



LESSON PLAN

CAHOKIA and MISSISSIPPIAN CULTURE SECONDARY

AIM

How advanced was the Mississippian culture with its capital in Cahokia?

GUIDING QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES

What were the different aspects of Mississippian culture? When examining these together, would this make it an advanced civilization? Why have so few Americans heard about Cahokia and the Mississippians? Why isn't the teaching of this an integral part of American history? When did "American history" begin?

KEY VOCABULARY

Civilization—a complex human society that is characterized by the development of cities, organized systems of government, writing, culture, technology, social structures, and often, a distinct form of religion or belief system.

Social structure/social stratification—the system by which society ranks people into different layers based on various factors like wealth, income, education, occupation, power, prestige, and social status.

Eurocentrism—view of histories and cultures from the perspective of Western Europeans and their descendents, emphasizing their superiority.

Historical Erasure—omitting certain people or groups from historical studies, often implicitly due to collective indifference.

Nationalism—belief that one's nation's interests are most important and loyalty to it above any other entity is essential.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AT END

ACTIVITY

1. Watch the Native Ed video on Cahokia
2. Divide the class into 5 groups to do additional brief research on the culture. The topics to research are as follows (NOTE: Resources are relatively simple to find, but some links are below if you wish to provide some):
 - a. Social structures, including chiefdoms
 - b. Belief system—the Southern Ceremonial Complex (SECC) or Southern Cult. Look at artwork associated with this as well.



Native Ed

- c. Food and Shelter—For food, look at the 3 sisters and how food production supported the large urban population. For shelter, just what kind of housing was typical.
 - d. Trade—Transportation routes and methods, main trade goods, role of Cahokia.
 - e. The mounds—Cahokia mounds, but also others—Moundville, AL, Ohio, etc.
3. After about 10 minutes or so of research, have each group present their findings in a 3 minute presentation. Can use slides or not.
4. Once all groups have finished, discuss the following:
 - a. Based on this information, would you characterize the Mississippian culture based in Cahokia as a civilization (see definition above)?
 - b. Think about the American history that you have studied. Based on this, when would you say American history began?
 - i. Possible answers: When the Europeans (Columbus) arrived. The Pilgrims/Puritans in New England. The 13 colonies.
 - ii. Does anyone say it began when humans first arrived in the land that is now the United States of America?
 - iii. Why is American history typically taught beginning with the arrival of European immigrants?
 - iv. How does this relate to:
 1. Eurocentrism
 2. Historical erasure
 3. Nationalism
 4. The fact that the indigenous people who were here when European immigrants arrived now own only about 2% of the land in the United States.
 - v. Should all students be learning about Cahokia and the Mississippians as part of American history?

EXIT TICKET

Write a 30 second elevator pitch that you would give to someone who had never heard about Cahokia and the Mississippians.

http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/pre/htmls/miss.html

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/mississippian-period-overview#Settlements>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/daily/march/12/cahokia.htm>

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/01/cahokia/hodges-text>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2017/02/10/513963490/1-000-years-ago-corn-made-this-society-big-then-a-changing-climate-destroyed-the>



COMMON CORE STANDARDS

1. History/Social Studies

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 / RH.11-12.2**
 - **Key Ideas and Details: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary.**
 - **Application: Students will summarize their research on the various aspects of Mississippian culture (social structure, belief systems, trade, food production, mounds, etc.) and present their findings clearly to the class.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3 / RH.11-12.3**
 - **Key Ideas and Details: Analyze a series of events or ideas and determine their significance to the development of the central ideas of the text.**
 - **Application: Students will analyze how the Mississippian culture and Cahokia's significance challenge traditional narratives of American history, understanding the complexity of indigenous civilizations before European colonization.**



- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 / RH.11-12.6**
 - **Craft and Structure: Evaluate authors' differing perspectives on the same historical event or issue.**
 - **Application: Students will examine how the historical erasure of indigenous cultures like Cahokia has shaped the way American history is taught and what perspectives are given precedence in historical education.**

2. Civics/Government

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9 / RH.11-12.9**
 - **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Synthesize information from a range of sources to draw conclusions about a historical issue or event.**
 - **Application: Students will draw from various sources (video, websites, and research) to assess why Cahokia and the Mississippian culture have been marginalized in American history and how this relates to Eurocentrism, nationalism, and historical erasure.**

3. Cultural Understanding

- **Standard 5: Culture**



- How culture is expressed through governance systems, art, religion, and societal roles.
- Application: This lesson will help students understand how the Mississippian culture, including its social structures, trade systems, and religious practices, contributes to our understanding of pre-colonial American history.

Common Core Literacy Standards for Speaking and Listening

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 / SL.11-12.1

- Speaking and Listening: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 - Application: Students will participate in group discussions, offering insights into the significance of Cahokia and how its history has been marginalized. They will listen to other students' findings and respond thoughtfully, using evidence to support their arguments.

2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 / SL.11-12.4



- **Speaking and Listening: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically.**
 - **Application: Students will present their research on Mississippian culture, including topics like social structure, trade, religion, and mounds, in a concise and clear manner, utilizing appropriate evidence.**

Writing Standards

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.1 / W.11-12.1

- **Text Types and Purposes: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.**
 - **Application: In the exit ticket, students will compose an elevator pitch for Cahokia and the Mississippians, making a persuasive argument to someone who has never heard of them, supported by key facts from their research.**

2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7 / W.11-12.7

- **Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research**



and investigation.

- **Application: Students will conduct research on Cahokia and the Mississippian culture, exploring a variety of topics and sources. They will synthesize their findings to draw conclusions about why this culture is not commonly included in traditional American history education.**