



Oregon's First People

The Native Americans of the Northwest

Native American Trade: Barter and Exchange

Grade: 3-5

Overview

This lesson begins with an activity about bartering, which is the basic act of trading goods without using money. During the time of the barter system, Native American tribes would trade goods that were thought of as equal in value, ranging from baskets to beads to fish to clothing. The items that were bartered depended highly upon the area the particular tribe lived in because they would create unique goods from the resources found in their territory. This bartering activity provides an opportunity for students to research and create a presentation about the Native American tribes of Oregon and the types of goods bartered along with experiencing the barter system.

Oregon Common Core State Standards

Language Arts Standards: See below for a full list of applicable standards.

- CCSS.ELA.W.4.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
- CCSS.ELA.W.4.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA.W.4.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Social Studies Standards:

- Historical Knowledge 4.1: Identify and describe historic Native American groups that lived in Oregon prior to contact with Europeans and at the time of early European exploration, including ways these groups adapted to and interacted with the physical environment.
- Geography 4.12. Explain how people in Oregon have modified their environment and how the environment has influenced people's lives.
- Civics and Govt. 4.15: Describe and evaluate how historical Oregon governments affected groups within the state (citizens, foreigners, women, class systems, minority groups, tribes).
- Economics 4.17: Analyze different buying choices and their opportunity costs while demonstrating the difference between needs and wants.

Materials

- Historic Oregon Newspapers website
- Items to barter (worth up to \$2)
- Letter to parents about activity
- Rule sheet for bartering

Key Vocabulary

- Barter
- Trade
- Tribes
- Customs
- Traditions
- Resources

Lesson

- *Introduction:* Discuss with students the concept of bartering, which is the basic act of trading goods without using money.
 - This can be accomplished through any kind of sharing activity
 - Use real-world, tangible concepts such as sharing candy or taking turns on the playground
 - Discuss the importance of bartering for the Native Americans using visuals such as these photo essays from historic Oregon newspapers:
 - ["Stone Implements Used by the Oregon Indians" from Sunday Oregonian, January 01, 1905](#)
 - ["Many Indian Baskets and Curios" from Sunday Oregonian, July 16, 1905](#)
 - The Native Americans bartered not only with natural resources such as fish, meat, seashells, and hides, but also with handcrafted goods such as pottery, baskets, and woven mats.
- *Activity: "Barter System Rendezvous"*
 - Students will be playing a game where they will be trading for keeps. Emphasize this rule so that students think deeply about their decisions.
 - Have students share their items with the class, then place the items on their desk.
 - Once every student has shared their item, have the whole class walk around and observe the items that other students have brought.
 - Go over the rules of bartering. Students are allowed to make multiple trades. Students do not need to barter if they feel the other item isn't worth the same amount as theirs.
 - Model the proper and respectful way to barter with another student by initiating the first exchange.
 - Give students 30 minutes for the activity.
- *Discussion:* Once the activity is over, bring students together to have a discussion about what they experienced during the activity.

- Some discussion questions to consider:
 - How many students were able to trade their item for the item they wanted most?
 - How many didn't make a trade at all? Why?
 - Was there anyone who traded more than once to get the item of his or her choice?
 - Say you saw something you really wanted most, and the other person said no to the trade. What did you do in order to trade for that item?

Extension Activity Ideas

Activities can be modified several different ways, depending on the grade level and focus of study. Listed are activity ideas that can be adapted and extended to and for any grade level.

- *Jigsaw Activity/Art:* Students research the Historic Oregon Newspapers website to find photographs of items that were actually used to barter. Each group or partnership specializes in one Oregon tribe to research bartering items unique to each of that tribe. Students will then put together a short presentation of their findings for the class. Additionally, students may conduct longer research to create a more formal presentation (i.e. using PowerPoint, poster board, etc.) to share with the class. To further this activity, students can use the research they have conducted to create replicas of these items.
 - Pictures during this era may be found through the [advanced search option](#) on the Historic Oregon Newspapers website. Type in "pictures" in any of the search options to pull up pictures. This advanced search option is customizable in that keywords such as "Siletz," along with the specific year, can narrow down the results.
- *Research Project:* Group students in partnerships or small groups to research one of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon: Burns Paiute Tribe; Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw; Coquille Indian Tribe; Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians; Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community; Klamath Tribes; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation. Additionally, students may research a smaller band within these larger tribes to provide a variety of information presented. [Oregon Blue Book](#) provides some great resources about these smaller bands, and the greater tribe.
 - Some presentation mediums include: PowerPoint presentation, models of tribal life, clothing, etc., picture book, fairy tale, play, etc.
 - Some topics to research include: natural resources, region, traditions, clothing, food, arts, etc.

Resources

Background About Trading Among Indians

Because Oregon is such a geographically diverse state, Native peoples living in different regions had access to different types of natural resources. Every region of the state had *some* of the things people considered necessary for life, but no one region had *all* of the things. Therefore, tribal groups living in different regions would trade with one another in order to get those goods that could not easily be attained from their local environment.

For example, peoples of the Coastal region (such as the Chinook, Siletz, and Tillamook) would trade seashells and baskets made of woven cedar bark with inhabitants of the interior Great Basin (such as Bannock and Shoshone), who could supply bison hides and the obsidian used to make arrowheads.

So, even before the arrival of the first Euro-American settlers, Oregon already had a well-developed trade economy based on a system of barter. The barter system is a method of buying and selling goods without the use of money. There are no “prices” in a barter system—goods and services are exchanged directly for other goods and services, and the two parties in the transaction decide on the relative values of the trade goods at the time they are making the trade.

Background About Indians

Before the coming of American and European settlers, Oregon had been inhabited for more than 14,000 years by Native Americans. In fact, the oldest known human remains on the North American continent were discovered in recent years outside Paisley, Oregon (MSNBC story about the discovery: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26819601/ns/technology_and_science-science/). DNA evidence indicates these people originated in northern regions of Asia and that they are the direct forebears of the Indian people who still live in Oregon today: they are known to archaeologists as Paleo-Indians (*Paleo* is a prefix that means “ancient”). Paleo-Indians crossed over a land bridge that existed between Siberia and Alaska during the last Ice Age, when sea levels were much lower than the present day. These people were nomadic hunters who lived in small bands that followed the herds of large prehistoric mammals known as *megafauna*. Many archaeologists believe that significant human impact on the environment of North America actually begins here because they theorize that over-hunting by these Ice Age people helped lead to the extinction of such animals as the mammoth, woolly rhinoceros, and giant ground sloth. As the big game species disappeared and the environment warmed with the retreat of the polar ice caps, groups of Paleo-Indians began to settle more permanently in various areas, adapting diverse cultures and lifestyles based on new food-gathering strategies (fishing, hunting smaller game, gathering wild plants).

Newspaper Articles to Support the Lesson:

“Editors’ Advice to Pioneers” from *Oregon Spectator*, April 29, 1847

- First mention of “Indians” in an Oregon newspaper: “Treat the Indians Kindly Along the Road, but Trust Them Not.”
- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022662/1847-04-29/ed-1/seq-1/>

“Disarm Them” from *Oregon Sentinel*, April 26, 1873

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn84022657/1873-04-26/ed-1/seq-2/>

“Northwestern Indians: What the Indians Require and What the Government Must Pay” from *Daily Morning Astorian*, February 28, 1884

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn96061150/1884-02-28/ed-1/seq-1/>

“Joseph in Wallow: Old Chief Wants Land of His Youth for a Reservation” from *Sunday Oregonian*, June 24, 1900

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83045782/1900-06-24/ed-1/seq-13/>

“Festivities of the Buck Moon on Umatilla Reservation” from *Sunday Oregonian*, July 08, 1900

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83045782/1900-07-08/ed-1/seq-25/>

“Stone Implements Used by the Oregon Indians” from *Sunday Oregonian*, January 01, 1905

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83045782/1905-01-01/ed-1/seq-34/>

“John Davenport, Colfax, with ‘Chinned’ Beard: An Oregonian Whom the Indians Loved Because He Never Told Them a Lie” from *Sunday Oregonian*, June 11, 1905

- The Good White Man meets the Good Indians—note: they loved him!
- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83045782/1905-06-11/ed-1/seq-39/>

“Many Baskets and Curios” from *Sunday Oregonian*, July 16, 1905

- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83045782/1905-07-16/ed-1/seq-41/>

“In Indians’ Behalf: Educational Institute for the Teachers” from *Morning Oregonian*, August 22, 1905

- Article describing a conference on the reform of Indian schools.
- <http://oregonnews.uoregon.edu/lccn/sn83025138/1905-08-22/ed-1/seq-11/>

Barter System Rendezvous

You Must...

- Be Respectful.
- Ask before taking or trading an item.
- Judge and decide which items are equal to yours.

You Can...

- Trade multiple times to different people.
- Say no to a trade.
- Decide not to trade your item at all.
- Reason with each other to trade items.

You Can Not...

- Take back a trade.
- Steal items.
- Change your mind after agreeing to a trade.

Continued list of applicable Language Arts Standards

- CCSS.ELA.W.4.6 With some guidance and support from adults, use technology—including the Internet—to produce and publish writing, as well as interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.
- CCSS.ELA.W.4.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.
- CCSS.ELA.SL.4.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA.SL.4.5 Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.