

Identity Through Storytelling

By April Swarey from Elkin High School
for the 2021-2022 World View Global Fellows Program

Overview of Lesson: Students will consider the many ways stories are communicated, not just through words, but also through material culture, to consider how identity is created based on the objects and architecture that surround us today and in the past. Archaeologists call these objects “artifacts” when referring to material culture recovered from an archaeological site where people once lived. This lesson will connect the past to the present by asking students to research ancient artifacts and then read a contemporary American Indian story. Students will then apply what they have learned to write their own stories based on an object/artifact or resource from their own lives. This lesson is placed at the end of a short story unit.

About the Project: American Indians lived in the area we now call North Carolina for at least 15,000 years. Archaeologists study the remnants of their communities to learn who these people were and how they lived and prospered for thousands of years. The lesson presented below was developed as part of the 2021-2022 UNC World View Fellows Program, [Exploring Indigenous Cultures: Ancient North Carolinians, Past and Present](#). It is one in a series of lessons that the Fellows created for K-12 schools and community colleges to help students learn about the ancient peoples that lived here and those who represent today’s vibrant American Indian populations. Lessons connect past to present day by exploring multiple resources within the [Ancient North Carolinians: A Virtual Museum of North Carolina Archaeology website](#) to examine how communities changed over time and what influenced these changes. Understanding past indigenous lifeways—their complexity, resiliency, and vitality—allows for a greater appreciation of the contributions American Indians made to the past and continue to make to the present and future of North Carolina.

Suggested Grade level(s): 9-10 (For high school 90-minute blocks, this lesson would take 3-4 class periods.)

Subject(s): English Language Arts

Corresponding National and State of North Carolina Standards:

Standard of Main Focus: W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Essential Questions:

1. What are the elements of a good story?
2. What stories can a culture’s artifacts tell us about a people?
3. How do stories function to preserve cultures and histories?

Lesson Objectives:

- A. Students will learn that objects as well as words can be used to tell stories.
- B. Students will learn the elements of a strong written short story:
 - Organize information and ideas around a topic to plan and prepare to write.
 - Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth

progression of experiences or events.

- Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
 - Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
 - Develop and strengthen writing as needed by revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience
- C. Students will be able to write their own short story based on an object/artifact or resource from their own lives.

Background information for students:

Teacher will start by introducing the artifacts on the Ancient North Carolinians website: (45 minutes) <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/galleries/3d-gallery/>. Students will be shown the different groups of artifacts to view: Spear Points, Pots, Pipes, Stone Objects, Clay, Shell, Bone, and Copper, and European Trade Goods.

Student activities:

Part 1

Students will explore the artifacts present on their own. Ask students to identify one artifact from each category listed above and respond to the following questions in written form, prior to a class discussion.

- What does this artifact suggest about American Indian ways of life in North Carolina?
 - What does this artifact suggest about the kind of resources American Indians had in North Carolina?
 - What does this artifact suggest about the social interactions of American Indians in North Carolina?
 - If 6,000 years in the future someone were to find artifacts from our civilization, what would they most likely find, and what would those discoveries tell them about us?
- **Discussion Suggestion:** For a modified fish-bowl discussion, write each category on a slip of paper and place in a basket or bucket. Have students sit in a circle and take turns drawing out the slips to discuss the first three questions for each category. At the end of the discussion, have students take turns answering the last question.

Part 2

1. Students will view the video: “10,000 Years Before Contact” (**30 minutes**) located at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZywD0s6DtrM> (Also on the Ancient North Carolinians website at https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/galleries/video_gallery/ancient-carolinians/.)

2. Video converted to an EdPuzzle for students to answer questions and consider key points here: <https://edpuzzle.com/media/61719f621020a1418a26d99b>. (If this pre-created EdPuzzle is no longer available, a teacher may use the video to create an EdPuzzle for students after signing up for a free educator's account at EdPuzzle.com.)

Part 3 (includes a literacy/text connection):

Teacher will explain to students: Stories have been passed down for many generations by the Cherokee people. Used for entertainment, to teach morals and values, and to keep Cherokee history and culture alive, storytelling is still an important part of Cherokee life.

1. Students will read the short story "The Coming of Corn," **(30 minutes)** a Cherokee story as told by Joseph Bruchac, on the Ancient North Carolinians website at: <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/first-peoples/the-village-farmers/> and analyze the structure of "The Coming of Corn" using a graphic organizer ([Short Story Analysis Organizer](#))
2. Next, students will view the video about contemporary Lumbee Indians and their preserving of the corn today **(30 minutes)**: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwlWqzDyUTw>. *(Teacher will explain to students: The earliest corn has been found on American Indian sites in North Carolina that were occupied about 1,000 years ago. Soon after, it became an important crop in this region, sustaining large communities of indigenous people. Today, corn remains an important resource for contemporary American Indian tribes in North Carolina.*
3. Finally, students will choose an object/artifact or resource from their own lives that reflects a belief or tradition that matters to them and their families or communities. *(Explain to students: The Cherokee and Lumbee people, two of eight state-recognized American Indian tribes in North Carolina, are distinct groups; however, they share corn as an important source of food, tradition, and community. Ask students: What object/artifact or resource run through your lives that sustains and binds you, your family, or community together? This could be a tradition, an attitude, or a tangible object.)*
4. Then, students will write a story about the object/artifact or resource and what it means to the student and his or her family/community. **(1 hour in class, but more may be needed outside of class to write)**. *(Teacher will show students the grading rubric and explain that the story must set out a problem, situation, or observation early in the narrative, use dialogue and description to advance the story, use details and sensory imagery to convey a vivid picture, and have a conclusion that resolves the conflict or explains the significance of the object/artifact or resource.)*
5. After writing stories, students will choose a partner to share their work and give feedback using the rubric provided **(30 minutes)**. Then, students will make corrections and record.
6. Students will record themselves telling their stories on an account created by the teacher on FlipGrid.com. Typed or written copies will also be shared with the teacher either on paper or shared on a Google doc for grading.
7. Students use the grading rubric to choose at least two of their peers' stories to read and review.
8. The teacher can then assemble the videos in a portfolio to be shared with the whole class and/or parents. Teacher will need to allow class time to view videos of about 30 minutes.

Short Story Grading Rubric:

- A. A problem, situation, or observation is established early in the narrative; smooth progression of events – 25 points
- B. Used dialogue and description to advance the story – 25 points
- C. Used details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture in the story – 25 points
- D. Has a conclusion that reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative – 25 points
- E. Total Points: 100 possible

Learning Extension(s) (at least 1 minimum); for example, experiential learning, interview a family (or community) member, essay, presentation, etc.

- Ask student to interview and video an older relative talking about an object/artifact or resource from his/her past they remember or have kept for many years. What is the story behind the object/artifact? What does it mean to them? How has it made a difference in their lives?
- Have student share the video with the class.

Explore Further: The following book is filled with several Cherokee short stories covering a range of topics and themes for additional reading.

- Duncan, Barbara R. (Ed.) (1998). *Living Stories of the Cherokee*. The University of North Carolina Press.

Materials:

1. “10,000 Years Before Contact” Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyWD0s6DtrM>
2. “The Coming of Corn” Cherokee Story - <https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/exhibits/first-peoples/the-village-farmers/>
3. Lumbee Family Preserves Corn Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwlWqzDyUTw>.

Bibliography:

Lumbee Tribe. (2020, July 1). Lumbee tribe preserves corn. [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/10000-years-before-contact-iplefc/>

UNC College of Arts and Sciences. (2021). *North Carolina Tribes*. Ancient North Carolinians.

<https://ancientnc.web.unc.edu/indian-heritage/by-modern-tribe/>

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UNC-TV. (2017). *10,000 Years Before Contact*. [Television series episode]. *Exploring North Carolina*. Natural World Productions, LLC. <https://www.pbs.org/video/10000-years-before-contact-iplefc/>

This lesson plan was created by April Swarey of Elkin High School as part of the 2021-2022 UNC World View Global Fellows Program. For more information about the program, please visit <http://worldview.unc.edu/>