

Kwakiutl Indians Unit—Lesson 5
Totem Poles

Date: Days 6-7

Subject/Grade: Social Studies, Grade 3
Length: 2 periods (60 min.)

I. Objectives / Pennsylvania Standards:

1. Students will learn about the storytelling properties of totem poles by creating poles of their own in groups and choosing a “speechmaker” to tell the story of the pole.
2. PA Standards: 8.3.3.A (History), 9.1.3.E and 9.2.3.A (Arts and Humanities), 1.4.3.A and 1.6.3.D (Language Arts)

II. Materials:

- 1 or 2 pieces of chart paper (optional)
- Pre-assessment sheet: Totem Poles—What Do You Know?
- *Totem Pole* by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith
- Photocopies of totem pole symbols
- Paper towel tubes or construction paper
- Totem poles website--<http://users.imag.net/~sry.jkramer/nativetotems/>

III. Anticipatory set:

1. The teacher will put review the main ideas of the chapter reading the previous day and put student responses on the board and discuss them with the class.
2. The teacher will then administer the pre-assessment to see what students already know (or think they know) about totem poles by showing that they agree or disagree with statements about totem poles. Those responses will be shared with the class.

IV. Procedure:

1. The teacher will read a section of the book *Totem Pole* by Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith, which describes how a traditional totem pole is carved. The teacher will show the pictures in the book to the class to demonstrate the stages a pole undergoes while being carved.
2. The teacher will reiterate that, as described in the textbook, each figure on the totem pole represented a part of the story the owner of the pole was trying to tell. The teacher will then explain that students will have an opportunity to tell their own story through totem pole symbols.
3. The teacher will divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and distribute the totem pole symbols to each group. The teacher will then ask each group to come up with (and write) a story that can be told through their totem pole symbols. (Totem pole symbol handout can be found in the following activity book: *Native American thematic unit, primary K-3*. Westminster, CA: Teacher Created Resources).
4. The teacher will ask the groups to choose the symbols they are going to use to tell their story. Each group member will cut out their symbol and color it. Once it is complete, and the group has its story, the cardboard/construction-paper tubes will be distributed, and the totem poles will be completed by attaching the symbols to the tube.
5. The students will then choose a member to serve as a “speechmaker” in order to tell their story to the class.

V. Closure:

1. Every group will recite their story for the class, and the teacher will review the importance of the totem pole as a storytelling aide, as the Kwakiutl had no written language.
2. Students are invited to learn more about totem poles by visiting Pat Kramer's website on totem poles: <http://users.imag.net/~sry.jkramer/nativetotems/>

As an extension activity, students can create their own electronic "totem pole" by assembling images (either digital snapshots from their parents or stock photographs and illustrations from the Web) in a PowerPoint presentation. Students can then tell their story, making sure to match up what happened with each visual. (More detailed information about this activity can be found at: <http://www.microsoft.com/Education/totempole.msp>).

VI. Evaluation / Assessment:

The teacher will assess student understanding by their successful completion of the poles and stories. Poles will be evaluated on how well the story corresponds to the symbols on the pole.

TOTEM POLES – WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Please put down "A" if you agree and "D" if you disagree (questions adapted from <http://users.imag.net/~sry.jkramer/nativetotems/>)

-Totems were once worshipped. _____

-Totems are/were used as talismans. _____

-Northwest Pacific Coast shamans used totem poles to ward off evil spirits. _____

-A slave was once buried at the base of a totem. _____

-Ancient, weird traditions were once practiced because people thought totem poles were magic. _____

-Totem pole building today is a vanishing legacy. _____

-Decaying totem poles are thousands of years old. _____

-Painted poles are fakes. _____

-Unpainted poles are fakes. _____

-Totem poles are solemn and always very serious. _____

-No other native people around the world make real totem poles. _____