

“First Contact”

Resource Summary: Early explorers initiated contact with people native to the Americas, and in particular the natives who lived on the Channel Islands. Cabrillo’s style of contact/approach was described as “benign” in the tale. This was not the case of every encounter between native people and foreigners. The Europeans’ conquest and pursuit of riches often led to misunderstandings that turned out poorly for native people. Have students role play and debate the pros and cons of contact with this learning activity.

Subject Areas: Language Arts, Social Studies, History

Grade Level Range: 4-6

Standards: **Comprehension and Collaboration:**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1](#)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 5 topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Resource Provided By: Valerie Trenev, fifth grade, Alice Shaw Elementary School, Orcutt Union School District

Resource Details:

Concept: Different cultures can clash due to a grab for resources, misunderstandings and fear. Let’s role play and debate the different sides of the issue. Through this activity, we can explore the ways cultures can come together for the good of both civilizations.

Title: Respecting Differences/Forging Friendships

Anticipatory Set: view the WOTW tale: First Contact

Objective: After viewing the tale, having a discussion, role playing and debate, students explore and consider the pros and cons and challenges of contact between civilizations.

Materials: DVD: *West of the West*, index cards; optional: art supplies (markers, glitter, glue, foil, clay or Play Dough) Optional: shield and swords

Modeling:

Day One - Class Discussion: While taking suggestions from the class, the teacher makes a list of what is considered positive and negative about exploration/interaction with indigenous people. Include the following:

Positive aspects: place to rest during a voyage; advancement of civilization; access to resources not available in home country; exchange of ideas and goods; trade; possible colonization.

Negative aspects: disrespectful and demoralizing behavior towards a group; occupying civilization's loss of resources, artifacts and relics; exposure to diseases; war; possible annihilation of a group. (Note: according to the WOTW tales, the natives on San Nicolas Island had first killed one of the Russian hunters, causing the Russian hunters to kill almost all of the males on the island. The brutal attack on the Nicolenos was provoked by this. It was also mentioned that Cabrillo's interaction with Indians of the Channel Islands was peaceful, and the explorers were actually welcomed onto the islands by the native people.) (15 min.)

Guided Practice:

Preparation for Contact: Divide class into two tribes. Each tribe simulates their own distinct language, culture and ways. Give index cards to each tribe. The occupying tribe draws pictures of relics, tools and jewelry on their cards. Make a list on the board of specific artifacts the tribe would possibly have. The visiting (invading tribe) draws weapons on their index cards. Make a list on the board of possible weapons the invading tribe would have. The teacher can provide ribbon, glitter, glue, markers or other supplies to embellish the cards. (Alternative: students use Play Dough, clay or aluminum foil to make the weapons and relics.) (20 min.)



Invasion: One tribe pretends to invade the other. The invading tribe disrespects the other, seizing goods and laying ruin to their village. After the invasion, tribes should go to different areas of the classroom. The invading tribe can compare what they got; the tribe that was invaded should console one another and tally their losses. (5 min)



Reflection: After invasion, or for homework, students write down their feelings about how it felt to be on one side or the other.

Day Two - Debate: Class divides into two new groups for a debate. Each group should have members from both tribes. One group defends exploration and interaction; the other is against it. Teacher acts as a moderator taking opening statements from each side, and inviting rebuttal from the opposing side. Points are awarded for valid arguments and valid rebuttals.

Independent Practice:

Closing Activity: Students write a short essay on how it felt to be on the side they were on and offer suggestions for peaceful interactions between groups. Questions to consider: How could the interaction be more positive for both sides? Would it have helped if the occupying tribe had weapons or more warriors to defend themselves? What other strategic steps could the occupying tribe have taken to have more leverage/power? Do you think the explorers or hunters had remorse?

Additional Resources:

Read about Cortes' and his defeat of the Aztecs

Research Chief Joseph and The Trail of Tears

Read about broken treaties between the Indian nations and the U.S. Government –
blog.nativepartnership.org/treaties