

Create a Village



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Middle school students encounter a variety of life experiences that help to shape them as unique individuals during their journey between childhood and young adulthood. As they mature, adolescents learn to appreciate human differences; they explore many character traits; and they seek to define their own identity. The Create a Village lesson is designed to foster teamwork, to develop mutual respect, and to highlight the importance of empathy and compassion while students also learn the intricacies of the bartering system and the importance of effective communication. This lesson guides students toward a deeper understanding of diversity and the impact of natural resources on a society; it fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills; and it underscores the importance of positive character traits to enrich the students' lives, now and in the future.

objectives

- [] Students gain a teamwork ethic as they work in 3–4 person teams to barter for necessary resources in order to create a Native American village.
- [] Students learn the importance of mutual respect as they fulfill their roles in their Native American Nation and learn to respect the customs of others in bartering between tribes.
- [] Students develop a sense of empathy, compassion, and reciprocity as they observe that people trade voluntarily only when each party expects to benefit from the trade.
- [] Students gain insight into Native American culture as they create their own village based on many Native American customs.
- [] Students learn the importance of communication as they use Native American sign language, and abstain from speech, in bartering.



time required

Three block periods (*approximately 50 minutes each, for a total of 1 hour, 30 minutes*)

materials

- [] Handout 1 Native American “Create a Village” gathering sheet; Native American symbols and meanings
- [] 11 quart-size ziplock plastic bags and 11 self-adhesive labels (*Teacher: insert each of the following resources into a separate ziplock bag and label as follows: Large Bearskin, Small Bearskin, Campfires, Babbling Brooks, Maize, Firewood, Horses, Buffalo, Kachina Spirits, Bows and Arrows, Wild Berries.*)



resources

- [] 4 large brown grocery bags: use the large panels to cut into 6in x 12in sections to make 16 “Large Bearskin” and use the smaller side panels to cut into 4in x 6in sections to make 16 “Small Bearskin”
- [] One 9in x 22in sheet of red paper cut into 3in x 4 1/2in sections to form a pack of 15 “Campfires” for the ziplock bag
- [] Two 9in x 22in sheets of bright blue paper cut into 3in x 11in sections to form a pack of 12 “Babbling Brooks” for the ziplock bag
- [] One 9in x 22in sheet of gold paper cut into 3in x 4 1/2in sections to form a pack of 15 “Maize” for the ziplock bag
- [] 16 small popsicle-stick-style wooden crafts sticks to represent “Firewood”
- [] 16 clip art horses, cut out individually to place in the resource bag “Horses”
- [] 16 clipart buffalo, cut individually, for “Buffalo” ziplock bag
- [] 16 clipart Native American symbols, cut individually, for the “Kachina Spirits” ziplock bag
- [] 16 clipart Bows and Arrows, cut individually, for the “Bows and Arrows” ziplock bag
- [] 16 markers (*red, pink, purple, violet*), for the “Wild Berries” ziplock bag

Note: Only these materials are available to the students. They should have nothing else out on their desks – no pens, pencils, tape, staplers, etc., during the activity – and they cannot use the teacher’s supplies.

The handouts for this lesson plan can be found in the supplemental items section at the back of this book.

teaching activity introduction

This lesson is designed to help middle school students gain an appreciation of diversity, positive character traits, effective communication, and knowledge about bartering. The lesson involves group work and teamwork as students fulfill roles for the good of the entire village. Likewise, the teacher is an active participant who maintains harmony during the bartering process.

period 1: roles

(Instructions, preparation for the activity)

Students are divided into groups of three or four. Each group is given the name of a Native American Nation (*for example, Cherokee, Arapaho, Comanche, Iroquois, Apache, Shawnee*). The students choose their roles within the group for the following:

Chief. Sends the Scout to another Native American Nation to respectfully barter for natural resources to create the village.

Only the Chief may contact the Kachina Spirits in a respectful manner, should the Nation have to ask a question. Once Chief Whispering Wisdom recognizes the Nation's Chief, that student is the only one who may verbalize with Chief Whispering Wisdom to ask for clarification or guidance.

Storyteller. Assembles the natural resources from the Scout and begins to turn the raw materials into necessary items by using customs from the Native American culture.

Scout. Travels to the neighboring Nations; respectfully addresses their Chiefs; using traditional Native American sign language, attempts to barter – using natural resources from his or her own Nation to trade for the natural resources of Nations he or she visits.

Gatherer. Receives the resources from the Scout and helps the Chief determine which resources still need to be secured through bartering. (*In 3-person groups, Scout and Gatherer are combined into one.*) *Kachina Spirits.* Represented by the teacher; referred to as Chief Whispering Wisdom; Chief Whispering Wisdom serves as a facilitator and monitor, guiding people and fostering harmony and respect during the bartering process.

instructions

Natural Resources. The raw materials placed in each labeled ziplock bag serve as one natural resource. Each Native American Nation is given one or two natural resources with instructions that the resources are scarce – that is, the supply is limited. The resources therefore are valuable for use in bartering.

Teacher Note: Depending on class size, some groups may have two resources. However, make certain that these are not compatible – campfire and firewood, for example – in order to preserve the need to seek outside resources.

Bartering System. Each Native American Nation is to gather natural resources from neighboring nations. The Chief will send the Scout to another Nation with one sample of his/her own nation's natural resource for use in trading. The Chief must make certain that only *one* Scout is at a neighboring Nation at a time. The Scout must greet the Chief of the neighboring nation with Native American sign language by respectfully raising his/her hand skyward, all fingers together. The bartering process requires use of Native American sign language also. (*Respectfully point all fingers, with the thumb tucked into the palm, at the Chief; then quickly pass the palms of the hands side by side three times in a trading motion, followed by the thumb pointed toward the Scout with fingers still together.*) Then the Scout shows his/her resource for inspection by the Chief in an offer to barter. If the Chief believes it is a good trade, he/she will signify by shaking his/her head yes; if this is not a good trade – this Nation has no need for the resource – the Chief may signal a no and a wave of the hand to send the Scout back to his/her Nation without a trade. The Scout must return to his/her own Nation and Chief for further instructions between bartering sessions. Remember, the Chief must send the Scout, as he/she does go out on his/her own accord.

Teacher Note: The group will need to figure out how to secure the necessary natural resources when a Chief refuses to trade for the items offered. For example: the group might barter with a different Nation for two resources, then trade one of these new resources with the Nation that previously declined to trade.

Create a Village. Once the new resource is secured, the Scout returns to his/her own Nation and presents it to the Chief. The Chief then offers the resource to the Gatherer and the Storyteller. They follow the instructions on the Create a Village gathering sheet and begin the process of turning raw materials into three-dimensional representations of the items necessary to create a community, as indicated.

For example: the group may think of ways to turn a brown grocery bag into a bearskin teepee – perhaps by crunching it several times to make the bag soft, by using “berries” to add the tribe’s symbols on the outside of the bearskin, by twisting it to make it stand in a traditional 3d cone shape.

Respect for the Kachina Spirits. If two Scouts are at any Nation to barter at the same time, it will be considered disrespectful and the Kachina Spirits will be disturbed. Chief Whispering Wisdom (represented by the teacher) will then call out “Peace Treaty,” and both Scouts must return to their own Nations without bartering. Then the group must determine how to show proper respect to the Kachina Spirits in order to resume the search for resources and begin bartering once again.

Teacher Note: The students must try to think of ways to appease the Kachina Spirits. The objective is that the Nation’s Chief must signal Chief Whispering Wisdom, apologize for the disrespectful behavior, and respectfully request to resume the search. Chief Whispering Wisdom then assures the Nation that the Kachina Spirits are now pleased and the search may begin again. If the Chief is not respectful, Chief Whispering Wisdom replies that the Kachina Spirits are still displeased. The group must then consider other ways to show respect.

The Power of Communication. At one time, the Native American Nations spoke over 10,000 different languages. Because of this diversity, Native Americans developed sign language as an important form of communication. The *last* portion of instructions for this lesson is that the students must abstain from speech, including lip-syncing, in their interactions. Remind them that they have no pens, no pencils, and, except for the Scout, they may not leave their seats during the activity, nor may they get into any supplies other than the natural resources provided. At this point, inform the students that once the activity begins there will be absolutely no spoken communication. If Chief Whispering Wisdom observes any disrespectful behavior in this area, then the Kachina Spirits will be displeased and a “Peace Treaty” will be called upon that Native American Nation. Ask for final questions.

Teacher Note: The students will need to think of ways to communicate without speaking – for example, by using body language, gestures, and (once they are secured) “berries” for writing commonly understood Indian symbols. This will be one of the most difficult areas for teamwork, but the one that the students will find the most rewarding once they figure it out. Often a student will inquire – “How are we supposed to do that?” The response is for Chief Whispering Wisdom to place one hand on each side of the student’s head, and state: “With what is between my hands. You will figure it out.”

period 2: create a village activity
Remind the students that once the activity begins, there is to be no talking. In this phase, the students assume their roles and transform themselves into members of the community they are creating.

The teacher’s role here becomes that of monitor, facilitator, guide, enforcer of the rules – and, serving as Chief Whispering Wisdom. (*In other words, melt into the background and let the students take ownership of the activity.*)

Once the members of a Nation believe that they have created their Village, the Chief respectfully summons Chief Whispering Wisdom. Review the collected natural resources, determine if each has been appropriately “brought to life” with creative thinking in a 3-dimensional representation of a Native American village as per the guidelines on the gathering sheet.



period 3: discussion/reflection

Guide the students through a class discussion about the following:

1. How did your Nation communicate with other Nations without spoken language?
2. What did you learn from the Kachina Spirits and Chief Whispering Wisdom?
3. If your group was turned down for a trade, what did you do to solve the problem?
4. If your Nation refused an offer of trade, what were your reasons?
5. If your nation refused an offer of trade, did you consider how your refusal would affect members of the other Nation?
6. If your Nation experienced a “Peace Treaty,” what was the reason? What might you have done differently to avoid the Peace Treaty?
7. If your nation received a Peace Treaty, how did you resolve the conflict? Why did this method work?
8. By responding to the following questions, tell what have you learned about Native American culture?
 - a. How did different customs and beliefs affect your Nation?
 - b. How can you take these lessons and use them in your own life?
 - c. What methods of communication did your Nation use?
9. What have you learned about the importance of communication?

Instruct the students to write an entry in a reflective journal, summarizing their thoughts about the activity, the class discussion, and the lessons that they have learned.

conclusion

The Create a Village activity is designed to grab the students’ attention. Initially, the students are eager to participate because of the game-like quality of the activity. As individual students learn to work within a group in order to perform effectively in the bartering system, the need to win gives way to the need to give as much as one receives. Subsequently, students conclude that the outcome is not the win-lose situation found in most games, but rather a win-win result. Positive character traits emerge in a context of teamwork and comradeship. The game encourages students to use higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving techniques in order to create a true sense of community. To an uninformed outside observer, the final result is a pile of crumpled grocery bag pieces, broken craft sticks, and colored bits of paper. To the participating students, however, the raw materials will have metamorphosed into a source of pride and accomplishment, created in part by the satisfaction that can come from working effectively in a team effort.

economic concepts

Bartering. The act of trading by exchanging some goods for other goods without using money.

Commodities. Something that is useful, often in its raw state, that can be traded, such as an agricultural or mining product.

Interdependence. A condition in which two or more people depend on one another.

Natural resources. Raw materials that are present on Earth without human intervention; land and water, are examples of these materials.

Scarcity. The condition that results because people’s wants are unlimited and the resources available to satisfy those wants are limited. This condition forces people to make choices.

Trade-offs. Giving up some of one thing to get some of another.



Handout: Native American Symbols

	horse <i>journey</i>		running water <i>constant life</i>		morning stars <i>guidance</i>
	man <i>human life</i>		raindrop / rain <i>plentiful crops</i>		sun symbols <i>happiness</i>
	sun rays <i>consistency</i>		tipi <i>temporary home</i>		big mountain <i>abundance</i>
	lasso <i>captivity</i>		sky band <i>leading to happiness</i>		house of water <i>water</i>
	thunderbird <i>sacred bearer of happiness unlimited</i>		medicine <i>man's eye wise, watchful</i>		fence <i>guarding good luck</i>
	crossed arrows <i>friendship</i>		mountain range <i>mountain range</i>		boxed enclosure <i>enclosure for a ceremonial dance</i>
	arrow <i>protection</i>		hogan <i>permanent home</i>		eagle feathers <i>chief</i>
	arrowhead <i>alertness</i>		bear track <i>good omen</i>		facing arrows <i>warding off evil spirits</i>
	four ages <i>infancy, youth, middle age, and old age</i>		rattlesnake jaw <i>strength</i>		cross <i>paths crossing</i>
	cactus <i>desert</i>		headdress <i>ceremonial dance</i>		broken arrow <i>peace</i>
	gila monster <i>desert</i>		butterfly <i>everlasting life</i>		lightning snake <i>lightning</i>
	cactus flower <i>courtship</i>		coyote tracks <i>coyotes</i>		snake <i>defiance, wisdom</i>
	saddlebags <i>journey</i>		rain clouds <i>good prospects</i>		thunderbird track <i>bright prospects</i>
	bird <i>care, lighthearted</i>		lightning and lightning arrow <i>swiftness</i>		deer track <i>plentiful game</i>
			days and nights <i>time</i>		

Handout: Create a Village

Your tribe is peaceful. You are searching for a special place to prepare for a new village. Each of the surrounding Native American tribes have special skills for acquiring one specific item. Your group will need to bargain, trade and communicate for the following, necessary items for survival during the long winter months ahead. Be sure to read all instructions carefully. You will need to pay attention to details and work as a team.

tribal name

chief

storyteller

scout

gatherer



Important: Your tribe must use only traditional Native American forms of communication. Power of speech is forbidden.

bearskin

One large bearskin to make a teepee
Make a teepee with your tribe's Native American symbols

campfire

Necessary to keep warm
Create an item to look like fire

babbling brook

Water is a necessity
Create an item to look like a stream for drinking, bathing, fishing

buffalo

Animal that is a basic part of Native American life
Buffalo is becoming scarce, be sure to make a good trade

maize

Food that is basic for every Native American meal
Create an item to look like corn on the cob

firewood

Necessary to keep warm
Create an item to look like firewood with a campfire

horses

Animals that offers transportation
Horses are respected for their contributions of safety, transportation, dependability and strength

berries

Natural food and dyes for painting
Berries offer sweet additions to the food supply. Berries are used to dye animal skins and create symbols.

kachina spirits

Called to help keep "The Circle of Life"
Sacred and respected – basic beliefs of Native American culture

bearskin

One small bearskin to make a blanket
Create an item to look like a bearskin blanket for the cold winter nights

bows and arrows

Necessity of Native American life
Bows and arrows are used for hunting, protection, and safety



Handout: Native American Resources

