVATION REFERENCED: Fort Belknap

SUBJECT AREA: Writing, Art, Reading

OVERVIEW: Students will learn to express thoughts and events through picture writing using American Indian symbols.

CONTENT STANDARDS ADDRESSED:

Writing Standard 4: Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Writing Standard 5: Students recognize the structures of various forms and apply these characteristics to their own writing.

Art Standard 1: Students create, perform/exhibit, and respond to the arts.

Art Standard 5: Students understand the role of the Arts in society, diverse cultures, and historical periods.

Reading Standard 1: Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read including literary works.

Reading Standard 5: Students gather, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from a variety of sources, and communicate their findings in ways appropriate for their purposes and audiences. Students use literary works to enrich personal experiences and to connect to the broader world of ideas, concepts and issues.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MONTANA INDIANS:

Essential Understanding 3: 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.

Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

Essential Understanding 6: History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

MATERIALS:

Picture Writing, The Indian Reading Series, Level II Book 6 (Borrowed from Hays/Lodgepole School Library) or other book with symbol examples
writing paper, pencil
lunch bags
construction paper crayons, colored pencils
skewers, yarn

ACTIVITIES: (30 minute time period for four days)

Day 1: Students are introduced to the history of picture writing. American Indians used pictures for writing their legends, dreams, and family history. They used flowers and herbs crushed and mixed with water for ink. They drew on hides, bark, and rocks.

Day 2: Practice drawing symbols and learn meanings from the resource sheet. Construct sentences in story form using words and the pictures.

Day 3: Continue working on your story, revising as you go. Classmates exchange stories and practice reading picture stories. Enjoy what you are creating.

Day 4: Cut out an imaginary ‘skin’ using brown paper bag. Draw only the symbols on the ‘skin’ from the sentences. **It is culturally correct to draw the symbols in a circle pattern or on the contour of the shape.** Wrinkle paper, smooth out, use skewers for frame; sew ‘skin’ to frame with yarn.

ASSESSMENT:

Students will present their final story sheet and 'skin' to the teacher. Content, neatness, originality, and enthusiasm for the project will be noted. Gold coin will be earned for finished product.

EXTENSIONS:

Send a copy of story to pen pal on the Fort Belknap Reservation. This should be arranged with the contact person for appropriateness. It would be exciting to receive a picture story back from a pen pal for sharing. Ask for parent comments about their child's project.