

NEBRASKA VIRTUAL CAPITOL LESSONS



Title: Native American Symbolism in the Capitol

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Grade Level	4th
Class Period(s)	2 - 4

Adapted from: Area 8: ROTUNDA Nebraska's Resources

Nebraska Social Studies Standards

SS 4.4.2 Analyze and explain multiple perspectives of events in Nebraska, including historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 4.4.2.a Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

SS 4.4.2.b Identify and describe how various sources relate their perspectives of Nebraska history.

SS 4.4.3 Analyze past and current events throughout Nebraska history.

SS 4.4.3.a Analyze key sources in Nebraska history to determine credibility and context.

Nebraska Math Standards

MA 4.1 Number: Students will communicate number sense concepts using multiple representations to reason, solve problems, and make connections within mathematics and across disciplines.

MA 4.1.2 Operations: Students will demonstrate the meaning of addition and subtraction of [numbers such as] fractions and compute accurately.

MA 4.1.2.e Use drawings, words, and symbols to explain the meaning of addition and subtraction of [numbers such as] fractions with like denominators.

Assessment for any/all the above: Give both a reading grade and a math grade for any (one or more) math worksheets that happen to have problems written in

Nebraska Language Arts Standards

LA 4.1.5.c Students will acquire new academic and content-specific grade-level vocabulary, relate to prior knowledge, and apply in new situations.

Assessment: Test students on vocabulary.

LA 4.3.2.e Students will develop and demonstrate active listening skills across a variety of situations.

LA 4.3.3 Students will develop, apply, and adapt reciprocal communication skills, especially **(4.3.3.a)** Demonstrate appropriate social etiquette and apply social cues when communicating, **(4.3.3.c)** Apply

Nebraska Fine and Performing Art Standards

FA 5.2.3 Students will use the critical process to examine works of art, learning about themselves and cultures to **(FA 5.2.3 c)** Interpret the message communicated by a work of art, using knowledge of visual elements, subject matter, and mood, and to

(FA 5.2.3.d) Compare personal interpretation of a work of art with the interpretations of others.

FA 5.2.4. Students will examine contemporary, historical, and cultural context in art and life to **(FA 5.2.4.b)** Compare and contrast works of art from a variety of contemporary, historical, and cultural contexts.

Assessment: Have students sketch,

SS 4.4.3.b Identify key events in American history that shaped or were shaped by Nebraskans.

SS 4.4.4 Develop historical inquiry and research skills.

SS 4.4.4.a Construct and answer questions about Nebraska history.

SS 4.4.4.c Gather, analyze, and communicate historical information about Nebraska.

symbolic math sentences that day, such as $2+4=6$.

(Note: This also works in MA 4.2 in which “n” is a symbol that just stands for an unknown number.)

conversation strategies to recognize and consider new information presented by others in relationship to one’s own ideas. and **(4.3.3.d)** Listen, ask clarifying questions, summarize, and explain information being communicated and consider its contribution to a topic, text, or issue under study, and **(4.3.3.e)** Collaboratively converse with peers and adults on grade-appropriate topics and texts, building on others’ ideas to clearly express one’s own views while respecting diverse perspectives.

Assessment: Give an individual and/or group rubric-based grade on listening etiquette, speaking etiquette, communicating ideas, considering other people’s ideas, and working with a group.

describe, compare and contrast, or portray some of the symbols they saw in the tour or their own version of such symbols. Or have them find and use pictures of real items (corn, sunflowers, buffalo, Plains Indians, teepees, etc.) and compare them to stylized equivalents from other sources or from their own creations.

and **FA 5.2.4.d** Explore how images and objects are used to convey a story, familiar experience, or connection to the world.

Assessment: Have students read a short story about Plains Indians (or create their own short story) and then (re)write or illustrate all or pieces of that story using appropriate symbols. Or have students find and share library books that use Native American symbol writing or ways of keeping track of things (such as Knots on a Counting Rope by Bill Martin, Jr.). Or decorate a Plains Indian style teepee or shield or dress with school-appropriate symbols.

Assessment: Give participation grades and/or use a rubric-type grading system for art activities.

Overview

Big Idea or Theme: Symbols represent things in our culture and in other cultures.

Essential Question/s:

- What is a symbol?
- (optional: What is an icon?)
- What does a symbol do?
- What does the word “common” mean?
- What is the difference between real and stylized?
- What does it mean to represent something?
- How can a group of words be a symbol?
- How (or in what school subject) can both numbers and other symbols form a sentence? (answer: math)

Purpose/Rationale

Symbols are all around us. They are a part of our world and our culture. We see them used every day from smile-y faces for good work, to math symbols such as $2+4=6$, to science statements such as $E=MC^2$, to a “no parking” sign (P with a slash through it), to men and women stick figures on bathroom doors, to tweeting birds and hash tags used in social media, to stylized hearts in “I (heart) (American flag)!” Symbols are pictures (or sometimes even letters or groups of words or numbers) that represent other things, words, actions, cultures, and more. And sometimes just one of those symbols (or a group of symbols) can take the place of a few to hundreds or even thousands of words.

Our state capitol is full of symbols (both inside and out) that help tell us the story of Nebraska and the world. We just have to learn how to look for and see those symbols and use them to understand ideas and concepts. Many of those symbols in and on our state capitol represent the first people of Nebraska—the Native Americans. We just have to learn to look for their symbols and stories to understand their place in our history.

Key Concepts/Vocabulary

- symbol – something that stands for or represents something
- symbolism – the use of pictures or icons to represent something
- common – something seen or heard often

- realistic – looking like something seen in nature
- stylized – not realistic, modified to look somewhat like a real thing
- mosaic – artwork or design made up of pieces of colored stone or glass

Materials

- *The Virtual Capitol Tour*, available at ???
- *The Virtual Capitol Tour Notebook Lessons*

Objectives

The student will be able to:

1. Understand that symbols are used every day in our world to represent parts of our culture, give directions, connote meaning with just a few words, etc.
2. Recognize and describe several different common real and stylized symbols used to represent Native Americans and their culture.

Procedures

SESSION ONE

1. Write, draw, or post easily-recognized common or stylized symbols all around the classroom, such as a smile-y face, flag, heart, math symbols (+, -, and =), stick man or woman, and other things.
2. Ask students to define or look up the word symbol and talk about what that word means or what a symbol does. Make the connection that many of the things we know either are, or could be, used as a symbol, even many of the things in their school or classroom.
3. Ask students if they know how to play a game called I SPY. Explain that I SPY can be played anywhere and involves a person using their eyes and mind to try to find some defined thing or things. Today students will be I SPY-ing for some special things in their classroom. (Later they will be I SPY-ing things in the state capitol.)
4. Have students bring out scratch paper and a pen/pencil and list as many school-appropriate symbols as they can see or think of in 2 minutes. Discuss some of those symbols or items that can be used as symbols.
5. Show a picture of a real heart and one of a stylized heart. Ask them which heart is real and which one is more often used as a symbol. Talk about the difference between real and stylized

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(from the root word style) and meaning a not-real version. Why is a stylized heart more often used as a symbol?

6. Write a simple sentence on the board, using a stylized heart, for example: I (heart) (Nebraska map) and ask them to read that sentence. Explain that they can read that sentence because they know what those symbols mean.
7. Now tell students you are going to write a different kind of sentence on the board using numbers and math signs, such as $2+4=6$. Ask a student to read that sentence aloud. Talk about how and why math signs can be symbols, because they are understood by most people. So math has a language of symbols and signs and sentences too. So does science.
8. Talk about how some symbols are used all by themselves (or with other things) in our culture. Prompt: If you saw a poster with a \$ sign on it, what might that mean? (money, bank, cost, pay, etc.) If you saw a cross, what might that mean? (church, religion, etc.) Those are things we often understand, because they represent those things in our world and our culture.
9. Ask students, What kind of symbols might Native Americans use (or have used) in their culture? Prompt: Might those things have been different from one tribe to another or from one area to another?
10. Give students (individually or in small groups) two to three minutes to make a list of at least five things Nebraska's Native Americans might have used as symbols, then have them go back and draw a symbol to represent their word. Put their pens/pencils away. (Grade: 20 points per item; 80% is a passing grade)
11. Have students take turns coming to the board to draw one of the items/symbols from their list. Have other students guess what that symbol stands for and why it was listed. Ask students why they drew stylized items instead of drawing real items. If desired for a grade, complete the board list and have students change to a different colored ink pen and compare their own Native American list of symbols to the board list, giving extra credit or percentage points for each match. (Participation grade—possibly an extra credit point or a rubric grade on cooperation/listening/doing)
12. Tell students that they are going on a Virtual Capitol Tour to I SPY for Native American symbols.

SESSION TWO

1. Start the virtual tour outside the state capitol; introduce the state capitol and how it is both a government building and a building of artworks.
2. Direct students to look way up at the (thunderbird) mosaics on the dome and ask students to try to figure out what kind of bird is represented in those mosaics.
3. Go to the Virtual Capitol Tour, page 2 of illustrations, and see if students recognize the thunderbird from the dome. Discuss whether this is a picture of a real bird or a stylized bird—also whether they have ever seen a living thunderbird or if the thunderbird is actually a real kind of bird in science or more like a story bird from mythology or early Native American religion.
4. Click on the Virtual Capitol Tour (VCT) map of “The Tower and the Plains” Lesson 0100_01, click on the Thunderbird Fact then click on/do Thunderbird Lesson 2 and window 0100_07. Discuss the symbolism of the thunderbird.
5. From the map, also look at “windows 0100_08” and discuss the reality and symbolism of corn to Native Americans and to people today.
6. Ask students what meat source(s) Native Americans, especially Plains Indians, would use. (You might also note that the buffalo/bison was also part of their religion and that by eating buffalo meat and doing special ceremonies, the Native American people felt that they were brothers of the buffalo/bison.)
7. Go back to the VCT map and go to the North Façade and talk about the buffalo icon/symbol then go to window 0200_09 and 0200_14 and window 0200_13. Discuss symbols seen or mentioned.
8. Do the Following the Bison lesson 0201_01-03
9. Do the Show What You Know Game page 0201_07. Take grades from the score card from the teacher's outline.
10. Do 201_03 and 302_0201 and possibly 302_0303 and ask what symbols other Plains Indians might have used for some of the cultural items mentioned.
11. Look at 0802_04 and 0900_03 and 04, also look at the bison/corn earrings photo on 1000_10 and corn and sunflowers on 1000_12.
12. Look at the doors to the Warner Chamber 1100_0302. Talk about the construction detail of the door if desired. Have students discuss what symbols they see on the door (and also on the door across the hall).
13. If images are available for the interior of the Warner Room, discuss the symbols there (beads, activities, etc.).

14. Review the major Plains Indian symbols seen in the capitol (real and stylized) and talk about others that might also have been seen.
15. Have students draw their own symbols of important things in Native American culture, or write a story using a few English words and some Plains Indian symbols.
16. Look at books on Native American picture writing. Or look at Plains Indian ledger art books.
17. Have each student write a paragraph describing some aspect of Native American symbolism, then a paragraph describing modern day symbolism. Compare and contrast how such early and modern symbolism is the same and different. (See assessment below.)

Assessment

For the final assessment: Students will receive a 4 or higher on the 6 Traits Writing Rubric in the area of Ideas and Organization.

Give students defined grades for their lists, for participation, and for working well with others. Some of the activities above include ideas for this.)

Decide ahead of time how and when you will want to take grades and on what activities. Then be sure students understand what they need to do to get a good grade for each of the graded activities.

Extensions

Use any of the many teacher activities accessible at http://alex.state.al.us/lesson_view.php?id=9477

<http://www.warpaths2peacepipes.com/native-american-symbols/index.htm>

<https://www.teachervision.com/native-american-history/printable/7198.html>

Sources

NET Nebraska Educational Television.
www.Netnebraska.org

Virtual Capitol Tour Area9 P7 and Area7 P73(01 and 04)

Vocabulary.com

Native American Imagery in the Nebraska State Capitol <http://nirak.net/projects/native-american-imagery-in-the-nebraska-state-capitol/index.html>