

# ***61 Cooperative Learning Activities in U.S. History***

*Kate O'Halloran*

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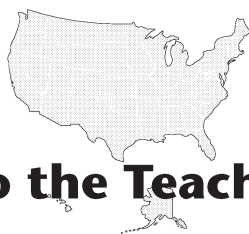
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## To the Teacher

This book has been developed to let you offer your students the benefits of working in small groups while increasing their knowledge and understanding of U.S. history.

The 61 activities, arranged chronologically, cover the history of North America from the time before European contact through the present day. The variety of the activities will appeal to many different learning styles and should call on the strengths of all your students.

Each activity includes a reproducible student handout and an accompanying teacher page. For each project, be sure to read both the student page and the teacher page before you begin. In most cases, the student handout includes everything students need to get started. The teacher page identifies the basic skills students will use in completing the project, as well as the academic objective for the project.

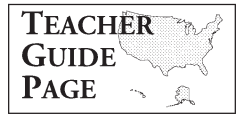
The teacher material also gives suggestions for the number of students in each group and possible group roles. Some teachers prefer not to assign roles, while some prefer to make sure each student within the group has a specific function and clearly understands what it is. You may use the group roles suggested here or assign other roles to suit the needs of your class.

The suggested group size is also flexible. In many classrooms, two students in a group is often ideal. Students get many of the benefits of group work, but there is less likelihood of one student failing to contribute to the group. However, some of the more complex activities require more students to get the work done. Adjust the group size to fit both your class and the chosen project.

The teacher page also identifies the materials students will need to complete an activity. For many activities where research material is suggested, your U.S. history text may provide enough information to complete the project. Check the text before giving students the handout.



## How the World Was Made



**Skills:** Research, comprehension, thinking, speaking.

**Objectives:** Students become familiar with the commonalities and diversity in American societies before European contact.

**Project:** Comparative chart and oral report.

**Suggested Group Roles:** Reader, recorder, coordinator, speaker(s).

**Suggested Group Size:** Three to four students in each group.

**Materials Needed:** Anthologies of Native American myths and tales to be obtained by students; *How the World Was Made* handout; notebook paper and pens. Optional: creation myths from other parts of the world.

**Procedure:** Read the Huron creation myth on the handout with the class. If possible, share creation myths from other cultures besides those of North America. Form groups. Students then research other Native American creation myths and prepare charts to compare and contrast stories. Student groups give oral presentations to class.

**Evaluation:** Does student chart compare at least three Native American creation myths? Do students clearly narrate one myth to the class?

**Variations:** Have students write their own creation myth. Have students also report on creation myths from other parts of the world.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## How the World Was Made



All over the world, people have wondered how the earth was formed and how life began. Many different cultures have stories to explain the beginning of the world. These stories are called creation myths. Each myth tells us something about the people who told it.

The Huron people of North America tell this story about the creation of the world:

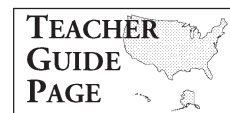
Long ago, the earth was completely covered with water. Only water animals lived there. Then one day a sky woman fell through a rip in the sky and came tumbling toward the water. Two loons caught her as she fell and called loudly to the other animals for help. When Turtle came in answer to their call, the loons placed the woman on Turtle's back. The animals decided that the woman could not live in the water, as they did. They took turns diving down to the bottom of the sea to bring up some earth for her. At last Toad surfaced with a tiny bit of earth in his mouth. The animals placed the earth on Turtle's shell, and the tiny bit of earth grew, until the whole world was formed.

Early Native American cultures lived in very different parts of the country. Different peoples had different ways of life. They developed many different explanations of the beginning of the world. People of the Plains had a different story than people of the Pacific Northwest did, or people who lived in the forests.

Find creation myths from at least three different Native American peoples. Make a chart listing the stories you find and their essential elements. Include the names of the characters in the stories and what happens to form the world.

Then choose the story the group likes best and present it to the class. You can take turns narrating the story, or each member can take on a different role in the story and act it out for the class.

## Native American Peoples



**Skills:** Research, comprehension, thinking, visual skills.

**Objectives:** Students learn about the Native American groups who originally lived in their area and combine their information into posters.

**Project:** Poster based on research.

**Suggested Group Roles:** Coordinator, recorder, artist, reader, checker.

**Suggested Group Size:** Four to five students in each group.

**Materials Needed:** *Native American Peoples* handout; research materials to be obtained by students; poster board or large blank paper; pens, colored pencils, markers. Optional: map showing distribution of Native American peoples before European contact.

**Procedure:** Distribute handout and discuss with students. Remind students that the Europeans who came to America in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries didn't come to an empty continent. Many different civilizations flourished here before the first Europeans came. If necessary, help students identify tribes who originally lived in your area. Form groups. Set date for students to complete research and begin group work. Display posters in class.

**Evaluation:** Do posters include most of the aspects of culture named on the handout? Is the information clearly and attractively presented?

### **Variations:**

1. To form a clearer picture of the diversity among Native American peoples, assign specific tribes or regions to each group.
2. Have student groups make a model of the kind of community Indians in their area would have lived in. The model should show the type of housing most commonly used by this group and how the individual dwellings would be grouped together. The model should also indicate the type of terrain favored by this people. The model could include figures of Native Americans appropriately dressed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Native American Peoples



Before Europeans came to America, most of the country was occupied by Indians. Although the new settlers soon pushed the Indians off most of their land, traces of Indian life remain in many places.

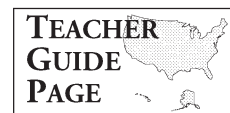
Find out what Native American people originally lived in your area. Describe their way of life.

- Who were they? What name did they use for themselves?
- Were they hunters? fishers? farmers? a combination?
- What did they hunt? What weapons did they use in hunting?
- What did they grow? What methods of agriculture did they use?
- What kind of homes did they build?
- What building materials did they use?
- What were their beliefs?
- Where did they live?
- Did they have a written language?
- Were any members of this tribe well known?
- What were their clothes like? What materials did they use for clothes?
- Did they live all year in one place, or were they nomadic, moving from place to place?
- What kinds of celebrations did they hold?
- What games and sports did they play?
- What kind of medical treatments and remedies did they have?
- Do any traces of their influence remain in the area?
- Do any local place names have an Indian origin? If so, what do they mean?

Combine all your information into a poster that describes the culture of this people. Illustrate the poster with original drawings and/or photocopies.

**Repro**

## 1539–1542: La Nueva España



**Skills:** Map skills, research, thinking, speaking.

**Objectives:** Students learn about the routes of the Coronado and de Soto expeditions and present dialogues about the expeditions to the class.

**Project:** Oral dialogue.

**Suggested Group Roles:** Reader, recorder, speakers.

**Suggested Group Size:** Two to three students in each group.

**Materials Needed:** *La Nueva España* handout; research materials to be provided by students; notebook paper and pens.

**Procedure:** Select groups. Distribute and discuss handout. Students read about the expeditions, then discuss and write their dialogues. Students present their dialogues to the class.

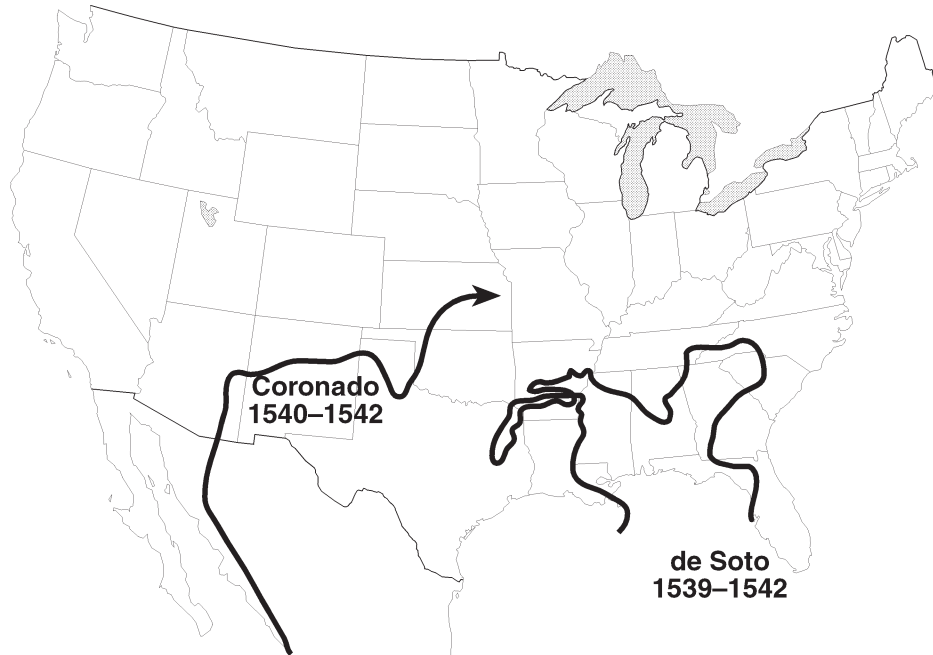
**Evaluation:** Grade on oral presentation.

**Variation:** Give students these directions: Trace the route one of these explorers took. Try to imagine what the group members saw along the route and what obstacles they faced. Then prepare a letter a member of the expedition might have written describing to a family member what the group saw. You may either describe one important event or give an overview of the whole trip.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## 1539–1542: La Nueva España



The earliest Europeans to explore North America came from Spain. They hoped to find gold. They also hoped to find a way across America to spice-rich India and China. Hernando de Soto led a party exploring the Southeast. Francisco Coronado led a group through the Southwest. The land they found was different from anything they had ever seen before. It was also different from what they had hoped to find!

The de Soto and Coronado expeditions took place at about the same time. Both crossed into the area now called Texas at some point—Coronado in the northwest, de Soto in the southeast. Imagine they had both continued through Texas and met in the middle. Read more about each expedition. Then create an imaginary dialogue in which the two explorers tell each other what they have seen over the course of their expedition. Present your dialogue to the class.

de Soto: \_\_\_\_\_

Coronado: \_\_\_\_\_

de Soto: \_\_\_\_\_

Coronado: \_\_\_\_\_

**Repro**