



200 Years of Change

summary

Students role-play different scenes that characterize the impact of European settlement on the Great Lakes in order to gain an understanding of some interactions that help to define Great Lakes history.

GRADE LEVEL

4-8



objectives

- Work with others to create and perform a historical skit.
- Describe the relationships between the Native Americans and Europeans in the Great Lakes region between 1600 and 1850.

prerequisite

Who Needs the Lakes?, Seasons Change, Ways of Life

vocabulary

Immunity: bodily power to resist an infectious disease
Reservation: a tract of public land set aside

setting




materials

- Scene cards
- Journals
- Pencils
- Costumes that are made or brought from home


subjects

Social Studies, History,
Language Arts


standards

 Social Studies: 16.A.2b,
16.C.1a, 16.C.1b, 16.C.3a,
16.E.2a, 17.C.2b, 17.D.2b,
18.C.2


Language Arts: 4.B.2b, 4.B.2c,
4.B.3a, 4.B.3c, 5.C.3b

 Social Studies: 4.1.2, 4.1.13,
4.4.3, 4.5.3, 5.1.2, 5.1.6,
5.1.7, 5.3.7, 5.3.10, 5.4.1,
5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 8.1.1

Language Arts: 4.7.9, 4.7.11, 5.7.9,
7.7.8, 8.7.10

 Social Studies: SOC.
I.1.LE.3, SOC.I.1.MS.1,
SOC.I.2.LE.1, SOC.
I.2.LE.3, SOC.I.2.MS.4,
SOC.I.3.LE.1, SOC.II.3.LE.1, SOC.
II.3.MS.1

Language Arts: ELA.10.LE.2

 Social Studies: A.8.8, B.8.4,
B.8.10, B.8.11
Language Arts: C.4.2, C.8.1,
C.8.3

background

A variety of Native American cultures have lived in the Great Lakes region for thousands of years. It is estimated that Ice Age hunters came from Asia, across the Bering Strait, to North America in approximately 14,000 B.C. Over time, there came to be many Native American tribes with both shared and differing beliefs. The tribes sometimes fought with each other, and expanded their territory by conquering one another. Prior to Europeans coming to the area, tribes rose and declined in numbers at different times and under a variety of circumstances.

When the first European settlers arrived in the 1600s, they found a variety of interrelated, but independent tribes existing within North America. Within a span of 200 years (mid 1600-1800), the situation would entirely change as European settlers took over the region and Native Americans, whose numbers were decimated, were forced to leave the lands of their ancestry.

The first Europeans in the region, who were French explorers and fur traders, introduced guns, iron, the wheel and manufactured goods to the Native Americans. They also brought a host of deadly diseases to which the Native Americans had little resistance, including smallpox, measles and cholera. These outbreaks killed one-third to one-half or more of a native population whenever they occurred. The Europeans had a superior advantage over the Native Americans, primarily because of guns, disease and alcohol and used it to conquer the continent of North America. Indeed, there was the rare European leader who was fair, but this

was the exception. Although there were many individuals (trappers, settlers) who had good relationships with Native Americans, most did not. This time in North American history is a complicated and painful topic, which can be difficult to address with students and requires discussion and reflection.

History shows the saga of humans conquering new lands, and this usually results in wars. The strongest group, which is frequently the invader, always wins. The weaker group either dies or comes under the rule of the invader. Although it is important not to rationalize this experience of conquering as inevitable or “right,” it can bring greater understanding to see it in the larger historical context. The relationship between the Native Americans and the European settlers and their shared dependency on the Great Lakes region is a history from which we have much to learn.

In this activity, students role-play a variety of scenes that characterize the time period of mid 1600-1800. The scenes can be simplified or extended, depending on the students and teacher.

About the skits: There are six skits and each one shares an important piece of the region’s history. If there are not enough students to do all the skits, pick the scenes you want to focus on for class knowledge and discussion, or have each student work on two skits. If there are extra students without a group, the groups can be enlarged by adding a narrator or extra characters.

procedure

1. Advance preparation: Photocopy the scene cards for each group. Choose a Native American tribe from your region for students to use in their skits.
2. Explain that students will create skits that show some interactions during 200 years of history in the Great Lakes region. The subject of the skits will be the relationship between the Native Americans and the European settlers. Tell students that this relationship was complicated and resulted in extremely difficult times for the Native Americans. Talking about this relationship gives us a chance to learn about history and to think about choices.
3. Divide students into groups of 4-5 people. Give each group a scene card. It is helpful for students to know which European immigrants settled in their region and which Native American group(s) lived in their area, so they can take on roles more specific for the region.
4. Students adopt the roles on the card and work together to create a skit that is 5-10 minutes long. Use dialogue suggestions to determine the script and questions from the scene cards to determine content, or as guides for later discussion. Students may need additional time to conduct

research, if necessary. They should rehearse and perform the scene for the class. Students will need time to create the scene, rehearse, and make props and costumes. Have students perform in chronological order.

Stage Tips: Remind students of the following as they create their scenes:

- A narrator may be helpful in providing context or setting the scene for the class.
 - Speak in voice that is loud enough for the audience to hear.
 - Face the audience when speaking or when doing an action they need to see.
 - Really adopt the role you are playing; the skit will be more believable.
 - Avoid accents. They can lead to stereotyping and false impressions, and can be difficult to understand.
5. While students are working on their skits, they should complete the appropriate journal pages.
 6. Save time for a question-and-answer session after each skit. Ask students for their reflections and questions on the skit contents.

1 | Making Waves

Year: 1620

Roles: Two Native Americans, two European immigrants

Setting: Each pair is out on the Great Lakes in separate boats.

Facts: The Native Americans (choose a tribe from your area) are fishing or traveling in a canoe. The immigrants (choose a group that settled in your region – French, English, Swedish, Dutch, German...) are coming from Europe on a large passenger ship, over the Atlantic Ocean, and through the Great Lakes, to your region. It has been a very long trip, lasting months.

The trip for the Native Americans has not been as long. They are from the Great Lakes region and their ancestors have lived there for over 10,000 years.

Dialogue: Decide what you will talk about. Some ideas: the boat trip, the beauty of the region, when the passenger boat will arrive, what they will be doing later in the day, what they expect will happen in the next few days, where they are from and what is happening there, what type of fish they are catching, what type of bait they use, how they made the fishing gear, how many fish they need to survive.

Questions: Why are the Europeans coming to the Great Lakes region? Will the new place live up to the Europeans' expectations? How are these two cultures similar and different?

2 | Trading Causes Change

Year: 1630

Roles: Two Native Americans, two European settlers

Setting: A Great Lakes community where trading is taking place.

Facts: At first, the trades seem beneficial to all. The Native Americans were able to obtain items they never had before such as guns, metal knives, axes, sewing needles, and brass kettles. In exchange, the Native Americans gave the Europeans furs to send back to their countries for clothing manufacture. In a few cases, where relationships went well, Native Americans showed the Europeans how to survive in the wilderness around the Great Lakes. They introduced them to corn, pumpkins, edible berries and nuts, and showed them how to hunt in the forests and fish in the lake.

Europeans brought more than just trade goods; they brought both groups of diseases that Native Americans had never been exposed to before (measles, smallpox, cholera, scarlet fever, yellow fever). Native Americans had no immunity to these diseases. Some epidemics killed entire Native American villages over very short amounts of time.

Dialogue: Decide what you will talk about. Some ideas: what benefits each group gets from this relationship, what both groups get from living in the Great Lakes region, what Europeans and Native Americans think of each other, what works and does not with this new relationship, how the Native Americans try to cope with the new diseases.

Questions: What happened when the Native Americans became dependent on the European goods and lost the skills needed to produce their own traditional goods from wood and stone? What happened when some tribes were given muskets while others were ignored?

3 | Beaver Hats in Fashion

Year: 1660

Roles: voyageurs/fur trappers (in North America), hatters (in Europe), beaver

Setting: This scene could be partially set in Europe where the hats were being made, and partially set in the forests of North America where the beavers and other animals were being hunted for export to Europe.

Facts: Many Europeans came to the Great Lakes region to hunt beavers. Beaver fur was sent to Europe, where it was made into hats. From 1600-1850, no proper European gentleman would be seen in public without a beaver hat. In 1760 alone, enough beaver pelts were sent to England to make 576,000 hats. By 1800, many of the beaver in the Great Lakes region had been wiped out.

Dialogue: Decide what you will talk about. Some ideas: the decreasing number of beaver, new kinds of hats, what to do when the beavers are gone, how the decrease in beaver numbers will impact other species.

Questions: What happened when hunting wiped out most of the beavers in the region?

4 | Whose Land?

Date: 1700 (looking back at 1608 when Champlain sailed on the St. Lawrence River). For historical accuracy, keep in mind that Champlain died in 1635.

Roles: Native Americans, Samuel de Champlain and other Europeans, European king

Setting: On the St. Lawrence River, then on the shores of the Great Lakes; could also be set in Europe to show kings giving away land they had never seen

Facts: In 1608, Champlain and a few men sailed up the St. Lawrence River in search of beaver pelts for the popular European beaver hats. Although thousands of Native Americans lived in the area, Champlain claimed the lands for France and renamed rivers, lakes and geographical features with French names. Europeans wanted land that they could farm, log, mine, own, and pass on to their children. This opportunity was not possible in many of their home countries. Most Native Americans did not believe a person could own land. They commonly believed the spirits of the Earth allowed people to live there and the Earth was to be shared. Meanwhile, European kings gave away huge pieces of Native American land to their business associates. At first, Native Americans did not see a problem, as long as the white men were few in number and did not move into their hunting territory.

Dialogue: Decide what you will talk about. Some ideas: the different beliefs that Europeans and Native Americans had about land, what it means to "own" land.

Questions: What happens as more Europeans come to North America and "own" the land that the Native Americans have been living on? What could the two cultures do to get along? What do you do when someone else wants land you are living on and is willing to fight for it?

5 | Final Removal – Where are they now?

Date: Looking back from either 1920 or the present to 1840

Roles: Native Americans, Europeans

Setting: On a Native American reservation, looking back at what happened since 1835.

Facts: After the Europeans came to North America, they found that their views and the Native Americans' views were very different. European colonialism produced a competitive political climate that drove this expansion into native lands. European individuals seeking a new life also wanted to own the land that the Native Americans were living on. Wars between the French, British and Native Americans, ending with the war of 1812, decided the fate of the people and the land in the Great Lakes region.

Before the Europeans came to the region, Native Americans lived in villages all over the region. After the wars, from 1835 to 1850, the Native Americans were forcibly confined to tiny reservations where there was not enough food to support them. Other Native Americans were sent to harsh, dry areas where farming was extremely difficult for people accustomed to the Great Lakes woodlands. After the United States government sent the Native Americans from the Great Lakes region, it quickly filled up with European farms, factories, roads, towns and cities.

Today, Native Americans on reservations do a variety of things such as farm, have gardens, go to college and work. Some Native Americans still live in the Great Lakes region. Some tribes have revived some of their traditions and crafts. Not all Native Americans live on reservations; some live in cities and towns.

Dialogue: Decide what you will talk about. Some ideas: this could be told as a story by someone looking back at the history, the transition to a new place, what is missed about the "old" way of living, what hopes they have for the future, what they do now.

Questions: What might the Native Americans miss most about the way they originally lived near the Great Lakes? What do Native Americans do now on the reservation?

6 | Big Changes – farming, logging, fishing

Date: 1905

Roles: Farmer, logger, fisherman, Great Lakes fish

Setting: Underwater, fish meet to discuss the changes they see happening in the lakes.

Facts: By the mid-1800s, most of the Great Lakes region suitable to farming was settled by Europeans. There were about 400,000 people in Michigan, 300,000 in Wisconsin and about 500,000 in upper Canada. Wheat and corn were some of the first crops grown. As farming grew, crops were exported through the shipping industry. Soon dairy products and meat became strong commodities as well.

Farming: The rapid, large-scale clearing of the land for agriculture brought changes to the region. When land was stripped of vegetation, rich topsoil washed away into the lakes through streams and rivers. This clogged and altered rivers, and ruined fish habitat and spawning areas. Fertilizer run-off in the lakes stimulated algae growth. When algae died, its decomposition took oxygen from the water, which in turn, caused fish to die. When people began to use chemicals to kill crop pests such as insects, fungi and weeds, these chemicals also washed into the rivers and lakes. They continue to cause problems for humans, animals and plants today.

Logging: In the 1830s, people began to cut down trees in the region to sell for construction. Farmers who did not have work in winter generally did the cutting. They felled trees, then floated them down the rivers to the Great Lakes during the spring thaw. Later, specially designed ships transported the logs. Many of these trees were hundreds of years old and could not quickly be replaced. With the trees gone, soil eroded into the rivers and lakes, harming fish habitat and spawning areas.

Commercial Fishing: Catching fish to sell began in 1820 and grew every year. The largest fish harvests were in 1889 and 1899. Catches increased with more efficient equipment and more fishermen. It became too intense for the fish to keep up with. In the early 1900s, the total number of fish began to decrease. Overfishing, combined with pollution and fish habitat destruction, soon caused serious problems for Great Lakes fish populations.

Dialogue: What will be discussed? Ideas include: change over time, the increase in population, how Native American practices were different, the fact that farmers, loggers and fishermen all have families to support, assistance for the Great Lakes. What will the future hold for the Great Lakes? How do these changes impact the Great Lakes wildlife?

wrap-up

Discussion

1. What was similar about the European and the Native American people? *Wanted to live near the Great Lakes, used the area to survive, drank the same water, hunted and fished for the same animals, had families, felt emotions.*
2. What was different between these two groups? *Beliefs about land ownership, tools and weapons they used, diseases their bodies were able to withstand.*
3. How did the two groups treat the land and water differently? *Native Americans did not view land and water as goods to be bought and sold, they did not carry out activities that added chemicals or huge silt loads to the lakes, and there were fewer of them to impact the Great Lakes.*
4. What did you like or dislike about the scenes that were presented?
5. What can we learn from Great Lakes history to help us have a healthy relationship with the Great Lakes' water, land and people? *Every day we help create a new page in Great Lakes history. The choices we make and lifestyles we adopt make a difference.*

sources

Native Americans of the Great Lakes, Stuart A. Kallen, 2000
Great Lakes Country, Russell McKee

assessment

ELEMENTS

	☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆	☆
HISTORICAL SKIT: Student works cooperatively with her/his group to produce a creative, historical scene from the Great Lakes region. Skit accurately portrays the chosen scene, and the student clearly demonstrates a personal investment in the skit.	Addresses all of the components	Missing one component	Missing two components	Missing three or more components
PERFORMANCE: Student follows activity guidelines to perform skit in a manner that conveys the intended information.	Addresses all of the components	Missing one component	Missing two components	Missing three or more components
DISCUSSION: Student actively participates in the wrap-up discussion. Student demonstrates an understanding of the historical relationship between the Native Americans and Europeans.	Addresses all of the components	Missing one component	Missing two components	Missing three or more components



We value your thoughts and feedback on Great Lakes in My World. Please let us know about any oversights, errors or omissions you find, or if there are things you or your students particularly like.

Send your comments to: education@greatlakes.org

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GRADE LEVEL
4-8

journal pages

FIRST NAME

LAST NAME

[1] Answer the following questions while creating and rehearsing your skit

a. What is your role in the skit?

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b. Describe what is happening in your skit.

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c. What emotions do the characters in your skit feel?

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.....

d. Would you make the same decisions as the characters in the skit? Why or why not?

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[2] Answer the following questions after seeing the class performances

a. What was similar about the European and the Native American people?

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b. What was different about these two groups?

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c. How did the two groups treat the land and water differently?

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d. What can we learn from Great Lakes history to help us maintain a healthy relationship between the Great Lakes' water, land and people?

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APPROVED BY

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