



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Stories From the Land

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- **Identity, History and Since Time Immemorial**

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student will understand

- the importance of telling one's own story,
- the histories of Native American peoples in Oregon prior to Westward Expansion, and
- how to recount key details in an informational text and explain how they support the main idea.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do some Oregon Tribes describe their history?
- Why is describing their own history important to their identity?

REQUIRED TIME

- 30 minutes

Overview

Oregon has always been Native land. Today, the U.S. government recognizes nine Native Nations in Oregon. These communities continue to protect and share their histories in their own voices. In this lesson, students will explore the origin stories of three Oregon Tribes and reflect on how storytelling plays an important role in preserving Native identity while learning how to identify the main idea in stories.

Background for Teachers

When teaching a lesson about Oregon's Native Nations and their origin stories, it's essential to approach the material with cultural sensitivity, respect, and accuracy. These stories are not just fictional tales—they are sacred traditions that carry deep meaning and help preserve Native identity. Teachers should make every effort to use materials that come directly from tribal sources, such as official tribal websites, cultural centers, or partnerships with Native educators. This ensures that students are hearing these stories as they are meant to be told—from Native voices themselves.



It's also important to avoid stereotypes and outdated representations of Native people. Students should understand that Native Tribes are not only part of Oregon's past but are vibrant communities that exist today. Highlight that the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon continue to protect and share their cultures, languages, and traditions. This helps students see Native peoples as present, diverse, and active members of their communities.

It's also crucial to provide context for students by explaining that each Tribe is unique, with its own customs, beliefs, and history. Avoid generalizing Native cultures and emphasize the diversity among Oregon's Tribes. Encourage curiosity but remind students that not all stories are meant to be shared outside the community, and that listening with respect is just as important as understanding the content.

Finally, ensure that activities related to the stories promote reflection rather than reenactment. It is not appropriate for students to dress up or act out sacred tribal stories. Instead, focus on listening, drawing, or writing to help students process and appreciate what they've learned. This lesson offers a valuable opportunity to help students develop empathy, respect, and a deeper understanding of the land they live on and the people who have cared for it since time immemorial.

STANDARDS

Oregon English Language Arts Standards

- 3.RI.2 Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

Key Words and Ideas

- **Tradition:** Something people do again and again because it's special to them.
- **Identity:** our understanding of who we are as individuals, shaped by our family, culture, experiences, and personal interests.
- **Main idea:** what a story or passage is mostly about

MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- PowerPoint presentation
- White Board
- Markers
- Student self-assessment



Considerations for Teachers

Practices

While teaching this lesson, the following principles can help guide your decision-making and engagement with students.

- When sharing content with students, address the “why” not just the “what”.
- Highlight the strengths /struggles of Oregon’s Indigenous peoples today while also acknowledging their history and tradition.
- Ensure your teaching practices are accessible and appropriate for Native and non-Native students.

Assessment

During this lesson, observe and listen to students during discussions and as they work independently and collaboratively to determine how their learning is progressing. Write down what you notice about what students say and do in relation to the success criteria. Use this formative information to provide feedback to students and plan next steps.

At the end of the lesson, provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through a self-assessment. Students can indicate their level of learning relative to specific success criteria. They can also write out an explanation of why they feel they are at that learning stage.

Success Criteria

- I can describe why it is important that Oregon Tribes tell their own histories.
- I can explain key details about the early history of one of Oregon’s Tribes.

Opener

Time: 5 minutes

Step 1:

Show students the Oregon map and where the nine federally recognized Tribes are located. Discuss how Native people have lived here for thousands of years and still do today.

Stories from the Land



- Share that since they have been here since time immemorial, each Tribe has their own traditions and their own stories. Sharing stories is important to sharing one's traditions and learning more about people's identity.

Step 2:

Ask, "Do you know any stories that have been passed down in your family?"

Step 3:

Tell students that in this lesson they will hear from two different stories from two different tribes - The Grand Ronde and the Klamath Tribes. These stories help them remember who they are and their connection to the land. Share that:

- These stories are passed down to help people remember who they are, where they come from, and how to live in a good way.
- The ways they tell their own stories and history is very important because it helps craft their identity as communities and as Native American people.
- They can also tell us about history, especially about their history before Westward Expansion and how their communities were changed.

Important note:

- Grand Ronde is pronounced, /grand rahnd/, sounds like: "Grand Rhond" (rhyming with "pond")
- Klamath is pronounced, /KLA-muth/, sounds like: "CLAH-muth"

Main Activity

Time: 20 minutes

Step 1:

Tell students that they will be watching and listening to two stories. Share that these stories are very important to their Tribes and can teach us a lot. As they listen to these stories, ask students to think about: *What is this story mostly about? Why do you think the Tribe tells this story?*



Step 2:

Play this 3:10 minute video to hear from leaders and members of the Tribe speaking about their people's history.

[Our Story- The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon](#)

Step 3:

Facilitate a story review by asking:

- What is this story mostly about?
- What is the big lesson or idea the Tribe wants to remember?

Then ask students to find a partner and ask them to tell their partner what main idea(s) was in the story.

Share for 2-3 mins. You can guide their responses by saying:

- "This story is mostly about..."
- "It teaches that..."
- "It helps people remember..."

Call on 2-3 pairs to share. Record student answers on the board.

Step 4:

Read aloud the second story by the Klamath Tribe. It is in the handout at the end of this lesson plan. You can print it out for students so they can read along.

Step 5:

Repeat Step 3:

Facilitate story review by asking:

- What is this story mostly about?
- What is the big lesson or idea the tribe wants to remember?

Then ask students to find a partner and ask them to tell their partner what main idea(s) was for the story.

Share for 2-3 mins. You can guide their responses by saying:



- “This story is mostly about...”
- “It teaches that...”
- “It helps people remember...”

Call on 2–3 pairs to share. Record student answers on the board.

Closing

Time: Approximately 5 minutes

Step 1:

Share that they listened to stories that are very old and very important. Remind them that Native people tell them to keep their traditions alive. What they did today—listening and learning from these stories—is one way to show respect to the Native peoples of Oregon.

End with sentiment that stories are powerful and they help us remember who we are, where we come from, and how to take care of each other and the land.

Handout: The Klamath Tribes' Story

"In the old times we believed everything we needed to live was provided for us by our Creator in this rich land east of the Cascades. We still believe this. We saw success as a reward for virtuous striving and likewise as an assignment of spiritual favor, thus, "Work hard so that people will respect you", was the counsel of our elders. For thousands upon countless thousands of years we survived by our industriousness. When the months of long winter nights were upon us, we survived on our prudent reserves from the abundant seasons. Toward the end of March, when supplies dwindled, large fish runs surged up the Williamson, Sprague, and Lost River. At the place on the Sprague River where gmok'am'c first instituted the tradition, we still celebrate the Return of c'waam Ceremony.

The six tribes of the Klamaths were bound together by ties of loyalty and Family, they lived along the Klamath Marsh, on the banks of Agency Lake, near the mouth of the Lower Williamson River, on Pelican Bay, beside the Link River, and in the uplands of the Sprague River Valley. The Modoc's lands included the Lower Lost River, around Clear Lake, and the territory that extended south as far as the mountains beyond Goose Lake. The Yahooskin Bands occupied the area east of the Yamsay Mountain, south of Lakeview, and north of Fort Rock. Everything we needed was contained within these lands."

(Source: <https://klamathtribes.org/history/>)



Handout: Story Notetaker

Our Story -The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon

Write down a few things you heard the elders saying in this video.	
What was one thing you saw in the video?	
With a partner- write 2-3 sentences that communicate the main idea.	<p>This story is mostly about...</p> <p>I learned...</p>



The Klamath Tribes' Story

<p>Write down a few things you heard while listening to this story</p>	
<p>With a partner- write 2-3 sentences that say the main idea</p>	<p>This story is mostly about...</p> <p>I learned...</p>



Handout: Student Self-Assessment

Directions: Read the lesson success criteria in the first column. Then, decide, did I meet this criterion? Choose Not Yet or Yes. Explain why below.

Success Criteria	Not Yet	Yes
"CAN I..."		
describe why it is important that Oregon Tribes tell their own histories?		
explain key details about the early history of one of Oregon's Tribes?		

What did I do well and what is one next step I can take?