



Weaving the Future, Confronting the Past

Lesson 1: Introduction to the California Indian Genocide

LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 2-3 Class Periods

Content Level: Grades 8-12

Aligned Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.4,6,9; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1,2,3,4,9

Summary: In this lesson, students use primary and secondary sources to outline the “path to genocide” as it applies to the California Indian Genocide. Students match evidence found in multiple sources to the UN definition of genocide as well to as [The 10 Stages of Genocide](#) framework created by George H. Stanton, of [Genocide Watch](#).¹

Essential Questions:

What actions did the US government take to suppress California Native peoples throughout the Gold Rush era? In what ways can the actions against California Native peoples during the Gold Rush be categorized as genocide, and why is this classification significant?

Learning Objective:

1. Students will learn and apply the UN definition of genocide to analyze a primary and secondary source short documentary related to the California Indian Genocide, identifying instances that align with the criteria outlined in the definition.
2. Students will critically read a secondary source detailing the historical context and policies related to the California Indian genocide.
3. Students will actively engage in class discussions to deepen their understanding of the genocidal acts committed against the Native peoples of California during the Gold Rush era.

Materials:

- Lesson 1 [Google Slides](#)
- Video **Notetaker**
- Ten Stages of Genocide Framework **Reference Guide**
- California Indian Genocide **Reading, Timeline & Glossary**
- [Audio recording](#) of Reading with [EdPuzzle](#) (optional)
- Ten Stages of California Indian Genocide **Reading Notetaker**
- Group Work **Toolkit**

¹ **Lesson Source:** This lesson was adapted from The Genocide Education Project's (GenEd) lesson “Stages of Genocide” which explores the ten stages of genocide as they apply to genocides worldwide. For additional information, review the [“Stages of Genocide” Educator’s Toolkit](#).



****BEFORE TEACHING THIS UNIT**

Before teaching this introductory unit on the California Indian Genocide, we recommend that your students learn about California Native people in a positive and nuanced way. This helps combat narratives that Native people are perpetual victims of colonization, when in fact, Native people are survivors who have adapted to protect their communities and cultures despite state-sanctioned genocide.

For tips on how to frame the California Indian Genocide, read the ***Introduction to Unit***.

We recommend the following resources:

1. [Intro to Native Identity](#), a part of Redbud Resource Group's *Ethnic Studies Support Lessons*. In this lesson, students are introduced to elements of Native identity. Topics include: political identity; race/appearance; physical existence; location; contemporary existence and assimilation.
2. [Where do I Live?](#), a part of California Indian Museum and Cultural Center and Redbud Resource Group's unit *Health Ecosystems Feed Healthy Communities*. In this lesson, students research the Native communities in the place where they live, including the contemporary locations of Native governments.
3. [Seeing Our Native Students video guide](#) - an animated video series by Redbud Resource Group. The beginning videos in this series introduce teachers and students to introductory Native Studies topics including identity, political status, historical trauma, and more.

TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS:

Prior to teaching this lesson, we highly recommend becoming more familiar with Indigenous perspectives of genocide, referenced below and in the Introduction to this unit, all of which will provide you with more background information on the California Indian Genocide:

- [“To destroy in whole or in part”: Remembering Our Past to Secure Our Future](#)” by Jack Norton. 2020.
- [Gold, Greed & Genocide](#), video and curriculum by International Indian Treaty Council
- [California Indian History](#) timelines and primary sources
- [Lecture](#) @ BYU Redd Center featuring **Benjamin Madley - An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe**



- [Jules Tavernier and the Elem Pomo](#), video by the de Young Museum highlighting some of the environmental impacts of the Gold Rush era

TRIGGER WARNING: Most students will not be aware that a California genocide occurred, so the information in this lesson may feel shocking, especially if they are familiar with the locations where the genocide occurred. Native students, and others who come from families who may have experienced genocide and/or colonial violence, may need a safe space to retreat if big feelings come up while watching the video and/or reading the article.

LESSON DIRECTIONS

Part 1

Engage: What is genocide?

TIME FRAME: 1 class period (40-60 minutes)

1. Before exploring the California Genocide with students, **ask students what they know about the word “genocide.” Where have they heard the word used before?** Students who have studied the Holocaust will likely be familiar with the word.
2. Explain that the definition of Genocide is debated by scholars around the world, but that the United Nations decided upon a global definition which the class will use for this lesson. Share the definition with the class:
 - A. *[G]enocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group*
 - B. Emphasize that in order for an act to be considered genocide, there must be clear intention to destroy, in *part* or in *whole*, a group of shared identity.
 - C. Additionally, not every element of the UNs definition must be present in order for an act to be deemed “genocide.”



3. Have students watch the following [video](#) produced by Business Insider, featuring Pomo women Nicole Lim JD and her daughter Jayden Lim.
 - A. **PLAY ONCE** and use the top half of the Notetaker to complete a S-I-T protocol:
 - a. Ask students to identify what they find surprising.
 - b. Ask students to identify what they find interesting.
 - c. Ask students to identify what they find troubling.
 - B. **Pause** to check student understanding, give students an opportunity to ask questions, etc.
 - C. [if needed] **PLAY AGAIN** and use the bottom half of the Notetaker to fill in any examples given in the video that could be applied to the UN's definition of genocide.
 - D. Alternate video if for some reason the above is unavailable: [History of Native California](#) by Humbolt PBLC.
4. Ask students if they notice any of the UN's definition of genocide present in the information in the video.
5. Ask students: Why are we learning about this *now*? Some ideas include:
 - A. The state of California would not exist without the attempted genocide of its Native population. In order to understand how our state government was formed, we must understand the genocidal history of the state.
 - B. Many of the ecological challenges that we have in the state (ie. drought, water infrastructure issues, wildfires, loss of biodiversity) are related to the forced removal and genocide of Native peoples and the illegalization of Native land stewardship practices. In order to understand the ecological challenges we face today, we must understand the genocidal history of the state.
 - C. The California Genocide preceded many of the 20th century genocides that are often included in class curricula. In some cases, the California genocide is cited as an influence on other genocidal events (ie. the Holocaust). In order to understand other global genocides, it is important to look at the genocidal history of our state.
 - D. The California Genocide is the only American genocide that is formally recognized by a state government. It might be argued that the American government committed other genocides in other parts of the country. In order to understand the extent of the American government's history of genocide, we must understand how genocide functioned in California.



Additionally, learning about the California Genocide may help inform future accountability plans.

EXTENSION IDEA: Assign students the task of conducting interviews with an elder or family member to explore their family history in California. Encourage them to develop a list of questions that will prompt reflection on the significance of their own experiences, as well as their family members' experiences, in the history of California.

Part 2

Class Discussion: The Ten Stages of Genocide Framework

TIME FRAME: 1 class period (40-60 minutes)

1. Begin class with a **KWL brainstorm**.
 - A. Ask students to recall what they learned from the Gold Rush video in Part 1. Record student responses in the *I Know* column of [Slide 9](#).
 - B. *You will return to this slide at the end of Part 2.*
2. Explain to students that there are limitations to using the UN definition to examine genocide, such as that it situates genocidal acts exclusively in the past. This makes it difficult to stop genocide in real time. There are additional tools we can use to examine genocide. One of those tools is called the *Ten Stages of Genocide*.
3. Hand out the **Ten Stages of Genocide Reference Guide**.
 - A. **NOTE TO TEACHER:** This is a paraphrased version of [Gregory Stanton's](#) Ten Stages of Genocide. For more information, read Stanton's *The Logic of the Ten Stages of Genocide* at the bottom of the Ten Stages landing page on www.genocidewatch.com.
4. Read the introductory paragraph together as a class, and reiterate the important role these stages may play in accountability and genocide prevention.
5. Tell students that they will be using this tool to analyze a text in Part 3, so they will need to become familiar with each stage.
6. Model for students how they should proceed to annotate the text for key language, questions and/or concerns they might have.
7. Ask students to complete a **think-pair-share** considering:
 - A. Why was a tool like this created?
 - B. Can any of these stages be applied to contemporary society, and if so, how?
 - C. In what other ways could this tool be helpful to people who are subject to hate crimes?



8. Come back together as a class and return to the **KWL chart** you started on **Slide 9**. Ask students to consider the Ten Stages of Genocide framework and what they already know about genocide in California, and complete the **I Want to Know** column of the chart.
 - A. *You will again return to this chart at the end of Part 3.*

Strategies for differentiation:

- [Genocide Watch](#) offers short 1-3 minute videos explaining each of the stages with examples. If time permits, consider incorporating these videos into your lesson to supplement the Ten Stages of Genocide Reference Guide.

EXTENSION IDEA: The first four stages taken together result in what James Waller calls ‘**Othering**.’ It’s important for students to define and celebrate their diverse self-identities; ask students to create a collage that represents their own identity. Encourage them to include different aspects such as cultural background, interests, hobbies, and values. Afterward, have students share their collages and discuss how their unique identities contribute to the diversity of the classroom.

HOMEWORK! Given the complexity of the reading material in Part 3 of this lesson, we highly recommend students read the article in full before engaging in the group work activity. Feel free to take advantage of our [EdPuzzle](#) assignment, which features an audio recording of the reading along with fundamental comprehension questions.

Part 3

Group Work: Applying the Ten Stages to the California Indian Genocide

TIME FRAME: 1-2 Class Periods (~90 minutes)

1. Open the class with a review of the **KWL brainstorm** activity from Part 2. Remind students that the class will come back together at the end of the activity to complete the third column, **I Learned**.
2. Assign students to groups of 4 and provide them with the **Group Work Toolkit** (optional):
 - A. Group Work Instructions and Rubric
 - B. Group Values and Norms
 - C. Group Roles and Evaluation Form



3. Discuss as a class or give groups 5-10 minutes to review each of the documents within the Group Work Toolkit.
4. Give students time to divide up individual role duties. While they are doing that, provide them with the remaining handouts:
 - A. California Indian Genocide **Reading**
 - B. California Indian Genocide **Notetaker**
 - C. *Students should have out their **Ten Stages of Genocide Reference Guide** from Part 2*
5. **Come back together as a class.**
 - A. Review the *Basic Facts* and *Key Regions* on the first page of the reading handout.
 - B. Point out the *Timeline* at the end of the reading for students to reference.
 - C. Read through the first two paragraphs of the “Ten Stages of the California Indian Genocide” Reading aloud, *modeling for the students how they might annotate the text as they read*, and any other reading strategies you have used in your class.
6. As a class, identify evidence of the first stage of genocide (classification) and write your answer for students on the **Ten Stages of California Indian Genocide Reading Notetaker**, having them write along with you. Ask students if they understand the process.
7. Reiterate for students that there may be more than one example for each stage within the reading.
 - A. **NOTE TO TEACHER:** There are key descriptive words integrated into the reading that give students clues to specific examples for each stage. They should be able to justify whatever they put on their notetakers. Some answers will be better than others, but there are a variety of possible answers if students can support their claims with evidence.
 - B. You may also consider reiterating here that these stages don’t always occur sequentially. Students may notice that examples of extermination happen throughout the entire reading. This is a distinct characteristic of the California Indian Genocide when compared to other genocides around the world.
8. *If necessary*, continue to read as a class and identify together the second stage of genocide.
9. Again, model the annotation process and record the answer in the notetaker.



10. Have students complete their notetaker in groups, identifying the remaining stages of genocide. Remind students of the group norms as they move through the activity.

Strategies for differentiation:

- Consider heterogeneous groups based on reading level.
- An audio version of the reading is available on [Redbud's YouTube channel](#) (Note: audio may not perfectly correspond to the most current version of the reading).

EXTENSION IDEAS:

1. Watch Redbud's "Steps to Land Back: Konkow Valley" [video resource](#) and have a class discussion around the question: *How are Tribes continuing to heal from the California Indian Genocide today?*
2. Creative Projects: Encourage students to express their understanding of the stages of genocide through creative mediums such as artwork, poetry, music, or short films. This allows them to engage with the topic in a more personal and expressive way, fostering emotional connection and reflection.

Group Evaluations and Class Share:

1. Ask each group to share out their answer for one or two of the Ten Stages of Genocide, allowing other groups to check their answers against one another and add to their notetaker.
2. Ask group members to assess how well their group members followed the set group norms and group roles.

Optional Reflection:

1. Ask students to complete a reflection journal answering the following prompt:
 - A. How might understanding the Ten Stages of Genocide help prevent tragedies in the future?
OR
 - B. Complete the following sentences:
 - i. Three things I learned from this lesson are...
 - ii. Two things I contributed to this project are...
 - iii. A question I still have after completing this lesson is...



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