

“The Lone Woman of San Nicolas”

Lesson: Unearthing Sacred Land-Opinion Writing

Resource Summary: Students will read about the unearthing of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas’ cave, and the push back to continue digging for it from her tribe, the Pechanga tribe. They will also read about the controversy over the building of the Dakota Pipeline. Students will write an opinion essay on whether they think research and development on sacred Native American land should be allowed if done cautiously, or if they feel Native American land should be left untouched as requested by local tribes.

Subject Areas: Language Arts, Writing, History

Grade Level Range: Grades 4-8

Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1](#) Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.A](#) Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer’s purpose.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.B](#) Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.C](#) Link opinion and reasons using words and phrases (e.g., for instance, in order to, in addition).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1.D](#) Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.

*Opinion writing standard thread continues for upper grades.

Resource Provided By: Marme, Kimberly, Fourth and Fifth grade teacher, Canalino Elementary School, Carpinteria California

Resource Details:

Writing Prompt Opinion Essay

For the next few days you will be reading about the Lone Woman of San Nicholas Island. As the main character of the popular 1960's book, Island of the Blue Dolphins, she has remained a person of mystery and intrigue many people of all ages.

After being removed from the island, she was brought back to the Santa Barbara Mission where she died shortly later of disease. In her brief time in Santa Barbara, she only spoke four words, and kept mostly to herself. It is believed that her cave has been found off the coast of San Nicholas Island, and archeologists are eager to learn more about the mystery.

However, the Pechanga Tribe, her Native American descendants, feel the digging is disrupting their ancestors' remains, and to leave it alone is the best thing to do. Before being stranded on the island, hundreds of the Lone Woman's family and tribe members were killed or removed from the island by Russian fur sailors. The Pechanga tribe feel their ancestors have been punished enough, and due to federal law they have halted the dig, and ask that it does not continue.

In other recent news, there has been controversy over use of sacred Native American land with the digging of the Dakota Pipeline in North Dakota. The local Standing Rock Sioux tribe feel digging the pipeline will: contaminate their water source, destroy sacred land, and ruin ancient burial sites. However, Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), an oil company looking to build the pipeline, promises to build in safety precautions and avoid important landmarks.

Read about the two recent incidents: the unearthing of the Lone Woman's cave and the building of the Dakota Pipeline. Decide what your opinion is. ***Should research or development on sacred Native American land be allowed if done with caution, or should we respect the wishes of the Native American tribes and leave the land untouched.***

Source 1

- With Island Dig Halted, Lone Woman Still a Stinging Mystery- The Pechanga tribe, long descendants of The Lone Woman of the San Nicholas do not agree with digging up her cave.
 - Read the article with your teacher, and listen for important ideas
 - Read the article again with your teacher, and highlight important information
 - Read the article a third time independently and mark any important quotes that you might want to use in your essay

Source 2

- A Long Protest Continues TIME For Kids- The Standing Rock Sioux tribe and the Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) are at odds over allowing the construction of an oil pipeline.
 - Read the article with your teacher, and listen for important ideas
 - Read the article again with your teacher, and highlight important information
 - Read the article a third time independently and mark any important quotes that you might want to use in your essay

Task 2

After you read, highlight and make notes from the sources, you will write an opinion essay. In your essay, you will decide: ***Should research or development on sacred Native American land be allowed if done with caution, or should we respect the wishes of the Native American tribes and leave the land untouched.***

In your essay, clearly state your opinion and support your opinion with reasons that are thoroughly developed using information from what you have read and viewed.

REMEMBER: A well-written opinion paper

- has a clear opinion;
- is well-organized and stays on the topic;
- has an introduction and conclusion;
- uses transitions;
- uses details from the sources to support your main idea;
- puts the information from the sources in your own words, except when using direct quotations from the sources;
- gives the title or number of the source for the details or facts you included;
- develops ideas clearly;
- uses clear language; and
- follows rules of writing (spelling, punctuation, and grammar).

Source 1: With Island Dig Halted, Lone Woman Still a Stinging Mystery

For months they worked together to reveal details of the cave where the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island may have lived, painstakingly removing bucket after bucket of sand — 40,000 in all.

Navy archaeologist Steve Schwartz, who was helping lead the project, was impressed by one of the Cal State L.A. students taking part in the high-profile dig: Tom Holm, a filmmaker who was eager to weave the team's archaeology lessons into a documentary based on the work.

And Holm felt blessed to work shoulder-to-shoulder with experts, marveling at their knowledge of the 19th century Native American woman who survived on the Channel island for 18 years, abandoned and alone.

In April 2012, they were inches away from relics that would flesh out the real-life story of the woman who inspired the novel "Island of the Blue Dolphins," one of the 20th century's most popular novels for young readers and required reading in many California schools.

But commanders at the naval base on the island about 65 miles southwest of Point Mugu ordered Schwartz to halt the dig.

The archaeologist was especially dismayed by a terse question embedded in the order: "Is the work you're doing out there legal?"



Archaeologist Steve Schwartz felt betrayed when the Navy ordered a halt to work at a site it took him 20 years to find: the cave believed to be the home of a 19th century Native American woman who lived on San Nicolas Island, abandoned and alone, for 18 years.

But something else stung. The shutdown grew out of allegations by none other than Holm, who had brought members of the Pechanga tribe to the island amid concerns that work in and around the cave was possibly out of compliance with federal laws enacted to protect cultural resources.

The closure interrupted research on one of the most significant historical finds in California history — and led Schwartz, 57, to retire early in anger and frustration.

It's a heartbreak. A travesty. We may never learn what archaeological riches that cave is guarding.— Steve Schwartz, archaeologist

Very little is known about the Nicoleno Indians, who in the early 1800s suffered catastrophic losses in repeated fights with Russian fur traders and Alaskan sea otter hunters over pelts and native women.

The Nicoleno population of about 300 dropped sharply to a few dozen after a particularly brutal battle in 1814.

In 1835, a ship was dispatched by Franciscan fathers to bring to San Pedro the few who remained. All but one made the trip aboard the *Peor es Nada*, loosely translated as "better than nothing."

According to legend, the woman jumped overboard and swam for shore after realizing that her baby had been left behind. A sudden storm forced the ship's captain to shove off without her.

Legend has it that as she was running back home, the baby was eaten by wild dogs.

"What actually happened to her remains a mystery," Schwartz said.

He was determined to find out.

Schwartz had already spent more than 20 years searching for the cave when, in 2012, its precise location was confirmed in the field notes and compass bearings of a 19th century government surveyor. One of his field stations on the island, the surveyor wrote, was "100 yards eastward of the large cave formerly inhabited by a wild Indian woman who lived there alone for 18 years."

Schwartz discovered the cave — 20 feet high, 75 feet long and packed with sand — under a rock overhang. Digging out the sand, Schwartz and his team uncovered two sets of initials and a date etched near the cave's arching mouth: "September 11, 1911." They also found two glass pepper sauce bottles, remnants of late 19th century seamen.

At first, Holm was excited to be taking part in the dig, led by Schwartz and Rene Vellanoweth, Holm's archaeology professor at Cal State L.A.

But Holm's views began to change after meetings with Pechanga elders who questioned his instructors' explanations of artifacts unearthed on the island. Holm also fumed over T-shirts worn by Vellanoweth and his team members that said "San Nicolas Cave Archaeology," because, as he put it, "we did not have permission to do anything other than remove sand."

Later, teams of archaeology students were stunned by heated exchanges between Holm and Schwartz and Vellanoweth in the cave and elsewhere on the island.

After stewing over the perceived violations for months, Holm invited three members of the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians to accompany him on a tour of the cave. A few weeks later, the tribe, best known for its lucrative casino near the Riverside County city of Temecula, fired off letters demanding that the Navy stop archaeological research in the cave and at 549 other sites across the island.

Now, the cave is closed indefinitely while its fate is being negotiated between the Navy and the Pechanga tribe, which is claiming cultural affiliation with the island's mysterious ancient people, who for 8,000 years scratched out a living eating mostly shellfish, sea lions, small fish and roots.

"We're only trying to do what's right by our ancestors," Mark Macarro, the tribe's chairman, said in an interview. "We must ensure that all applicable federal laws are followed."

As a rule, when it comes to digging up artifacts, the Pechanga's preference is avoidance.

Federal agencies are required to consult with a federally recognized tribe before undertaking a proposal that may adversely affect cultural resources it is affiliated with. The Pechanga aims to assume that role.

The tribe hinges its claim on its interpretation of the only four words uttered by the Lone Woman that were written down, and two songs she reportedly sang, after she was finally brought from the island to Santa Barbara.

No one understood a word of the Lone Woman's language beyond that she called a hide "tocah," a man "nache," the sky "toygwah" and the body "puoochay," according to badly spelled transcriptions made under unknown conditions by unidentified non-linguists. Her songs are mostly "vocables," or nonsense syllables.

Many archaeologists who are knowledgeable about the earliest inhabitants of the Channel Islands say a preponderance of skeletal and DNA data affiliates the island with Gabrielino Tongva Indians, who occupied the greater Los Angeles Basin and the southern three islands: Santa Catalina, San Clemente and San Nicolas.

Among them is John Johnson, curator of anthropology at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History. "Granting cultural affiliation with Pechanga would be a big mistake," he said. "I don't believe it would survive a legal challenge. The four words do not indicate some sort of cultural connection."

Last week, however, the Navy announced it had determined that the Pechanga were culturally affiliated with the remains of 469 people and 436 objects that have been removed from San Nicolas Island and are now stored in museum and university collections throughout the state.

The designation, which does not specifically apply to the cave, is expected to give the tribe a greater role in determining the extent of future archaeological research on the island. The tribe says it has not yet decided what to do with the artifacts.

Among the losers in the dig shutdown is Holm himself, who says he invested \$100,000 in a film project that may never be completed.

Holm, 53, said he didn't know that bringing Pechanga tribal members to San Nicolas would stir up a "wasps' nest." But he says he believes the Navy made the right decision.

As for his role in the end of Schwartz's 25-year career as a Navy archaeologist, Holm said: "He should be happy because he got to discover the cave. At some point in every man's life, he must hand over his work to the next generation."

"That's ridiculous," Schwartz said, shaking his head in disappointment. "If the Navy hadn't stopped us, I'd still be out there continuing the research."

For now, at least, the mystery of the Lone Woman of San Nicolas Island will remain unsolved.

In the years after she was left behind, fishermen occasionally reported seeing a figure running along the deserted island's wind-raked beaches.

In 1853, the woman — strong, of medium height and about 50 years old — was skinning a seal and living in a nearby cave when she was found by Santa Barbara fur traders.

She sailed to Santa Barbara on their vessel. She died seven weeks later of dysentery. On her deathbed, she was baptized and named Juana Maria.

She is buried at the Santa Barbara Mission. One hundred and sixty-two years after her death, she remains as alone and mysterious as ever.

louis.sahagun@latimes.com

Source 2: A Long Protest Continues

A Long Protest Continues

Native American tribes oppose the construction of an oil pipeline

SEPTEMBER 14, 2016

By Glenn Greenberg with TIME and AP reporting



ROBYN BECK—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Native Americans protesting the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline march to the site of a sacred burial ground near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, on September 4.

If the Dakota Access Pipeline is completed, it will carry nearly a half million barrels of oil across four states every day. The pipeline will run from North Dakota through South Dakota and Iowa, to an existing pipeline in Illinois. Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), a Texas-based company behind the \$3.8 billion project, hopes to finish construction this year. But the Standing Rock Sioux, a Native American tribe, is determined to stop the 1,172-mile pipeline from being built. Both sides show no signs of backing down.

“We are committed to completing construction,” ETP chief executive officer Kelcy Warren said in a letter to employees on Tuesday.



ROBYN BECK—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and their supporters confront bulldozers working on the Dakota Access Pipeline on September 3.

Dave Archambault II, tribal chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux, pledged that the protest would go on. “Our fight isn't over until there is permanent protection of our people and resources from the pipeline,” he said in a statement.

Tribal Concerns

The Dakota Access Pipeline was announced in 2014. A section of it will run near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, in southern North Dakota. A reservation is an area of U.S. land set aside for Native Americans. The tribe says the construction threatens to destroy sacred areas and ancient burial sites. They also say the pipeline could contaminate their main water source, the Missouri River. In April, the Standing Rock Sioux began a protest against the project. They set up an encampment at the construction site. Since then, thousands of people, including people from other Native American tribes, have traveled to the site from as far as Florida, New York, and Alaska, to join the cause.

ETP says that the pipeline will have built-in safety measures to protect against oil leaks. Workers will also monitor it remotely, and will be able to close valves within three minutes if leaks are detected.

But in early September, Standing Rock Sioux tribal officials said construction crews bulldozed several sites of “significant cultural and historic value” to the tribe. ETP denies this.

Stop and Starts



ROBYN BECK—AFP/GETTY IMAGES

People protesting the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline gather at an encampment along the Missouri River near Cannon Ball, North Dakota, on September 4.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers controls the land on which the underground pipeline is being built. It granted permits allowing ETP to use the land. The Standing Rock Sioux filed a lawsuit that challenged the permits, but on September 9, a federal judge ordered construction to be continued. Minutes later, however, the federal government gave the tribe a reason to celebrate. The Department of Justice, the U.S. Army, and the Department of the Interior ordered a temporary stop to the project, as officials reconsider the approval process.

In a statement, the U.S. government called for “a serious discussion on whether there should be nationwide reform with respect to considering tribes’ views on these type of infrastructure projects.”

ETP says that in the end, the pipeline will be completed. “I am confident that as long as the government ultimately decides the fate of the project based on science and engineering, the Dakota Access Pipeline will become operational,” Warren said in his letter.

But Archambault said the protesters are not giving up. “People are still coming down here and are committed to stopping the project,” he said.

Additional Resources:

Source 1: With Island Dig Halted, Lone Woman Still a Stinging Mystery

<http://www.latimes.com/local/great-reads/la-me-c1-cave-artifacts-20150305-story.html>

Source 2: A Long Protest Continues: Native American tribes oppose the construction of an oil pipeline

<http://www.timeforkids.com/news/long-protest-continues/453436>