

Social Studies Lesson Two

Early Great Basin Inhabitants **Native Americans of Nevada**

Overview:

Nevada is approximately 110,561 square miles. On the west border of the state is California and on the East border is Utah. The topography of Nevada is diverse and unpredictable. There are numerous mountain ranges that are separated by valleys. Each mountain range differs in elevation and vegetation, which has the effect of producing either more moisture or a more arid environment in the valleys below. The Las Vegas Valley is located in what is known as The Great Basin. The Great Basin is located between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada mountain range. This area is predominately an arid climate with little rainfall.

The early inhabitants of this area can be classified into the group known as hunter-gatherers. The people in this region lived in small bands that worked together to survive on small game animals, pine nuts and insects. The early Americans of this area chose to reside in a region that many found to be unlivable. Early explorers never could have predicted the growth that The Great Basin experienced after the construction of the Boulder Dam (later renamed the Hoover Dam). Recently, there has been a renewed interest in learning about Native American cultures. By learning about the early Native American cultures of this region, it is hoped that students will develop an appreciation for this region's past; with appreciation will come understanding of the people and their ways of life. The Native Americans of the Great Basin survived without the aid of the Hoover Dam; the Hoover Dam was not completed until 1935. The Hoover Dam is a human control on the environment. The dam has tamed the waters of the Colorado River to provide a steady supply of water for this region. Hoover Dam is said to be the "lifeline of the desert."

All early civilizations were set up along a viable water source. It has been noted that the early Native Americans of this area enjoyed fresh-water springs, natural rivers, and the unpredictable flooding of the Colorado River. Native Americans respected the land they lived on. They believed that no one person could own land; all persons were granted the right to live on the land and use it. Indians believed that land, like all of nature, deserved respect. The land and its resources were to be utilized to benefit all. No one person was to overuse or abuse its gifts. Today there is a need to conserve the water and respect the land of The Great Basin. It is hoped that with the completion of this project students will be able to identify the early "culture groups" of this region, the natural resources available to this region and the natural plant and animal life that exists in the region. This project will provide students the lifelong learning skills to conduct themselves as citizens interested in the growth of Southern Nevada

without destroying the environment and water supply in this most arid of metropolitan areas.

Objectives:

1. Define Nevada as it relates to the five themes of geography (Location, Place, Movement, Regions, Human-Environment Interaction)
2. Relate important historic events in Nevada to the development of American History.
3. Describe how humans settled Las Vegas and adapted to a variety of environments in Nevada.
4. Recognize early Native Americans in Nevada's history.
5. Demonstrate the ability to use a computer to collect data.
6. Apply information found in research on the computer and various books to produce a comprehensive project.

NEVADA GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

NEVADA HISTORY STANDARDS 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10

NEVADA WRITING STANDARDS

Questions to answer while researching:

1. What is the history of Nevada?
2. What is the history of the Las Vegas Valley?
3. What are the names of the states within Nevada's geographic region?
4. What does "culture area" mean?
5. What Native American groups (Indians) resided in this culture area?
6. What are the Native American shelters in this region called?
7. (When looking at culture group map) which region has a small number of culture groups? What does the map illustrate about the settlement patterns of Native Americans? Can a change in environment affect settlement patterns?

Materials:

1. Internet/one computer for research
2. Various books from the library
3. History textbook (You may use any textbook, preferably the book which you currently use in class)
4. Colored pencils and/or markers
5. Construction paper, blank white paper
6. Rulers
7. Atlases of the United States (*Nystrom Desk Atlas* page 55, or any other available atlas)
8. Atlas of the state of Nevada
9. Optional: Prentice Hall, *Pathways to the Present*, 2000 edition, page 5 (Native American Culture Groups and Trade Routes)
10. Optional: *National Audubon Society Field Guide to the Southwestern States*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1999.

Internet Resources:

1. www.xeri.com/Moapa/moapa-afidavits.htm
2. www.ghosttowns.com
3. www.nevadaweb.com/gbart/historic/index.html
4. www.hooverdam.com
5. www.ci.las-vegas.nv.us

Time Allocation:

2-5 class periods, depending on how much work is done outside of class

The final product should illustrate analytical, tactile, social and visual skills of all participants.

Procedures:

1. Begin with an opening activity that will introduce the unit objectives. For example, the instructor may want to ask students to name Native American groups of The Great Basin area. Ask students to recall any facts they may know about the group (their way of life, food, clothing, or the specific location they inhabited).
2. Depending on the class level, instructor will need to determine whether the activity will be a group project or an individual project.
3. Depending on computer availability instructor will need to determine where students can retrieve internet information (recommendation: a school computer lab, so that all students can be focused and learn how to use a computer for data collection)
4. Instructor will outline contents to be included in project. Each task should be presented on a separate page, preferably a plain white sheet of paper. The final project will be approximately 10 pages. If this is to be a group project, individual students will need to be responsible for specific tasks. Contents to be included in the work:

- a) Map of North America that illustrates- by color- all Native American "culture groups."
- b) Map of Nevada that illustrates- by color- all Native American "culture groups" that resided in Nevada (showing location).
- c) Map of Nevada showing the location of all water sources (i.e., Lakes Pyramid, Tahoe, Walker, Mead and all rivers).

The remaining pages will provide the student(s) opportunities to write. All writing should be checked for accuracy, punctuation and appropriate vocabulary usage. With each description, students should provide a picture that will illustrate their description. Illustrations can be done by the student or retrieved off the Internet, from an encyclopedia or textbook.

- d) List vegetation that is native to the Las Vegas area (i.e., plant life: trees, shrubs, flowers, perennial desert plants).

- e) List and describe desert animal life.
- f) Descriptions of Native American “culture groups” of the area (descriptions should include: how the group obtained water, types of food they ate, dress, religion, entertainment, housing, accounts of first contacts with Europeans, trade or livelihood, known artifacts of the group, present day locations and activities of this “culture group,” and adaptations to the environment made by this “culture group”).
- g) On this page, students should provide a brief description of what they learned by doing this project. Remind students that in one paragraph, they should be able to summarize what they learned about the early “culture groups” of Nevada. The second paragraph on this page should describe how retrieving and using water today is different from the Native American era.
- h) On this page students will create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the environment that existed during the early “culture groups” and the environment that exists today. (See Language Arts Lesson Two in Unit 3 for a sample Venn diagram.)
- i) Bibliography of resources (all students should be responsible for citing specific page numbers on all book content as well as Web site information).
- j) The cover of the project should be of construction paper. Students will create an eye-catching cover that should illustrate the contents contained in the work. The back of the cover should be a description of the contents of their book on early Nevada.

Extension Activities:

1. Students can present their work, either cooperatively or individually.
2. Students can be tested on important facts learned from participation in the project (i.e., Native American names, map locations, etc.).
3. Students can be tested on the methods used to acquire data from the computer.