

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY USING PRIMARY SOURCES

Tenet 2 in an Elementary Classroom

VIDEO GUIDE

Description of Video

Watch fifth grade teacher Geoff Freeman lead his students through a primary source-based activity addressing tenet two of culturally relevant pedagogy in which students develop cultural competence. See students analyze historic maps of St. Paul and create their own maps as they explore past and present culture characteristics of their school and neighborhood.

Audience

Elementary teachers and other educators exploring culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and primary source-work

Purpose

This document offers guidance for viewing the video and implementing primary source analysis and culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom.

Highlights

- Fifth grade lesson comparing two historic maps of St. Paul, MN, to student-created maps of their St. Paul neighborhoods
- Elementary students engaging in critical analysis of primary source maps
- Culturally relevant pedagogy in action in an elementary classroom

Pedagogical Framework

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) is a teaching framework established by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This video demonstrates how primary sources can provide an effective vehicle for students to engage in meaningful learning. Primary sources are raw, unfiltered evidence from the past. Students interpret the past through the lens of their own cultural knowledge. The multiple perspectives that primary sources offer are integral to students constructing a richer and more nuanced understanding of their world.

This video focuses on the second tenet of CRP: “Students’ cultural knowledge and expertise is developed and utilized as a vehicle for learning.” See tenet 2 come to life as students analyze primary sources to develop a deeper and more complex understanding of their school’s history and then use those sources as inspiration for creating their own community maps.

Note

There is no “checklist” for creating a culturally relevant lesson. It is a way of thinking about one’s curriculum and instruction that places students and their own unique cultural knowledge at the center of classroom instruction. Titles or lesson ideas offered in this video are intended as examples of what could be used in a culturally relevant lesson.

Guiding Questions

1. Historic maps are a great way to introduce students to primary sources. Because maps are visual, they may be easier for students at lower reading levels to work with as compared to diary entries, newspaper articles, or other text-based primary sources. What kind of skill-building or scaffolding might students in your school community need to use historic maps in their classroom?
2. These fifth grade students were learning about the culture of their community by examining both historic maps and student-created maps. How does using evidence to form an interpretation require students to use higher order thinking skills? How does working in small groups place value on multiple perspectives?
3. Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on the idea that there are multiple “cultures” in every class, so teachers must build strong relationships with students and recognizing the cultural expertise of each student. How would you describe the “cultures” in your class?
4. Tenet 2 of CRP is about facilitating students’ own cultural competence. How is Geoff’s lesson based on the cultural knowledge of his students?
5. Based on the cultures in your class, how would you teach a similar lesson on the culture of your community?
6. One challenge of teaching a lesson based on students own cultural knowledge is that many elementary students have “limited lived experiences.” In what ways do students in your school community have “limited lived experiences”? How could this lesson be adapted to address these gaps in their knowledge?
7. Geoff asks his students, “Based on your observations, what was most important to the cartographers who made these map?” Why is it important to ask students to consider the perspective of the person who created a primary source?
8. These students began a series of lessons exploring the history of their school, by making a map of their own neighborhood. How was this done in an age-appropriate way for fifth grade students? How might you adapt this lesson for fourth graders? Second graders?
9. In the video, students lead class discussion by calling on one another. How does this reinforce tenet 2 of CRP?
10. It is important for teachers to develop a meaningful understanding of the beliefs and values of their students’ cultures, beyond recognizing visible cultural characteristics like music, food, or dress. What are some ways a teacher can use visible culture, like features on the students’ community maps, to facilitate a deeper understanding about a community’s beliefs and values?
11. Geoff has his students create a map highlighting ten “personal landmarks,” or places that carry special significance to them. What personal landmarks would *you* choose if you were doing this activity? What might these personal landmarks reveal about your own culture?

Next Steps

- Visit the Inquiry in the Upper Midwest (IUM) project website: mnhs.org/ium
 - Watch a twelve-minute webinar on analyzing maps: education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development
 - Sign up for an upcoming IUM project workshop: education.mnhs.org/ium/professional-development
 - Check out the other videos and supporting materials on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Using Primary Sources: education.mnhs.org/ium/teaching-materials
- Explore maps online at the Minnesota Historical Society: collections.mnhs.org/maps/
- Explore primary sources online at the Wisconsin Historical Society: wisconsinhistory.org
- Explore maps online at the Library of Congress: loc.gov/maps
- Sign up to receive the Minnesota Historical Society's monthly Education eNewsletter: mnhs.org/enews