

Content Spotlight:

Indigenous Peoples and Colonialism in the United States



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November is National Native American Heritage Month, a time to celebrate Indigenous communities across the United States.

Historically, curricula have overlooked the history and experiences of American Indians, especially in regard to Thanksgiving. Though widely celebrated as a day of gratitude and togetherness, the holiday is, for many Indigenous people, a reminder of the lasting effects of colonization, including the genocide and displacement of their people and the erasure of culture.

This month is an opportunity for students to build their understanding of colonization, indigenous history, and the ongoing challenges Indigenous people face, such as

loss of their ancestral homelands and the effort to reclaim sovereignty. By understanding our nation's roots, students can recognize the importance of supporting Indigenous communities today.

In addition to the information provided in this resource, you can check out these resources to learn more:

- **NDN Collective**
- **Association on American Indian Affairs**

Check out how Britannica experts use both social studies and science lessons in the featured inquiry!

Expedition: Learn! is an instructional platform with standards-aligned, interdisciplinary lessons that build content knowledge, reading comprehension, and critical-thinking skills. Explore how our experts utilize content area reading to develop key ELA skills!



In Practice

Through an interdisciplinary inquiry framework, students can deepen their understanding of historical injustices and Indigenous resistance. They will develop social studies, science, and ELA skills by engaging with the following tasks:

- analyze sources and develop an evidence-based argument
- apply learning to address real issues
- take constructive, independent, and collaborative action

Keep the exploration going! Discover these resources and more in Expedition: Learn! on Teach Britannica.



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Classroom Guide

Directions: Use this inquiry to practice interdisciplinary literacy.



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Indigenous Peoples and Colonialism in the United States

Inquiry

Grades 6–8

3 weeks (based on 60 min. periods)

Compelling Question

What does the control of land influence?

Staging the Compelling Question

Introduce students to the themes of the compelling question by displaying the **Native Land Digital interactive map**. Search your school's address to learn about the territories, languages, and treaties associated with the Indigenous lands you are on. To conclude, present the compelling question to students and discuss it in the context of what they learned from the interactive map.

Explore the Supporting Questions

For each supporting question, students will complete the accompanying formative assessment by exploring primary and secondary sources.

Supporting Question 1

What were the effects of early colonization on Indigenous peoples?

Formative Assessment

List the ways Indigenous peoples were impacted by early colonization.

Expedition: Learn! Sources

Social Studies Lesson
The American Indians and the Pilgrims

Science Lesson
Epidemics and Pandemics

Supporting Question 2

How did the prevalence or scarcity of natural resources impact colonists?

Formative Assessment

Describe the availability or lack of natural resources and how that impacted colonists in a **T-chart**.

Expedition: Learn! Sources

Social Studies Lesson
The Early Virginia Colony

Science Lesson
Natural Resources

Supporting Question 3

How did government policies impact Indigenous peoples and their land?

Formative Assessment

Create a **timeline** with eight policies and describe the impact of each.

Expedition: Learn! Sources

Social Studies Lesson
The Impact of Westward Expansion on American Indian Nations

Skill Builder
Excerpt from President Andrew Jackson's Second Annual Message (1830)

Social Studies Learn More
U.S. treaties with American Indian nations

Skill Builder
Indian Land for Sale (1911)

Supporting Question 4

How have Indigenous peoples responded to the loss of their lands over time?

Formative Assessment

Summarize Indigenous peoples' responses to the loss of their lands over time.

Expedition: Learn! Sources

Skill Builder
The Suppressed Speech by Wamsutta Frank James (1970)

Skill Builder
Standing Rock Protests

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Summative Performance Task

Students will demonstrate their understanding and consider historical and current events related to Indigenous land rights and power in the United States.

Argument: Construct an argument in the form of an essay in response to the compelling question using specific claims and counterclaims supported by relevant evidence.

Extension: Research developments related to land rights and Indigenous peoples, such as the Land Back Movement. Think about how current efforts to reclaim land are influenced by history and government policies.

Taking Informed Action

Provide students with the opportunity to apply what they have learned to issues currently affecting Indigenous communities across the United States.

Understand: Learn about current legal challenges affecting Indigenous peoples in the United States by researching topics such as land and resource rights and voting rights.

Assess: Choose an issue you would like to explore, and research how Indigenous communities are addressing the challenge.

Act: Decide the best approach to support the cause, such as generating awareness, writing a letter to a government official, or supporting a petition campaign.

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