

Impacts of Indigenous Utahns' and Trappers' Interactions: Ideas for Teaching

This lesson is intended to help students understand the economic and social impacts of the interactions between Indigenous people and the trappers that entered the region that is now Utah in the early 1800s. Students will also consider the concept of **historical significance**, evaluating which of the impacts were most significant.

General Information about the Inquiry

Central Question: During the early 1800s, what were the most significant impacts of the French, British, and American trappers and Native American groups on each other in the region that is now Utah?

Optional Additional Question: Which groups had the most significant impacts on each other?

Background Information: We provide a short essay with background information for students under the “background information” tab, with a longer essay with background information for the teacher included in the teacher resources.

Archive: The archive for this inquiry includes 21 primary and secondary sources organized by the nationality of the people primarily described in the document: French, British, American, and different Native American nations. It should be noted that some of the documents provide evidence about the interactions of more than one European group, for example, students might find some references to English trappers in documents that are primarily about the French.

Teacher materials: The graphic organizer provides a space for students to record information about the interactions between each of the trapping groups and the Indigenous people of the region. Students can take notes on the graphic organizer and highlight or underline information that is repeated in more than one document. This image shows what a graphic organizer might look like after reading all of the documents related to the French.

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Possible Focus Skills

These are several historical thinking skills that could be supported during this inquiry.

- Distinguishing primary from secondary sources: Students can be shown the difference between primary and secondary sources and think about the advantages and disadvantages of each.

- **Sourcing:** Students can be taught to think about the perspective of the people who created the primary source. As they do so they might think about why Europeans could have been critical or have spoken in a condescending way about Native American groups.
- **Significance:** The concept of **significance** is central to the question that guides this inquiry. Students can consider the idea of significance and why some things that happen in the past are remembered and studied by historians and other things are ignored and forgotten. Impacts that are repeated in many of the documents are probably more significant than those that are briefly mentioned in one source.

Possible Lesson Structure

- **Provide background information:** The student background information page and the teacher background information page suggest vocabulary and information that will help students during the analysis of the archive. Before thinking about the evidence, students will need to know a little about the fur trade that brought Europeans and Americans to the West. We recommend that teachers give the information through a lecture rather than having students read it, to break up the activities students are engaged in. As part of the background information, the teacher might also talk with students about the differences between primary and secondary sources, particularly historians' writing. They should help students recognize the advantages and disadvantages of each. They might also help students understand the idea of significance.
- **Explain and use the graphic organizer:** After passing out the graphic organizer and explaining how to complete it, the teacher might model with one document how to take notes on the graphic organizer. Students should be shown that the graphic organizer is a worksheet in the true sense of the word. It is a place for them to collect evidence that will help them answer the central question: During the early 1800s, what were the most significant impacts of the French, British, and American trappers and Native American groups on each other in the region that is now Utah?
- **Crowdsource the evidence:** This inquiry is not designed to have every student read all 21 documents. Instead, we imagine a teacher crowdsourcing this activity, with small groups of students focusing on a single group (like the French or Americans) and then sharing what they found out about that group with the class. After having some time to read their documents and identify evidence, student groups could report to the class the nature and impacts of the interactions of their assigned nationality. As students listen to their peers they take notes in the appropriate places on their graphic organizer.
- **Evaluate the evidence and answer the questions:** After listening to their peers report, students are prepared to answer the central question. After they have answered the question individually, the last few minutes of class can be spent debriefing about their conclusions and debating the significant impacts.

- **Assessment:** The questions at the bottom of the graphic organizer can be used to assess students' achievement of the objectives for the lesson.

Other Teaching Ideas

- Rather than having students work in small groups on a single nationality, you could give groups enough time to look at two or three documents from each of the five nationalities. Doing so might help them make direct comparisons across groups.

Feedback: We want your input on how to make these lessons better! If you have any comments or suggestions, please email our team at utahhistoryinquiries@gmail.com.