



LESSON PLAN

THE TRUE STORY OF POCOHONTAS ELEMENTARY

AIM

Who gets to tell a story and why do they tell it the way they do?

GUIDING QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES

What knowledge about Pocohontas do students have and where did they get it? Why is this information different from what is in the video, what most historians believe? Why can versions of the same historical event be SO different? Who gets to tell the stories we remember and what happens when one perspective is dominant? Why do nations create and preserve origin myths?

KEY VOCABULARY

Colonialization—When one country or group takes control of another people's land and establishes its own settlements and power there.

Diplomacy—Working through communication, negotiation, and relationships to resolve conflicts or maintain peace.

Perspective—The way a person sees and understands something based on their experiences and position.

Source—Something that gives us information about the past.

Primary Source—Evidence created by someone who was at or close to the event.

Bias—Point of view that can affect how someone understands and/or tells a story.

Myth—A story that develops over time and comes to represent important ideas, but may not be historically accurate.

Propaganda—Information or stories designed to influence what people think or believe.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT AT END

ACTIVITY

1. What do I know? (3-5 minutes)
 - a. Have students write down everything they think they know about Pocohontas. Tell them not to worry about whether this is right, if they don't know much or if they don't know anything at all.
2. Show the Native Ed Video "The True Story of Pocohontas." (5 minutes)
 - a. Tell students to pay attention to things that are surprising or interesting to them
3. When the video is over, do not explain anything. Instead ask them to answer the following questions in a group of 3 or 4. (5 minutes)
 - a. What did you have right about Pocohontas before watching the video?
 - b. What did you have wrong?
 - c. What was most surprising?
 - d. What was most different from what you knew?
 - e. Where did you get your version of the story of Pocohontas?



4. Next, briefly have a discussion with the class about “Why do you think so many of us knew the same version of the story. (5 minutes)
5. Back into groups to discuss their answers to the following: (10 minutes)
 - a. Part 1
 - i. Who wrote the first stories about Pocohontas?
 - ii. Were the people who wrote the first stories Powhatan or English?
 - iii. Who side of the story do we have the most information about?
 - iv. What can happen when most of what we know about history comes from only one side?
 - v. If one side wrote all or most about what happened, does that mean their story is right?
 - vi. What parts of a story might be missing if we only get to learn one side?
 - b. Part 2
 - i. If you were John Smith, what kind of story would you be likely to tell about yourself?
 - ii. Imagine John Smith sitting down to write his story
 1. What would make a good story?
 - a. POSSIBLE ANSWERS: Hero, Villain, Danger, Rescue, Romance, Adventure, Happy Ending
 - c. After they are done discussing, ask the class the following: Which of the following makes John Smith look better: ***“I was involved in a complicated diplomatic encounter that I didn’t really understand”*** OR ***“I was about to be killed by savages and a beautiful young woman saved my life,”***?
 - d. Optional: Teach students the word “Propoganda” and define it.
6. Two Stories Activity (10 minutes)
 - a. Give the Groups 2 headlines
 - i. Young Native Princess Falls in Love with English Settler and Helps Save New Colony
 - ii. Young Powhatan Diplomat is Kidnapped by English Settlers and Used To Promote Colonialism.
 - b. These 2 headlines are about the same historical person and events. How can they be so different?
 - c. Have students in groups identify:
 - i. Who is the hero?
 - ii. Who has power?
 - iii. What is being emphasized?
 - iv. What is left out?
 - v. What does the reader feel after reading each headline?
 - vi. Which version would be most popular with the people who were building a new colony and later a new country? Why?
7. Exit ticket (2 minutes)
 - a. Option 1 (If most students knew something about Pocohontas before class)
 - i. Before today, I thought Pocohontas was _____. Now I think _____. The biggest reason for the change in my understanding is _____.
 - b. Option 2 (If most students did NOT know about Pocohontas before class)
 - i. When I ask “Who told this story?” and “Why did they tell it?”, I can better understand history because _____



Standards Alignment

Common Core ELA/Literacy

Reading — Informational Text / History-Social Studies (Grades 6–8)

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 — Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 — Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8 — Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9 — Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.**

Writing — History/Social Studies (Grades 6–8)

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1 — Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9 — Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.**

Speaking & Listening (Grades 6–8)

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1 — Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.2 — Analyze information presented in diverse media and formats.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.3 — Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance of the evidence.**

Grade 5 — Reading, Writing, and Speaking & Listening

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6 — Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.**



- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7** — Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.1** — Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.9** — Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.1** — Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.2** — Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.5.3** — Summarize the points a speaker makes and explain how each claim is supported by reasons and evidence.

C3 Framework for Social Studies — History

Grades 3–5

- **D2.His.4.3-5** — Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.
- **D2.His.6.3-5** — Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.

Grades 6–8

- **D2.His.4.6-8** — Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- **D2.His.5.6-8** — Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.
- **D2.His.6.6-8** — Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

National Council for the Social Studies — Thematic Standards

- **Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change** — Understanding the past through historical evidence and examining how interpretations of history change over time.



- **Theme VI: Power, Authority, and Governance — Examining relationships of power and authority, including those involved in colonization.**
- **Theme X: Civic Ideals and Practices — Evaluating competing perspectives and engaging in informed, evidence-based discussion.**

Civics Connection

Students examine how the stories societies tell about their past can shape collective memory, national identity, and understandings of power. Through collaborative discussion, students practice evaluating competing perspectives and considering whose voices are included, excluded, or given greater authority in historical narratives.

Primary Standards Alignment

The lesson most directly addresses:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 — Point of view and purpose**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9 — Comparing historical sources**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-8.1 — Collaborative discussion**
- **C3 D2.His.6.6-8 — How perspectives influence historical sources**
- **NCSS Theme II — Time, Continuity, and Change**
- **NCSS Theme VI — Power, Authority, and Governance**
- **NCSS Theme X — Civic Ideals and Practices**

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS FOR CLASS ACTIVITIES



STUDENT DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION HANDOUT

1. AFTER THE VIDEO: WHAT CHANGED?

With your partner or group, compare what you wrote before the video with what you learned from the video.

1. Did you write anything about Pocohontas before the video that turned out to be right?
2. What did you write that was incorrect or incomplete?
3. What things were most surprising or different from what you thought?
4. Where did you get your information about the story of Pocohontas?

2. WHO TOLD THE STORY?

Discuss these questions with your partner or group and be prepared to share your ideas with the class.

1. Who wrote the earliest written accounts of Pocohontas? Were they Powhatan or English?
2. Whose point of view do we have the most information about? Why is this the case?
3. What happens when one side of a historical encounter is responsible for all or most of the written records?
4. What could be missing in this case and why?
5. If one side has written records and the other doesn't, does that mean their version is more accurate? Why or why not?



3. IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE JOHN SMITH

Imagine that you are John Smith sitting down to write the story of his life. What kind of story would he be likely to tell about himself? How would he make himself look?

What makes a great story?

Hero Villain Danger Rescue Romance Adventure Happy Ending

Which of these are included in John Smith's story?

Which version makes John Smith look better? Why?

A. "I was involved in a complicated diplomatic encounter with the Indians that I didn't really understand.

OR

B. "I was about to be killed by the Powhatan savages and a beautiful, young woman saved my life."

4. TWO STORIES: SAME PERSON, DIFFERENT STORY

Read the two headlines. They describe the same historical person and event. How can the meaning be SO different?

Version A: Young Native Princess Falls in Love with English Settler and Helps Save New Colony

Version B: Young Powhatan is Kidnapped by English Settlers, Forced to Marry and Used to Advance Colonial Expansion

In each version: Who is the hero? Who has more power? What is being emphasized? What is left out?

How do these make the reader feel?

Which version would be most popular among people building a new colony and eventually a new country?

Why?

5. EXIT TICKET

Complete in 2-3 sentences: When I ask "Who told this story?" and "Why did they tell it?", I can better understand the history because...
