

ROBYN DARLING-GREENLEY: THE HERO/VILLAIN: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT HISTORICAL FIGURES



Rodolfo Roberto de la Cuva del Río: Malinche con Cortés

Students will begin by considering how heroes and villains are made and therefore begin to see that bias greatly influences who is deemed a hero and who a villain. We will look at the complexities of the phenomenon of “trashers” and “vindicators” (as Dr. Gibson refers to the opposing parties in the dispute over who is revered historically). Finally, we look at two female historical figures (Malinche/Malintzin and Pocahontas) to begin to analyze how myths have emerged about them as well as how they have weathered the test of time within the framework of “trashers” and “vindicators.”

- ☞ Hero, Villain, or Both?
- ☞ Doña Marina/Malinche: Victim, Traitor, or Survivor?
- ☞ Who Was the Real Pocahontas? Unlearning the Disney Myth

Name of Unit: The hero/villain: Taking a closer look at historical figures

Suggested Grade Level: 7-8 Grade Social Studies (can be used with high school students as well)

Essential Questions: How are heroes and villains made? What factors/people influence how this occurs? Why should we care? Who were the *real* Malintzin and Pocahontas? How has history treated these two Native American women?

Primary Objective: Students will begin by considering how heroes and villains are made and therefore begin to see that bias greatly influences who is deemed a hero and who a villain. We will look at the complexities of the phenomenon of “trashers” and “vindicators” (as Dr. Gibson refers to the opposing parties in the dispute over who is revered historically). Finally we look at two female historical figures (Malintzin and Pocahontas) to begin to analyze how myths have emerged about them as well as how they have weathered the test of time within the framework of “trashers” and “vindicators”.

Overview and Rationale for the Unit:

We have all had our moments as adults where we have said, “That is not how I learned it!”, referring to some historical event that we learn later in life was not as black and white as we were led to believe. Students should be exposed early in their education to the notion that bias is inherent in much of the material we read and view; history texts included. In an effort to incorporate critical thinking skills, particularly when dealing with the media and how history is constructed, this unit offers students a chance to analyze a variety of media, from film to primary source documents.

This unit assumes that students have already learned about the history of colonization in the Americas to some degree. They will be asked to look for historical bias, misrepresentations, themes and larger questions they wish to explore further. Students should begin to see that history is not black and white and that historians have a much more complex role in sharing the past with their readers than they imagined.

State Standards: NM State Benchmark (5-8) I-D: Research historical events and people from a variety of perspectives, Benchmark (5-8)I-C—World: Compare and contrast major historical eras, events, and figures from ancient civilizations to the Age of Exploration. Benchmark (9-12) I-D—Skills: Use critical thinking skills to understand and communicate perspectives of individuals, groups, and societies from multiple contexts.