



A COMPARISON OF TWO CULTURES

Level: high school, grades 9-10
Course: ESL, Spanish, library

Rationale

Zuni students live in a geographically isolated homogeneous society. Students have difficulty relating to the world beyond the pueblo (with the exception of the teenage culture as exemplified by rap music, movies, etc.). By comparing their own culture to that of an indigenous group in Central or South America, students will be learning about their own culture and history, and in the process identify issues which they have in common. This lesson is designed using the Mayan and Zuni culture. Latin America is fertile ground for this kind of comparison study because of the multitude of cultures existing there. The process will encourage students to use a variety of information gathering tools, including the Internet, the LADB, interviews, print and non-print sources. As ESL students, these students will also have an opportunity to hone their English skills. Ultimately students will learn how the world views their culture and how they view their own culture. As teenagers these students are at a life stage when the question of identity becomes paramount. This unit helps them answer the question "Who am I?"

Lesson Overview

Using sources as diverse as interviews and the World Wide Web, students will learn about their own culture through the study of another indigenous culture. Students will look for cultural similarities and differences. There will be lessons on discovering,

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analyzing and organizing information. As a final project to demonstrate their understanding of their research, the students will create a web page about themselves and a web page about the other culture they choose to study. For the purposes of this lesson the Mayan culture will be used. Another culture would work equally as well in this context.

Time Needed

This project could be completed in a nine week quarter. Because the final product requires training in so many areas (e.g. the Internet, Web publishing, research, computer skills, oral history techniques, and possibly video and photography) the length of the unit would depend in part on how many students learn which skills to what degree and how the tasks are assigned. The current pedagogical preference is to cover fewer topics more thoroughly rather than many topics on a surface level. Thus a shortened version of this lesson could take one aspect of culture and compare with the same aspect in another culture. Also several sections of the same course could choose to study different aspects of culture.

Materials

Internet, computer, reference books, cd-roms, etc.

Methodology

As teachers we are aware of the need to use a variety of techniques and approaches. Use your own judgment as to what lessons would work best as small group activities and whole class activities. All class members should participate in the activities which target communicating in English, especially speaking and writing. Other activities can be assigned to those who wish to become the class experts in interviewing, computers, illustration, video and so forth. Add hands on activities and include lectures as appropriate. Students should be prepared before a speaker comes in with some familiarity of the ideas the speaker is to present, as well as questions for the speaker. Videos should be given a context and include some follow up activity.

The Web page as a final project has several benefits and advantages. It has a built in audience and allows for feedback. A web page can incorporate textual, audio, and visual information. All the presentation and communication skills are needed to create a Web page. A Web pages encourages research to form the connections to other pages. Finally a Web page can be revised.

Procedures

Lesson 1: What is culture?

Objective: The students will create a working definition of "culture."

The students will look up the word culture in a dictionary. They will find a definition something like: "The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and other products of

human work and thought.” American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1992.

As a class or in small groups, have students discuss what this might mean. Have students generate a list of items that might constitute culture. The teacher may want to fill in any obvious gaps by asking questions such as, “What about language? Is that part of culture?” Encourage students to elaborate on their lists. Once the lists are exhausted, students can put the items into categories. Work with students to develop the larger categories: religion, language, art, material culture, and so forth.

Enrichment activity

As an extension of the above, the students could imagine what would happen to a group of people if a certain part of their culture changed or was forbidden or eliminated, such as language or religion or government. An example in New Mexico is the Catholics in New Mexico who found out that their ancestors were Jews fleeing the inquisition. Another example is how the Pueblo peoples dealt with the introduction of Catholicism and the suppression of their religion. The Ghost Dance is an example of a cultural response to a radical change, as are the Cargo Cults of the Pacific. The plague in Europe and the impact it had on culture is another historical example. The changes wrought in our culture by computers or television could be discussed. What would happen if there were no television? Students may want to seek out their own examples.

Lesson 2: What is culture?

(continued)

Staff from the Zuni Historic Preservation Office will speak on the topic what is culture. Sources for speakers are historical societies, state and local historic preservation offices, museums, universities, and so on.

Students will be responsible for writing a letter or making a telephone call to invite the speaker. If they wish to video tape the speaker they must ask their permission and make arrangements to have the equipment available. The students are responsible for explaining the project and their conclusions to date to the speakers.

Students will develop a list of questions to ask the speaker.

If appropriate, the teacher will prepare the students for the speakers by discussing appropriate behavior during a presentation.

Students then go back to look at their lists. What categories do they see now? For example is art part of religion? Material culture such as pottery and weaving? What about art done only for sale? And jewelry? Is there a Zuni literature?

This can be discussed in small groups first and then with the class as a whole until topics for future research are established. Students should be reminded at this point that they will be comparing the Zuni and Mayan cultures. The students can then be divided into project groups.

Lesson 3: Cultural relativity

or how the world perceives Zuni and how Zuni sees the world

Students will use the Internet to discover how outsiders perceive Zuni. Some specific sources would be the All Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Home Page which contains several inaccuracies about Zuni. The students would be challenged to decide how they choose to deal with this information. Is it important. Do they wish to correct it? Ignore it? Contact the author or AIPC? Does this mean that all of the information on the Internet is wrong?

Students will also examine the home page created by Karen Strom about her trip to the Southwest including Zuni. What is their reaction to her experiences? Should there be more signs telling tourist what to do? Should tourist be allowed at all? What would be the economic consequences of banning outsiders? Would the students go walking through a cemetery in someone else's country? Why or why not? What do they think about how this woman acted? How the Zuni people acted toward her? What would they have done if they had meet her? Students may choose to respond by writing a letter to the author.

Students could role play being a white tourist in Zuni and a Zuni tourist else where. Or have the Zunis write and perform scenarios for the class or for video. Then answer the questions about how it feels to be an outsider and how it feels to be the object of someone's curiosity. Discuss what they learned from their role play.

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Lesson 4: Cultural relativity

or how does the world perceive Zuni and how Zuni sees the world (continued)

The teacher will lecture briefly on Cushing, including when he was in Zuni and what his purpose was while here. Read A Zuni Artist Looks at Frank Hamilton Cushing by Phil Hughte. How did the Zunis feel about Cushing? How did he help them? How did he hurt them? A short reaction paper is appropriate here. Show the video made about Phil Hughte and his book. Ask: Is this book now part of Zuni culture? Discuss.

Note: Lessons 5-8 can be presented by the student research groups or by the teacher depending on time constraints. Student reports can supplement the teacher presentations. Days for student research can alternate with days of teacher/student presentations.

Lesson 5: Who were the Maya?

Mayan history from pre-history through contact. Films and Mayaquest.

Lesson 6: Who are the Maya today?

Films: *We are Guatemalans* and *If the Mango Tree Could Speak*. Internet: Chiapas Home Page, Fourth World Home Page, other Internet resources relating to indigenous peoples.

Lesson 7: Zuni and Maya

Cultural similarities and differences

One possibility here would be to look at the ancestral cultures of the Zuni and the Maya. Are the Zunis descendants of the people who built the great ceremonial center at Chaco? Why did the Mayan civilization change from one with large ceremonial centers composed of agrarian groups? How did the conquest and contact with the European affect these two indigenous cultures? Did the reservation system in this country make a difference in the way the two cultures relate to the dominant culture? How so? After studying both cultures, and absorbing print, Internet, and video materials, students should be able to come up with more questions.

Lesson 8: Zuni and Maya —

Issues and problems in common, including cultural preservation, economic survival, education, language preservation, land use and acquisition, environment, etc.

Lesson 9: Development of a Web Page

Who is the audience? What kind of information needs to be included? Should there be commercial advertisers in the page? How should the page be organized? What graphics should be included? What links to other pages should be made?

Bibliography

Electronic

Listserves

INDKNOW: Indigenous Knowledge List. To subscribe send message to <listproc@uwashington.edu> to post<indknow@uwashington.edu>

CHIAPAS-L: Chiapas Discussion. To subscribe send message: sub chiapis-l Firstname Lastname to <majordomo@profmexis.dgsca.unma.mx>

Post to <chiapis-l@profmexis.dgsca.unma.mx>

World Wide Web (WWW)

Fourth World Documentation Project

http://history.cc.ukans.edu/history/WWW_history_main.html

Fourth world Documentation Home Page

<http://www.halcyon.com/FWDP/>

Latin America Data Base, many articles

<http://ladb.unm.edu>

Mayaquest

<http://mayaquest.mecc.com>

Native Net

http://kuhttp.cc.ukan.edu/~marc/native_main.html

Voyage to Another Universe

<http://hanksville.phast.umass.edu/title.html>

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Engst, Adam C. Internet Starter Kit. Hayden books: Indianapolis, Indiana, 1994. (includes software.)

Hart, Richard E., editor. Zuni and the Courts: a Struggle for Sovereign Land Rights. University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, Kansas, 1995.

Hughte, Phil. A Zuni Artist looks at Frank Hamilton Cushing. Pueblo of Zuni Arts and Crafts, Zuni, NM, 1994.

Lemay, Laura. Teach Yourself Web Publishing with HTML in a Week. Sama Pub.: Indianapolis, Indiana, 1995.

Rosset, Peter and Sheila Cunningham. Understanding Chiapas. First Food Action Alert. Institute for Food and Development Policy.

Video

If the Mango Tree Could Speak, produced by Patricia Goudvis, 66 Winter St. Watertown, MA 02172 617-923-4878 (58 min) Mayan children in Guatemala and El Salvador

School of Assassins, narrated by Susan Sarandon (18 min) Maryknoll World Productions, PO Box 308, Maryknoll NY 10545. 800-227-8523

We are Guatemalans, narrated by E. G. Marshal (28 minutes) 1995
Maryknoll World Productions, PO Box 308, Maryknoll NY 10545. 800-227-8523