



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

chinuk wawa

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- History
- Identity
- Language

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student will be able to:

- Connect the importance of language to culture.
- Understand the history and importance of chinuk wawa to the Native American tribes in Oregon.
- Use chinuk wawa to engage in a dialogue.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can language be powerful?
- What is the relationship between language and culture?

LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?
In the classroom with a variety of whole class and partner work for engagement.
- How are the students organized?
 - Whole class Teams: 3 – 5
 - Pairs Individually

TIME REQUIRED

60–90 minutes

Overview

This lesson introduces students to the history and importance of the Indigenous language known as chinuk wawa. Students will have the opportunity to learn how tribes from diverse regions and language families used chinuk wawa as a method of communication among groups essential for trade, political, social and other reasons. They will also reflect on the power of language and the relationship between language and cultural identity.

Background for teachers

Native Languages

Language is an essential part of human identity and shapes how we view the world. For many Native American tribes, however, language is a complicated and even painful subject. In addition to being forcibly removed from their ancestral homeland, Native American people have faced systematic cultural suppression. Beginning as early as the 17th century, Euro-American government officials, teachers, and other authorities actively discouraged Native American and Alaska Native people from speaking their native languages and even physically punished Native children for doing so at boarding schools. This continued well into the 20th century.



As a result, the amazing diversity of languages once spoken by Indigenous people in North America has been depleted, with many languages becoming extinct. Oregon is a case in point. According to the National Geographic Society:

*Oregon was probably the most diverse region of [Indigenous] languages in the U.S. California might have the claim, but it is much larger, so the award for density of linguistic diversity goes to Oregon. At the time Lewis and Clark arrived in what's now Oregon 200 years ago there were 14 language families, more than in all of Europe combined.*¹

Today, only five Indigenous language families still exist in Oregon, and most of them have only a handful of speakers. Many tribes in Oregon are undertaking language revitalization efforts that include creating children's books, developing dictionaries, and implementing language programs in the schools or the community. To support student understanding of these efforts, refer to the Oregon Department of Education grade 4 Health lesson: Language Revitalization

chinuk wawa

chinuk wawa is an intertribal hybrid language indigenous to the Pacific Northwest, where it served as a regional lingua franca facilitating communication between speakers of different tribal languages as well as between tribal people

¹Braun, D. M. (2009, November 15). Preserving Native America's vanishing languages [Blog post]. Retrieved from National Geographic Society website: <https://blog.nationalgeographic.org/2009/11/15/preserving-native-americas-vanishing-lan->

STANDARDS

Oregon Social Sciences Standards

4.7 Explain the interactions between the Pacific Northwest physical systems and human systems, with a focus on Native Americans in that region.

4.10 Describe how technological developments, societal decisions, and personal practices affect Oregon's sustainability (dams, wind turbines, climate change and variability, transportation systems, etc.).

4.11 Analyze the distinct way of knowing and living amongst the different American Indian tribes in Oregon prior to colonization, such as religion, language, and cultural practices and the subsequent impact of that colonization.

4.14 Examine the history of the nine federally recognized Oregon tribes.

Oregon English Language Arts Standards

4.RI.7 Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears

4.W.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

4.SL.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.



and speakers of English and Canadian French. It arose on the lower Columbia River (The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, 2012). The modern Chinook Indian Nation consists of the Clatsop and Kathlamet tribes of what is now Oregon and the Lower Chinook, Wahkiakum, and Willapa of Washington state. These five tribes have existed since time immemorial in their aboriginal territory in the Lower Columbia River region and along the coast at the river's mouth. It is here that Chinook families welcomed Lewis and Clark to the Pacific Ocean and helped them survive the winter of 1805/1806.

The Indigenous people living along the Lower Columbia River were traders long before Euro-Americans invaded the Pacific Coast. The Indigenous people traded with many other tribes that did not speak the same dialects. To make it easier to communicate and conduct trade, the tribes developed a version of verbal communication that included elements from many Indigenous languages in the Pacific Northwest. This language is known as chinuk wawa.

When Euro-Americans invaded the Pacific Northwest, elements of both English and French were incorporated into chinuk wawa, which became an important language for trade throughout the Pacific Northwest and as far north as Alaska. chinuk wawa has survived for many generations among the Native people of the Lower Columbia. chinuk wawa remains a testament to the rich cultural traditions of Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest and is both a source of pride and intertribal identity.

MATERIALS

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

- chinuk wawa PowerPoint presentation
- chinuk wawa *Greetings and Introductions* handout
- Emotions with blank text boxes handout (2 pages)
- chinuk wawa text boxes to go with emotions (cut these out ahead of time unless you would like students to during lesson)
- Greetings crossword puzzle handout
- Optional: chinuk wawa App (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/chinuk-wawa/id908108231>)

SUPPLIES

- LCD projector or another type of computer projection device
- (Optional) If possible: Classroom access to iPads with the chinuk wawa App (one per group of 4-6 students)
- glue sticks (optional for pasting text boxes that go with emotions)



Resources

Teachers should become familiar with the origin and history of chinuk wawa. In addition, teachers should learn about the revival of this language in and around Native American communities in Oregon.

Chinuk Wawa Dictionary Committee. (2012). *Chinuk Wawa: As our elders teach us to speak it*. Grand Ronde, OR: Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Denham, K. (2019). *Northwest Voices: Language and Culture in the Pacific Northwest*. Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press.

Holton, J. (2004). *Chinook Jargon: The hidden language of the Pacific Northwest*. Retrieved from <http://www.rjholton.com/>

Zenk, H. (2018). Chinook Jargon (Chinuk Wawa). In *The Oregon Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from Oregon Historical Society website: https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/chinook_jargon/#.XTDAh-hKiUk

Zenk, H. B., & Johnson, T. A. (2013). Chinuk Wawa and its roots in Chinookan. In R. T. Boyd, K. M. Ames, & T. A. Johnson (Eds.), *Chinookan peoples of the Lower Columbia* (pp. 272–287). Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Considerations for teachers

Assessment

- Students will engage in a substantial amount of classroom and group discussions. The teacher should actively monitor student discussion for correct understanding and should intervene when there are misconceptions or biases

VOCABULARY

Ancestors – People living before us that we are descended from and have passed down traditions including oral language and stories.

chinuk wawa – An intertribal hybrid language indigenous to the Pacific Northwest.

Lingua franca – A language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different.

Dialect – A form of a language spoken by a group of people.



that could inhibit authentic engagement with this topic.

- Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively. The formative assessment will consist of teacher observation of student participation in classroom discussion. The summative assessment will include a final script developed by pairs or small groups of students using chinuk wawa.

Practices

The teacher must understand the value of chinuk wawa and the central role it played among tribes in Oregon.

- The teacher must be prepared to activate engagement strategies, such as think-pair-share and group discussion.

Learning targets

- I can connect the importance of language to culture.
- I can understand the history and importance of chinuk wawa to the tribes in Oregon.
- I can work with a partner to use chinuk wawa to verbally have a conversation.



Activity 1

Hook (Think-Write-Pair-Share)

Time: 15 minutes

Step 1:

Ask students to think for a few minutes about the following question:

Why is language important?

Step 2:

After students have had a few minutes to think, direct them to write down their thoughts in a journal or on a piece of scratch paper.

Step 3:

Ask students to find a partner and discuss their thoughts for three or four minutes.

Note: The teacher can either allow students to select their partner or can assign pairs. Remember to be sensitive to learners' needs when assigning pairs (for example, reading and writing skills, attention skills, language skills). In addition, some students might be sensitive to sharing personal family knowledge and should not be required to do so.

Step 4:

Once partners have had enough time to share their thoughts, expand the "share" to a whole-class discussion. Record the class discussion on poster paper or a white board.

Step 5 (Optional):

If there is time, have students return to their pairs to talk about how their thinking may have changed as a result of the classroom discussion.



Activity 1 (Continued)

Step 6:

Show slides 1-4 on Language and Culture from the chinuk wawa PowerPoint presentation.

Say:

Language and culture are intertwined. Language is not simply a collection of words but also a way of understanding the world and how a specific group of people relate to it and to each other. When learning a new language, you are also learning about the culture (customs and traditions) tied to a group of people and a place.

Step 7:

Show slide 5 on Vocabulary. Read each of the vocabulary words.

Say:

The purpose of our next activity is to learn about the history and importance of the language known as chinuk wawa. You will have the opportunity to experience how chinuk wawa was an effective means of communication between groups of people who spoke different languages.

Activity 2

chinuk wawa

Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes

Step 1:

Review slides 6-11 on the history and status of the chinuk wawa language. (10 minutes)

Say:

The Indigenous people living along the Lower Columbia River were traders long before Euro-Americans invaded the Pacific Coast. The Indigenous people traded with many other Native tribes who did not speak the same language.

To make it easier to conduct trade and other social/political interactions among many different tribes speaking a variety of languages, a version of verbal communication was developed from a combination of the languages used by the tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

This language is known today as chinuk wawa, a Native American language. This language was a useful way to communicate that developed between groups that did not have a language in common.

When Euro-Americans invaded the Pacific Northwest, elements of both English and French also became part of chinuk wawa.

chinuk wawa became the lingua franca among traders throughout the Pacific Northwest and as far north as Alaska. Lingua franca is the language adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different. chinuk wawa is still spoken by some Native Oregonians today and is a source of great pride.

Step 2:

Distribute the **chinuk wawa Greetings and Introductions handout** and ask students to independently read through all the words and phrases.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 3:

Ask students: What English, Spanish, French or Russian words do you see or recognize in chinuk wawa? Can you tell anything about the culture(s) of the people who used chinuk wawa?

Step 4:

In order to expose students to the sound of chinuk wawa, show students the brief **YouTube video, “Greetings and Introductions in chinuk wawa by Kathy Cole, citizen of The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde”:** (2:14) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h63dOXmJAik&feature=youtu.be>

Then show them the chinuk wawa conversation video with English subtitles: (0:36) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JH5luXa6zRk&feature=youtu.be>

Note: You may want to show the videos multiple times (or make them accessible to students) to give students a firm foundation in how to pronounce greetings.

Pronunciation: As an intertribal hybrid language indigenous to the Pacific Northwest, chinuk wawa has been usable for people from many different linguistic backgrounds, so an individual’s pronunciation of a given word may depend on their own native language and dialect, be it English, French, Salish, or Hawaiian. It is also important to understand that all published lexicons were created by English speakers and are therefore influenced by standard English spelling conventions, so there is some variety in the spellings of words in chinuk wawa.

The best way for teachers and students to learn the pronunciation of chinuk wawa is to have access to the chinuk wawa App developed by the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Land & Culture Department. This app includes recorded pronunciations of the different sounds that make up chinuk wawa.

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 5:

Next, ask students to move into pairs/partners. Then distribute one copy of the **emotions with blank text boxes (2 pages)** and **chinuk wawa text boxes to go with emotions** to each pair. Distribute glue sticks (optional).

Say:

You and your partner are going to work together to match the chinuk wawa text boxes to the emotions. Let's look at an example together.

Step 6:

Using an overhead projector or document camera, share the **emotions with blank text boxes and model how to match up the chinuk wawa text boxes**. Show students where each chinuk wawa word can be found on the chinuk wawa *Greetings and Introductions* handout.

Step 7:

Give partners 15-20 minutes to match up the text boxes with the emotion cards. Walk the room and answer questions and provide guidance.

Step 8:

When students have completed matching their emotion cards and text boxes, organize the students into small groups of three to four. Have the groups practice saying the Greetings to each other to create introductory conversations.

Step 9:

Facilitate a whole-group discussion using the following questions:

Say:

Did you discover any challenges with communicating in chinuk wawa? How did you overcome these challenges? What were the benefits to communicating with chinuk wawa? Were you successful in deciphering what the other person was saying?

Activity 2 (Continued)

Step 10:

Distribute the **Greetings crossword puzzle handout**. Students should also have their copy of the chinuk wawa Greetings and Introductions handout.

Say:

You will be completing the crossword puzzle given to you titled, "Greetings". Let's look at an example together.

Step 11:

Show the crossword puzzle on an overhead projector. Give an example of how to find words across and down and fill out.

Reflection/closure

- Review the learning targets.
- Have students think-pair-share about questions they might have as a result of their learning. Prompt for two or more questions from each group, and then let a few groups share their ideas with the whole class.

Optional Activity

- Have students watch the chinuk wawa conversation video without the English subtitles here: (0:36) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEE1KrsuKYU&feature=youtu.be>
- Students can then write down the English words each person in the conversation is saying (they may use the chinuk wawa conversation video with English subtitles to reference/assist them as needed: (0:36): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JH5luXa6zRk&feature=youtu.be>

hayu masi (many thanks) to Kathy Cole, Tribal Librarian and citizen of The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde for assistance in the creation of this lesson as well as her many contributions to Indigenous education in Oregon.

