

## **Title** **Frames Within Frames: Perspectives on Native-American Heritage**

**Grade Levels** 7–12

**Subject Areas** History, English

**California State Standards** <http://www.cde.ca.gov/board/>

Writing

Grade 7

Research and Technology

1.4 Identify topics; ask and evaluate questions; and develop ideas leading to inquiry, investigation and research.

2.2 Write responses to literature:

a. Develop interpretations exhibiting careful reading, understanding and insight.

b. Organize interpretations around several clear ideas, premises or images from the literary work.

c. Justify interpretations through sustained use of examples and textual evidence

Writing

Grade 8

2.2 Write responses to literature:

a. Exhibit careful reading and insight in their interpretations.

b. Connect the student's own responses to the writer's techniques and to specific textual references.

Historical Research, Evidence and Point of View

Grades 9 – 12

Students identify bias and prejudice in historical interpretations.

Reading

Grades 9 and 10

2.8 Evaluate the credibility of an author's argument or defense of a claim by critiquing the relationships between generalizations and evidence, the comprehensiveness of evidence, and the way in which the author's intent affects the structure and tone of the text.

Reading

Grades 11 and 12

3.4. Analyze ways in which poets use imagery, personification, figures of speech and sounds to evoke readers' emotions.

Reading

Grades 11 and 12

2.4 Make warranted and reasonable assertions about the author's arguments by using elements of the texts to defend and clarify interpretations.

Writing

Grades 9 and 10

1.5 Synthesize information from multiple sources and identify complexities and discrepancies in the information and the different perspectives found in each medium (e.g., almanacs, microfiche, news sources, in-depth field studies, speeches, journals, technical documents).

2.3 a. Marshal evidence in support of a thesis and related claims, including information on all relevant perspectives.

### **National Standards** [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

Grades 6–8

Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media (e.g., main concept, details, themes or lessons, viewpoints)

Grades 6–8

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=7&StandardID=7>

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)

### **Overview**

Watching **The Return of Navajo Boy** is a powerful experience. In this lesson, students are given the opportunity to focus on the variety of responses the film evokes as they create their own "film within a film," learn about cultural expression, and engage in discussion and reflective writing activities.

### **Learning Objectives**

This lesson's objectives are for the student to

- analyze the varied reactions to key issues portrayed in the film.
- learn how media can function as a tool for examining social and political mechanisms for change.
- create a video presentation that synthesizes classmates' responses to various elements of the film.

To assess students' understanding of the above learning objectives, teachers may rate students on the quality of their written summarizations, their presentations and their participation in group discussions.

**Time** Two to three 40- to 50-minute class periods

### **Materials and Teacher Prep**

Videotape **The Return of Navajo Boy**

Internet access

Drawing and writing supplies

Bookmark the following Web sites:

<http://www.navajoboy.com>

<http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ecubbins/webcrit.html>

## PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY ONE

The purpose of this activity is for students to respond to poetry and share their responses with each other.

1. Share the following poems regarding language and identity with the students.

#### **My Language Is My Home**

In my mother tongue  
my hatred is sanguineous,  
my love soft.

My innermost soul  
is in balance  
with my language.  
The closeness of it  
caresses my hair.

It has grown  
together with me,  
has taken root in me.

My language  
can be painted over  
but not detached  
without tearing  
the structure of my cells.

If you paint  
a foreign language  
on my skin,  
my innermost soul  
cannot breath.

The glow of my feelings  
will not get through  
the blocked pores.

There will be  
a burning fever  
rising in me  
looking for a way  
to express itself.

-Pirkko Leoporanta-Morley in **Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle**

## Untitled

Broken arrowheads from long ago  
Children dig them up  
Bones of horse and buffalo  
Whose lives have ended  
Shot or run off a cliff to  
Land on the hard stones below  
Or just trapped  
All the buffalo are gone forever  
Yelling and screaming now they are gone

-Christi Moeller in **Girl Power** by Hillary Carlip

Scroll down the following page to this poem:

**"Culture Is an Illusion, the Stronger the Illusion, the Stronger the Magic"**

<http://www.indians.org/welker/poetry.htm#01>

2. Ask the students to choose one of the poems and write a response to it.
3. Divide the students into pairs and ask them to share their responses with each other.
4. Ask for student volunteers to share their responses to the poems with the class.
5. Lead a class discussion based on the following questions:
  - How does each of these poems describe identity?
  - What message do the poets convey regarding loss of culture, language and identity?
  - What do you think the poets were trying to say in these poems?

## FOCUS FOR VIEWING

In this film various members of the Cly family describe their lives and culture. Encourage the students to focus on how culture is expressed in our everyday lives.

Some important questions to discuss prior to viewing the film include the following:

- How do people express their culture?
- How do children react when their home culture is not valued in the classroom?
- What role does language play in one's identity?
- What role do literature and the arts play in the expression of identity?

Media can function as a mechanism for social and political change by providing an opportunity to explore issues in a variety of different ways. By exploring the impact this film had on the Cly family, students gain firsthand knowledge of the power of a story to effect change in the world. Encourage students to think about the effect this film had on larger societal and political issues.

Tell the students to think about the following overarching question as they watch the production:

- What message did this film convey to you?

## POSTVIEWING ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY ONE

**The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to reflect on their individual responses to the film.**

1. Ask the students to spend five to 10 minutes writing about their response to *The Return of Navajo Boy*.
2. After the students have finished, divide them into pairs and ask them to share their responses.

### ACTIVITY TWO

**The purpose of this activity is for students to think about the different ways that people respond to this film.**

1. Tell the students that they are going to create a video that focuses on their classmates' reactions to **The Return of the Navajo Boy**.
2. Ask the students to list the various components that were used to tell the story of **The Return of the Navajo Boy**.

This list should include the following components:

- The story of the first film, *Navajo Boy*
- The story of how the return of *Navajo Boy* impacted the story being told in *The Return of the Navajo Boy*
- The impact of the the film's return on the individuals featured in *The Return of the Navajo Boy*
- The photographs taken of the Clys
- The individual reactions to the photographs
- Episodes of daily living activities

Ask the students to discuss how the filmmaker, Jeff Spitz, made use of all these elements to weave a new story. Ask the students also to analyze the success of his efforts in capturing the different components.

3. Divide the students into small groups. Each group should focus on creating a scene. The scene may be based on any topic in the film and should be created in a way that best captures students' responses. This might be done by interviewing students, by featuring student art, by incorporating different types of music, by filming students' written words or by any other suitable means of artistic expression. Encourage the students' creativity.

Each group will have responsibility for a different segment of the production. These segments might include scriptwriters, film editors, props and costumes, lighting, narrators, and so on.

4. Have the students explore some of the topics in the film, including, but not limited to, the topics below. To enhance the production, students may want to conduct further research on the various topics.

Family relationships

Film industry exploitation

Uranium mining on Indian lands

Adoption of American Indians

Propaganda films

Plight of Navajos today

The power of media to educate, inform and unite

5. Film small-group scenes.

6. As a class, watch each group's scene. Brainstorm ideas on how to take these scenes to create a coherent film that showcases a variety of responses to the film. In essence, create your own "film within a film."

7. If possible, share this film with others in the school and the community. Create an ongoing discussion forum to provide opportunities to respond to the film. This might be in the form of a book to be passed around after viewing in which comments can be written and read, postings on a class Web site, or a continuation of the class video.

8. After viewing the film and listening to audience reactions, ask each student to write a review of the "film within a film." Create a class collection of these reviews to use as a shared resource. Visit the following Web site, which contains reviews of **Return of Navajo Boy** at <http://www.navajoboy.com>.

Note: If video cameras are not available, students can write a script or create a storyboard that captures their responses.

## Extension Activities

### Activity One

**The purpose of this activity is to explore the different ways American Indians are portrayed in the Web sites.**

1. Ask the students to choose a Web site on Navajo culture.

2. Visit the Web site at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~ecubbins/webcrit.html>, which describes how to evaluate and critique Web sites about American Indians.

3. Ask the students to critique the Web site they have selected based on the categories given and respond to the following question in writing:

- Do you think this is a valid way to evaluate Web sites about American Indians?

## **Activity Two**

**The purpose of this activity is to explore representations of American Indians in film.**

1. Choose a film from the following Web site and discuss how American Indians are portrayed in it.  
<http://iserver.saddleback.cc.ca.us/div/la/neh/films.htm>