

Weaving the Future, Confronting the Past

Mini-Lesson 1: California Indian Genocide Historical Artifact Analysis

LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 1 Class Period (50 minutes)

Content Level: Grades 8-12

Aligned Standards: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6-12.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-12.1,2,4,6,7,9;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.9

Summary: *This lesson is meant to supplement Lesson 1: Introduction to the California Indian Genocide.* In this mini-lesson, students will use the Ten Stages of Genocide framework and primary sources to analyze Western attitudes towards California Native people during the Gold Rush era.

Essential Question:

What can historical artifacts reveal about the attitudes of U.S. settlers towards California Indians during the California Indian Genocide?

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will analyze and interpret a variety of primary sources to identify prevailing attitudes towards California Indians during the California Indian Genocide.
2. Students will gain an understanding of the historical context surrounding the California Indian Genocide, including the societal, political, and economic factors that contributed to settlers' attitudes and actions.
3. Students will engage in ethical reasoning by examining the moral implications of the settlers' attitudes and actions, considering questions of justice, responsibility, and human rights.
4. Students will enhance their written and verbal communication skills by summarizing their findings, engaging in class discussions, and/or presenting their analyses to their peers.

Materials:

- **Historical Artifacts Packet**
- **Historical Artifacts Mind Mapping Activity**
- [Google Slides](#) with analysis questions (optional)
- [Google Form](#) with analysis questions (optional)

TEACHER BACKGROUND MATERIALS:

Here are some helpful resources to explore as you prepare to teach this lesson:

- For information on **indentured servitude in California** during the Gold Rush era, read more about the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians on [PBS](#). You can also explore this curriculum: [Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California](#).
- For more information on the war bonds that were handed out by the California State Treasury, read the section titled “**1850-1859: California Militia and Expeditions Against the Indians**” (pp. 15-22) in Kimberly Johnston-Dodds’ (2002) report for Senator John Burton, [Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians](#).

💰 According to MeasuringWorth.com, in 1859, the total amount of \$1,293,179.22 [Johnston-Dodds, 2002] paid by the State of California for military expeditions against California Indians equates to about **\$7,842,351,093.62** today as measured by its relative share of GDP (the market value of all goods and services produced in a year).

NOTE: Calculating the value of money from one year compared to another is not straightforward. There isn't just one right way to do it, and experts choose different methods based on what they're trying to understand. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) looks at the cost of a set group of items and services over time, but what's in this group can change, like when cars replaced carriages or when new technologies like cell phones were introduced. The value can differ based on the method and item of value (Williamson, 2023).

- **Short biography on California State Governor John McDougal:** McDougal was the second governor of California, serving from 1851 to 1852. He ascended to the governorship after Governor Peter Burnett's resignation. Born in Ohio, McDougal moved westward, first to Indiana and then to the California territory during the Gold Rush. Like many who moved to California during this period, he was drawn by the allure of gold and potential prosperity (Melendy, 1960).

McDougal's administration coincided with an apocalyptic period for the state's Native American population. The gold rush and rapid expansion of the settler population had severe consequences for the Indigenous peoples of California. While he was not directly responsible for the signing of the genocidal legislation, the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians, like his predecessor Peter Burnett, his administration and policies continued to institutionalize the hunting and killing of California Indians (Madley, 2016).

LESSON DIRECTIONS

Part 1

TIME FRAME: 25 minutes

5. Provide students with the **Historical Artifact Packet** and introduce each primary source from California settlers/government officials from the time of the California Indian Genocide.
6. Break students up into 5 groups. Assign each group one of the artifacts (artifacts 2&3 can be assigned together).
7. Give students time to answer the following questions within their groups. Each group may type their answers onto a separate slide using the [Google Slides](#) or [Google Form](#) with analysis questions, or just discuss verbally. *(Some questions will be easier to answer than others depending on the artifact.)*
 - a. What type of artifact is it (i.e. advertisement, speech, financial instrument, etc)? Why do you think this artifact was made? Who was the intended audience?
 - b. Describe the artifact's key features, such as the language used, design, imagery, or anything else that you observe.
 - c. What action is being taken against California Indians through this artifact? What attitudes or beliefs are reflected in this action?
 - d. How do you think these actions impacted the lives of California Indians at this time?

- e. Is there evidence in the artifact that suggests settlers faced moral or ethical dilemmas?
- f. What new questions or inquiries come up as you explore this artifact?

NOTE: Remember to MAKE A COPY of the Google Slides and Google Form before sharing with your students!

Part 2

TIME FRAME: 25 minutes

1. Provide students with the **Historical Artifact Mind Mapping Activity** and read the instructions as a class.
2. Give groups time to discuss each of the 10 stages in the context of their assigned artifacts. Then,
 - g. Students will mind map **2-4 stages** that they believe most strongly relate to their artifact.
 - i. They can color/outline each of the stages directly on the decagonal diagram, or make their own mind maps on the back of their paper.
 - h. In the middle, students can record a **new name** for their artifact that they feel better depicts the artifact's nature.
 - i. Then, using their **Ten Stages of Genocide Reference Guide** (if needed), students should organize the key features they discussed in Part 1 into distinct stages. Some features may fit into more than one stage; encourage students to illustrate any possible overlapping.
3. Students can use their completed slides and mind maps to report back to the class a final analysis of the artifact and a brief evaluation of the impact this artifact may have had on California Indian communities.

PERFORMANCE TASK: Have students complete a 500-word journal entry reflecting on the artifacts presented in this mini-lesson. If needed, use the following questions to guide student thinking:

- a. How do these pieces shed light on California history? How does it connect to our lives today (provide specific examples)?

- b. How do you feel after learning about these sources? Are there any emotions or thoughts it evokes concerning justice, responsibility, or human rights?
- c. How can understanding the settlers' attitudes and actions inform our actions and beliefs today, especially in terms of treating different cultures and groups?
- d. How does this artifact connect to the narrative provided in the *Introduction to the California Indian Genocide* essay from Lesson 1?

EXTENSION IDEAS:

1. Have students organize an awareness campaign around Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) for the young Native girl depicted in Artifact 1.
2. Send students on a scavenger hunt using [California Indian History's](#) extensive collection of primary sources to locate newspaper clippings that pair with the Expeditions Against the Indians listed in Artifact 3. Students may also refer to Kimberly Johnston-Dodds' (2002) report for Senator John Burton, [Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians](#).
3. Have students pull language from Artifacts 4 and 6 to create their own [found poetry](#).

REFERENCES

- ACLU of Northern CA. (2019). *Gold Chains: The Hidden History of Slavery in California*.
<https://www.aclunc.org/sites/goldchains/index.html>
- Johnston-Dodds, K. (2002). *Early California Laws and Policies Related to California Indians*. Retrieved March 28, 2024, from
https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/hornbeck_usa_3_d/34/
- Madley, B. (2016). *An American Genocide : the United States and the California Indian catastrophe, 1846-1873*. Yale University Press.
- Melendy, H. B. (1960). Who Was John McDougal? *Pacific Historical Review*, 29(3), 231–243.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3636162>

PBS. (2019). *Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*. American Experience. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/goldrush-act-for-government-and-protection-of-indians/>

Williamson, S.H. (2023). *Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1790 to present*. MeasuringWorth. www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Insider News. (2022, April 18). *Why The Gold Rush is One of the Darkest Moments in US History* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2bpBAXvJew&t=1s>

Miller, L. K. (2013). The Secret Treaties with California's Indians. *Prologue*, 45(¾), 38-45. <https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/prologue/2013/fall-winter/treaties.pdf>

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