

“How Smooth Must Be the Language of the Whites”

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Introduction: I use this lesson as part of our study of Jackson’s Indian Removal policy and the Trail of Tears. Though this is organized as a stand alone lesson, it can be modified in various ways to best meet the needs of your curriculum and students.

Grade Level: 11th Grade

Content Area: Social Studies/History/English Language Arts

Standards:

MSLR for Social Studies-

Civics and Government C4

History A1, C2

CCSS for Literacy in History-

11-12 History/Social Studies Reading 1, 2, 4, 7, 9

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Objectives: Students will be able to

~examine and analyze primary sources;

~identify examples of bias;

~contribute their questions and ideas to class discussion;

~interpret historical artwork;

~extract meaningful language and terms from documents to support their argument;

~write formal essay incorporating pertinent information from multiple sources to support an argument.

Timing: three class periods

Materials:

~Excerpt from President [Jefferson's Private Letter](#) to William Henry Harrison, Governor of the Indiana Territory February 27, 1803

~President Jackson’s Speech to Congress [“On Indian Removal”](#)

~*Indian Removal Policy* by Richard White (pdf)

~Chief Black Hawk Writing Prompt (pdf)

Procedure:

Day 1: Ask students what important events from 1803 in American history that they can recall (looking forward to the Louisiana Purchase). Discussion will review Jefferson’s purchase as well as the Lewis and Clark expedition to discover what lay in the territory. Direct discussion towards the native peoples living in the west. As the country’s borders continued to move westward, followed by the white population, what impact did this have the

those who already lived there? That will be the focus of the next few days. What did President Jefferson think of the natives? What plans, if any, did he have for them? What about the presidents who came after Jefferson and their plans for the Native Americans?

Pass out copies of Jefferson's letter and review with students what primary sources are and why they are so valuable to historians. Instruct students that they will be using President Jefferson's letter to infer what his attitudes and intentions he had for the Native Americans.

Have students read aloud with you the first two paragraphs of the letter. Once you've finished, have students independently review what you've read, paying particular attention to words that they are not familiar with, words that convey a strong sense of tone or voice, questions that have been raised in their mind, and conclusions that they can draw. Once students document the above, have them compare their findings with their neighbor. Finally, review with the entire group what they've found.

For homework, assign the remainder of the letter and have students use the following strategy:

1. Read it once through
2. Read it again and annotate the reading with a top 5 list that includes the following:
 - #5 Top 5 vocabulary words you don't know with definitions
 - #4 Top 4 words that create a sense of tone/voice
 - #3 Top 3 questions you have
 - #2 Top 2 conclusions you can make from this speech
 - #1 Top idea you would agree or disagree with from this speech
3. Be prepared to share your responses and ideas in class.

Day 2: Analyze Jefferson's letter by reviewing the lists that students generated as homework. First, have students work in small groups of four or five to share their work, look up the definitions to words they did not recognize, answer each other's questions, and discuss their interpretations of the speech. Each group will report out to the class their questions and conclusions.

Discuss with students their reactions to Jefferson's letter as well as working with primary sources.

Instruct students that you will now be jumping ahead about 25 years to look at the action of another President, Jackson, and the impact that some

of his policies had on the Native Americans. Provide students with copies (digital or paper) of the Richard White article *Indian Removal Policy* and draw their attention to the painting by Lindneaux. Ask students if this could be considered a primary source and discuss their responses. Finish class by having students infer what they think is going on in the painting.

For homework, have students read the article and offer as enrichment the pertinent clips from PBS's *We Shall Remain*

(http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/episode_3_trailer)

Day 3: Start class asking students to write down what they have learned about the Trail of Tears, particularly what happened, why to whom, and who were some of the key people involved. After working independently, have students share their thoughts and make sure that they understand the basic information about the Trail of Tears.

Next, instruct students that you are now going to look at the speech delivered by President Andrew Jackson that outlines the policy that led to the Trail of Tears. Pass out copies of the *On Indian Removal* speech and have students read aloud with you a portion of the speech. Ask students to answer some basic questions such as who is making the speech, where, when, and to whom. After discussing those responses, have students work independently for ten minutes annotating the speech using the same literacy protocol as they did with the Jefferson letter:

1. Read it once through
2. Read it again and annotate the reading with a top 5 list that includes the following:
 - #5 Top 5 vocabulary words you don't know with definitions
 - #4 Top 4 words that create a sense of tone/voice
 - #3 Top 3 questions you have
 - #2 Top 2 conclusions you can make from this speech
 - #1 Top idea you would agree or disagree with from this speech
3. Be prepared to share your responses and ideas in class.

Debrief with students about what they've read, their responses to the 5 questions, and how the speech connects with what they've learned about the Trail of Tears.

Lastly pass out copies of the Chief Black Hawk Writing Prompt. Have students read the brief history of Chief Black Hawk and his people and then introduce the writing prompt. Check for understanding of the prompt and assignment, ask a student to offer an example of language from one of

the documents used and how they might incorporate that in their essay, and allow students the last few minutes of class to finish the Jackson speech, start their pre-writing exercise, or ask clarifying questions. For homework, students are assigned the first draft of their essay.

As a follow up to this lesson, have students analyze the Dawes Act of 1887 looking again for examples of what Black Hawk would refer to as smooth language that makes right look like wrong and wrong like right.