

THE BEAR FACTS

Duration: 3 min 58 s



LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVE

Help students understand the historical significance of early contact between Aboriginal peoples and European explorers.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students in grades 1 to 3.

SUBJECT AREAS

- ◆ History
- ◆ Social sciences
- ◆ First Nations
- ◆ Humanities

DESCRIPTION

This lesson plan aims to familiarize students with a universal notion: that of discovering the ways and customs of other civilizations.

START AND PREPARATORY ACTIVITY

Approximate duration: 30 minutes

Write the phrase *the white desert* on the blackboard without providing an explanation. Ask students to describe what these words evoke for them. Then write the words *north* and *snow*. Do they associate these terms with the Arctic? What do they know of the people who live in the North, specifically the Inuit? What do they know of their traditional ways of life? And of their current lifestyles?

Have the students form small groups. Ask each group to imagine that they have been assigned to explore Inuit lands in the winter — a journey that will involve two key factors:

- ◆ Adaptation (preparing to cope with the harsh winter climate)
- ◆ Difference (the Inuit have their own lifestyle and customs)

How will students prepare for their journey? What supplies and/or equipment will they bring? How will they forge a relationship with the Inuit? As each team shares their ideas, write them on the board. Be sure to underscore those that involve a dialogue between the “visitors” and the Inuit, as well as those that refer to the latter’s traditional lifestyle.

ACTIVITY: WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A BY-YOUR-LEAVE

Approximate duration: 60 minutes

STEP 1

Show students the first part of *The Bear Facts*, stopping the film at 1 min 45 s (i.e. where it fades to black after the first flag is planted). Have the students say what they think the story is about by answering the following questions:

- ◆ Who are these two characters?
- ◆ What attitudes have they adopted?
- ◆ Are they having a dialogue?
- ◆ How do they differ from one another?
- ◆ Does the explorer look like he’s just passing through, or do you think he means to move in and settle down?
- ◆ Why do you think the explorer has planted a flag?
- ◆ Why do you think the filmmaker has decided to represent the explorer as a house?

The last question leads into the next step. Indeed, to proceed to Step 2, students need to understand that the explorer represents a *nation*. As such, he has not only internalized his society’s culture, ambitions and dreams, but also manifests them outwardly (the house).

STEP 2

Watch the film again, this time from start to finish. Seeing the film for a second time will allow students to appreciate the pacing of the narrative. This time, ask them to express what they saw in their own words. You can guide their reflection by exploring the three notions raised in the preparatory activity:

- ◆ Adaptation: What happens when the explorer’s “shell” is blown away by the wind? The “shell” is the portable house that protects him — and also prevents him from truly coming into contact with his new environment.
- ◆ Dialogue: Is the explorer’s symbolic gesture (planting the flag) an invitation to dialogue? The explorer certainly makes no attempt to see whether he is indeed entitled to perform this gesture!
- ◆ Difference: Can you imagine the gulf that separates these two men? Theirs is the encounter of two worlds that are poles apart — two very distinct lifestyles, with completely different ways, customs, and habits.

STEP 3

Encourage students to go beyond the situation described in **The Bear Facts** and reflect further on the first contact with Aboriginal peoples by asking the following questions:

- ◆ Did the Arctic peoples understand the significance of planting a flag? (The flag is a symbol that has meaning only for the explorer.)
- ◆ Can you imagine an alternative scenario where the explorer makes a friendly gesture towards the Inuit instead of being indifferent to his presence?
- ◆ Why would nothing be the same after this first contact?

RECAP: THE EXPRESS SCHOOL BUS

Duration: 60 minutes

Invite students to invent a story in which they need to learn to adapt. What if the classroom was suddenly transported to another continent? Have the students form small groups, then prompt them to imagine the aftermath and consequences of such a change. Following this, have them tell their stories to the class, ensuring that they have considered key aspects of adaptation (food, climate, housing, language, etc.). This discussion can lead to more comprehensive research through which students further explore the lifestyles of children their own age who live in other countries — and in so doing, avoid the kinds of stereotypes that stem from lack of information.

REFLECTIVE SHARING

Have students discuss what it means to respect difference, communicate with peoples from other cultures, and adapt to different environments and cultural practices. Ask them to verbalize the kinds of behaviours and attitudes that could improve communications with unfamiliar civilizations, the better to foster mutual learning and exchange.

