Teacher: Nate Brager

Lesson Title: A Mile In Their Shoes

Grade Level: 5th

Theme: The Frontier From the American Indian Perspective

Subject(s): Social Studies/Language Arts

State Curriculum Standards met in this lesson:

Social Studies: 5.4.1.2.2. “Explain a historical event from multiple perspectives.”

Language Arts: 5.1.3.3.3 “Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text.”

Instructional Objective(s):

1.) Students will explore multiple perspectives of the events depicted (both those of the author and those of the American Indians she encountered) by drawing on details from the story and using those details to write an alternate version from the perspective of the American Indians.

2.) In their own words, students will explain how this pattern of “history being written by the victors” results in minority groups being stereotyped and marginalized.  To do this, they will be asked for answer the following questions: 1) Where have you learned most of what you know about American Indians (likely movies, TV, etc.)  2) Whose perspective was being represented?  3) Given what we’ve just discussed, do you think the information you were given was completely accurate? 4) When thinking about or discussing American Indians, what can you do to separate reality from some of the stereotypes you’ve encountered?

Materials, Resources and Technology:

-Copy of “Pioneer Girl” by Laura Ingalls Wilder

-Smart board or overhead projector

-Writing utensils and notebook paper

Instructional Procedures:

Anticipatory Set- “The Hook” “Snappy Launch”

I’ll start by asking the class if they’ve ever gotten into a fight with a sibling or a friend.  (We all have.)  I will then tell them a brief story about the time that my brother and I were playing catch in the house and a decorative dish got knocked off the shelf and broke.  We both bumped into the wall, but I really thought it was my brothers fault and he really thought it was my fault.  When we told our parents, we both believed we were telling “the truth”!  That’s because people can have different perspectives about the same event, and it doesn’t mean that one person is necessarily “wrong” or “lying”.

Lesson Set/Techniques and Activities:

-I’ll remind the students that much of our “history” comes from the perspective of our ancestors, many of whom were European settlers like Laura Ingalls Wilder’s family.  However, I’ll encourage them to think about how the different characters in our story might have viewed the events being described.

-I will then read an excerpt from “Pioneer Girl” in which Laura’s father, Charles Ingalls is away from home and two Native Americans arrive at the Ingalls homestead and ask for food and tobacco (which her mother, Caroline, gives them.)

-I’ll ask the students use clues from the text to describe how Laura and her mother felt during the encounter (“afraid”, “nervous”, etc. would be common answers), and I’ll write those feelings down on the smart board under the heading “Ingalls’ perspective”.  I’ll then ask them to consider the perspective of the American Indians.  What brought them to the house?  Were they trying to scare someone?  Were they simply being friendly?  Did they need supplies?  We will then write down some thoughts on how the American Indians may have felt under the heading “American Indian’s perspective”.

Assessment/Evaluation:

1.) Each student will write a write a summary of the story from the perspective of the Native Americans involved.  Their summary may draw upon our class brainstorming session, but it should be based on clues from the original story.  This is just a quick-write, and the story shouldn’t be more than a few paragraphs long.

2.) Each student will explain how this pattern of “history being written by the victors (dominant group)” can lead to minority groups being stereotyped and marginalized.  They will be asked to answer the following questions: 1) Where have you learned most of what you know about American Indians (likely movies, TV, etc.)  2) Whose perspective was being represented?  3) Given what we’ve just discussed, do you think the information you were given was completely accurate? 4) When thinking about American Indians, what can you do to separate reality from some of the stereotypes you’ve encountered?  (Collect the data!!!)