

Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz Lesson Plans

TITLE: 47 Cents per Acre

GRADES: 9 Through 12

SUBJECT AREA(S): Social Studies, Language Arts, Visual Arts

OVERVIEW: A legendary event in the history of Alcatraz was the American-Indian takeover of the island in 1969. Young Indian activists wanted to make a statement about the treatment of American Indians by the U.S. government. "Termination and relocation" policies took people off their homelands, moved them to major urban areas and then cut them loose on receipt of their first paycheck. Ancestral land was appropriated by the federal government in an attempt to assimilate Indians into American society. Much of the tribal land was taken over and sold to private citizens or corporations, angering many American Indians. Since Alcatraz, which was unused federal land, had been declared "abandoned," a group of activists from the American-Indian Movement (AIM) claimed it as Indian land. As many as 90 people lived on the island for 19 months. Damage to the lighthouse gave the federal government an excuse to storm the island and forcibly remove them. The most important result of the occupation was that President Nixon, after much lobbying by Leonard Garment, ended the termination and relocation policies, and established self-determination on Indian lands.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn why Alcatraz was occupied, the history behind the occupation and the risks that were taken by young activists.
- Students will understand what role leadership played in the occupation.
- Students will understand why the occupation ended.

CALIFORNIA STATE STANDARDS:

Grades 9-12

Visual Arts

2.5 Create a two- or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue.

Grades 9-10

Language Arts

All language arts entries are from **Representative Content Standards and Instructional Connections for the Language Arts.**

**CALIFORNIA STATE
STANDARDS
(continued):**

Grades 9-10
(continued)

Reading:

2.2 Prepare a bibliography of reference materials for a report, using a variety of consumer, workplace and public documents.

Writing:

1.3 Use clear research questions and suitable research methods to elicit and present evidence from primary and secondary sources.

2.4 Write persuasive compositions.

Listening and Speaking:

1.1 Formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.

5.3 Deliver persuasive arguments (including evaluation and analysis of problems and solutions and causes and effects).

Technology:

1.8 Design and publish documents by using advanced publishing software and graphic programs.

Grades 11-12

Language Arts

Writing:

1.3 Structure ideas and arguments in a sustained, persuasive and sophisticated way and support them with precise and relevant examples.

Social Studies/History

11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

11.10.5 Discuss the diffusion of the civil rights movement of African Americans, from the churches of the rural South and the urban North, including the resistance to racial desegregation in Little Rock and Birmingham, and how the advances influenced the agendas, strategies, and effectiveness of the quests of American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans for civil rights and equal opportunities.

11.11 Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

11.11.2 Discuss the significant domestic policy speeches of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton (e.g., with regard to education, civil rights, economic policy, environmental policy).

Grade 12

Social Studies/History

12.2 Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

**CALIFORNIA STATE
STANDARDS
(continued):**

Grade 12
(continued)

Social Studies/History (continued)

12.2.1. Discuss the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured (e.g., freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, privacy).

12.3.2. Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.

12.10 Students formulate questions about and defend their analyses of tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: majority rule and individual rights; liberty and equality; state and national authority in a federal system; civil disobedience and the rule of law; freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial; the relationship of religion and government.

TIME: Two to four class periods

**MATERIALS
AND TEACHER**

PREP:

- Video, **Alcatraz Is Not an Island**
- Video, **Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz** (optional)
- Web site, <http://www.kqed.org/alcatraz/>
- Review history of broken treaties to gain background information at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/reservation/resourc2.html>.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

- Note to teacher: Students may have heard something about the AIM occupation and the annual Un-Thanksgiving ceremonies, but they probably don't know too much. It might be best not to give them too much background; let the Web site and video get their interest. That should be enough to make them think, especially if you can relate the motives behind the occupation to issues that might affect their own lives, such as losing apartments or homes, being from another culture, not understanding city life, not being well-educated or not having a well-paying job.

FOCUS FOR VIEWING:

- Have students take detailed notes, keeping in mind that they will be conducting a mock trial of a very important case after they visit KQED's **Lonely Island: Hidden Alcatraz** Web site at www.kqed.org/alcatraz and watch the video **Alcatraz Is not an Island**. Ask them to write down any legal points, laws or arguments they hear.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Have students do the following:

- Write the reasons given for the occupation.
- Write names of individuals and their tribes while viewing the Web site.
- Write statements telling how people felt about what they were doing.
- Make note of slogans and figure out what they mean.

POST VIEWING ACTIVITIES:

Activity 1

In this activity, students will stage a mock trial of the AIM members who conducted the Alcatraz occupation.

1. After students view the video, ask them the meaning of "47 cents per acre." Why is it important to know this?
2. Divide the class into three groups. One group will prosecute AIM members who were part of the Alcatraz occupation; the second group will defend the AIM members. Each group must appoint a lead counsel, investigators (researchers) and clerks (to prepare a document). All members of each side must work to produce a persuasive argument, with historical references as proof. The third group is the jury. Each of the counsel groups presents its case, and the jury decides if the AIM activists had the right to take over and live on Alcatraz and if the FBI had the right to arrest them and remove them from the island. A major point to argue is that the only reason the FBI could make their arrests was because of the damage done to the lighthouse. Students may want to consider the fairness of that in the light of American Indians' history with the federal bureaucracy.
3. After the trial, ask the class about their own feelings. Who do they think was right? What is a moral right? What is the difference between a moral right and a legal right?
(This activity can arouse strong feelings, so it might be best to review conflict resolution standards before beginning: let the other person speak, listen carefully, question what you don't understand [clarify] and be fair.)

EXTENSIONS:

- Have students write a letter to the children and widow of Richard Oakes, discussing the stand he took in 1969 and its effect on all Native Americans.
- Have students create a plan for the use of Alcatraz.
- Ask students to discuss the American celebration of Thanksgiving and explore why many Indians now spend the day on Alcatraz at a huge "Un-Thanksgiving" celebration.

EXTENSIONS
(continued):

- The Indian occupation changed the course of history. Then-President Nixon's adviser, Leonard Garment, advised suspending the "relocation and termination" laws that were moving Indians off their reservations to large metropolitan cities and forcing them to assimilate. Forcing a change in this policy was why AIM moved onto Alcatraz and was its biggest success. Ask your class such questions as the following: What do you think would have happened if Richard Oakes had not jumped overboard and swum ashore that day so long ago? Can you think of any other instance when one single action made such a difference? What's important about taking a stand and acting on it? Why is it hard to do? Is it worth it if the personal consequences are tragic, as they were in the case of Richard Oakes? Do you think he would take that little swim back if he could?
- Ask students to write a story, poem or first-person narrative, make a cartoon, or compose a statement. Students can read their work to each other and display it in the room.
- Pass out a map of the United States and have students, using an atlas, locate, identify and label tribal lands and reservations. (Many states and cities actually have Indian names. For example, the Kansa lived in and around what is now Kansas; the Dakotahs lived, oh my, in the Dakotas, and so on. There are many, many of these Indian place names, especially on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

WEB SITES:

The following Web sites are accessible for research by teacher or students.

Reservation Controversies:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/reservation/resourc2.html>

This site, part of the Library of Congress American Memory Collection, has links to almost everything related to Native-American studies, including a link to treaties made and broken, Native-American authors (their bios and synopses of their works), and current issues.

Printable travel guide:

<http://www.nps.gov/alca/pphtml/print.html>

National Park Service geology lesson plans:

<http://www2.nature.nps.gov/grd/edu/>

Alcatraz Island: Memoirs of a Rock Doc:

<http://www.alcatrazdoc.com/>

A physician on Alcatraz Island between 1937 and 1938 reveals excerpts from his secret journal.

Alcatraz Island Q:

<http://alcatraz.san-francisco.ca.us/>

Links, history, mailing list, trivia, and a photo gallery.

The Rock in the Age of the Public Enemies:

<http://www.alsirat.com/alcatraz.html>

AlcatrazHistory.com:

<http://www.alcatrazhistory.com/>

Features narratives and photos that chronicle life in the maximum-security penitentiary.

American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island with photos from the 1969-71 occupation:

<http://www.csulb.edu/~gcampus/libarts/am-indian/alcatraz/>

Battle of Alcatraz:

<http://www.alcatrazhistory.com/battle1.htm>

Islands of Infamy:

http://www.thinkquest.org/library/lib/site_sum_outside.html?tname=21109&url=21109/

A tour of island prisons -- mainly Alcatraz, U.S.A., and Robben Island, South Africa.

Books available on Native American history:

<http://www.csulb.edu/projects/ais/>