

Poems for Two Voices Lesson Plan

Created by Billings school librarians Ruth Ferris and Kathi Hoyt

Grade Level: 7-12

Enduring Understanding:

Students will understand that Native American approaches to dealing with the U.S. government varied.

Time: Two to three 50-minute class periods

Content Standards

ELA.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

ELA.W.9-10.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELA.W.9-10.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

EU 1: There is great diversity among the twelve tribal nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories, and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

EU 2: There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined, and redefined by entities, organizations and people. A continuum of Indian identity, unique to each individual, ranges from assimilated to traditional. There is no generic American Indian.

Activity Description

Students will learn about Chief Plenty Coups and Chief Sitting Bull and the Crow and Lakota (Sioux) tribes. They will analyze excerpts from speeches given by both leaders, using a word sort to compare Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups' tone, philosophy, and goals. After completing a graphic organizer showing similarities and differences between the two, student pairs will create a Poem for Two Voices, comparing and contrasting the tribal leaders' perspectives.

Objectives

At the conclusion of the lesson students will understand two very different approaches taken by Native American leaders in response to the challenges brought about with the U.S. government's policies of westward expansion.

Materials

Handouts (provided below):

- Background information (excerpted from Chapter 7, "Two Worlds Collide, 1850-1887," *Montana: Stories of the Land*. Helena, MT, 2008, pp. 136–39. The entire chapter is available for download through the Montana Historical Society's website).
- Document 1: Sitting Bull Quotations, and Document 2: Plenty Coups Quotations (taken from "Hearing Native Voices: Analyzing Differing Tribal Perspectives in the Oratory of Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups," a learning activity created by Bozeman teacher Derek Strahn for the Montana Historical

Society. That lesson is available in its entirety through the Montana Historical Society's website).

- Word Sort Graphic Organizer
- Point of View Graphic Organizer
- A Poem for Two Voices Template (created by FOI Oklahoma and reprinted with permission)
- A Poem for Two Voices Secondary Social Studies Example (created by FOI Oklahoma and reprinted with permission)

Teaching Notes: This lesson is best used in conjunction with Chapter 7 of the *Montana: Stories of the Land* textbook, which examines the interactions between Native Americans and the U.S. government from 1850 to 1887. If students are not familiar with the material from this chapter, this lesson can still be taught by using the excerpts from the textbook to provide students with context.

About Poems for Two Voices (from FOI Oklahoma): “Encouraging exchange of ideas and active debates of opposing viewpoints is one of the strongest, most memorable instructional strategies, according to recent research. One method for combining creative writing with the study of factual events in a history, geography, or economics class is with the “Poem for Two Voices.” This strategy requires students to put themselves into another person’s experiences in another time or place, considering what that individual would say if we could listen to a debate between him/her and an individual from his/her opposing point of view. This strategy can be an effective follow-up to the analysis of primary sources in which two opposing or contrasting viewpoints were expressed, asking students to quote from the source or rephrase it in their own words, as they write the “poem.” Student poems also make for good classroom performances and readers’ theaters, involving groups of students or the entire class.”

Pre-Lesson Preparation

Review the lesson and make copies of the handouts provided below.

Procedure

Day 1

Project the Enduring Understanding or write it on the board to clarify students’ learning goal:

Students will understand that Native American approaches to dealing with the U.S. government varied.

To accomplish this goal, let students know that to reach this Enduring Understanding, at the end of the lesson they will need to be able to explain the differences and similarities between Crow and Sioux strategies in interacting with the U.S. government.

Pass out and read the excerpts from *Montana: Stories of the Land*.

Discuss: Who was a Crow chief that the text mentions? Who were the Sioux chiefs that the text mentions? What was the problem that each tribe was trying to deal with? How did their two approaches differ?

Pass out Documents 1 and 2, Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups quotations, to be read individually, aloud by student pairs, or as an entire class. (**Note:** It is important that these excerpts be read completely through before distributing the Word Sort Graphic Organizer. Otherwise, students will focus on the details of the assignment and miss the larger meaning.)

After the documents have been read once, pass out the Word Sort Graphic Organizer. Have students complete their graphic organizers by looking again at Documents 1 and 2 to find the language that Plenty Coups, Sitting Bull, or both used.

Discuss how the words that Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups used in their speeches align with the background information provided in the textbook. Are there surprises? What do the two chiefs' word choices say about their perspectives?

Day 2

Based on the word sort activity, and their initial reading of the quotations, have students complete the Point of View Graphic Organizer comparing Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups' points of view.

Present the Poem for Two Voices.

Tell students: You are going to create a Poem for Two Voices. These poems place two distinct perspectives or opposing points of view in dialogue with one another.

Within the poem each voice speaks individually and then the two voices speak together. When speaking together, the voices comment on something over which they agree or disagree. In the end the two sides do not have to agree.

You will be split into pairs, and within your pair, one of you will voice Sitting Bull's perspective while the other will voice Plenty Coups' perspective.

Using the primary sources and the word sort and point of view graphic organizers you have already completed, you will create a poem based on the provided template.

Hand out and review the template.

Read aloud the secondary social studies example comparing Chief John Ross's views to Andrew Jackson's with a student volunteer. (You need two voices to model a Poem for Two Voices.)

Tell students to read the documents aloud to each another in their pairs before starting their poems.

Allow time for pairs to create their poems.

Day 3

Hold a readers' theater for students who would like to share their Poem for Two Voices.

Encourage readers to use an appropriate and interesting tone that reflects the words they are using. Is the voice more angry, somber, or serious at certain points in the poem?

Encourage listeners to take note of the tone, language, and imagery that their classmates used that they think is interesting or effective.

Post-readers' theater discussion questions:

- What specific language did your classmates use that you found especially interesting or that captured the essence of their characters?
- Did anyone use a tone that pulled you in as a listener? What sort of tone was it?
- What was Sitting Bull's strategy for dealing with the U.S. government?
- What was Plenty Coups' strategy?
- Which strategy do you think was ultimately more effective? Why?
- Does anyone know what happened to Sitting Bull and Plenty Coups?
- How could we find out?

Optional summative assessment: At the end of class, assign a Minute Paper. Students should answer the following questions over the course of a minute. If the teacher feels that their students need more time, allow them 2 to 3 minutes, but not much more. This will provide the teacher with timely assessment data that reflects student learning.

The students should write the Minute Paper on:

- What is the most important point of this lesson?
- What important question(s) remain unanswered?

Student answers to the second question can serve as a point of embarkation for individual research or the next lessons in the class.

Background Information

Each tribe chose its own strategy for survival under increasing pressures—not only from expanding settlements but also from enemy tribes who were themselves being pushed off their lands.

The Crow Strategy: Cooperation

The Crow chose to ally with the U.S. government against a common enemy, the Sioux. The Crow were surrounded by enemies—Sioux to the east, Assiniboine to the north, and Cheyenne to the south. Sioux forces had pushed the Crow tribe west from its traditional homelands into the Powder River area, cutting off the tribe from its traditional trade routes. As Crow leader Plenty Coups later explained, “Our leading chiefs saw that to help the white men fight their enemies and ours would make them our friends . . . We plainly saw that this course was the only one which might save our beautiful country for us.” However, instead of respecting the Crow tribe as an ally, the government treated the Crow the same way it treated other tribes. Within twenty-five years the 39-million-acre Crow Reservation was reduced to 1.8 million acres. . . .

Sioux and Northern Cheyenne Strategy: Armed Resistance

The Sioux and Northern Cheyenne chose armed resistance. In 1874, just six years after the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, prospectors accompanied a cavalry expedition to the Black Hills of South Dakota. They discovered gold. This was in the very heart of Sioux territory protected by treaty, but that did not stop the eager miners. As gold seekers rushed in, the government offered to purchase the Black Hills from the Sioux. The chiefs refused to sell. Then the government tried to force the Sioux onto their reservation. The Sioux refused to go. In the spring of 1876, both the U.S. Army and the Sioux prepared for war. The army gathered several thousand soldiers on the plains—

including Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer’s Seventh U.S. Cavalry—plus about 300 Crow and Shoshone warriors. Meanwhile, approximately 5,000 Sioux and Cheyenne people, including 1,500 warriors, gathered in eastern Montana. They were led by Sioux chiefs Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, and Northern Cheyenne chief Two Moon. U.S. troops and tribal warriors met in several fights that spring and summer. One of the largest was the Battle of the Rosebud on June 17. During this battle there were many acts of bravery on both sides. One involved a girl named Buffalo Calf Road Woman, who rescued her brother, Comes-In-Sight, after his horse was killed. In her honor, the Cheyenne people call the Battle of the Rosebud Kese’eehe Tsevo’estaneohhtse hestatanemo (kse’EEHE tseh-VOH’ stah-neh-veoh-tse HEH-stah-dahnem): “Where the Girl Saved Her Brother.”

Excerpted from *Montana: Stories of the Land* (Helena, 2008), 136–39.

Document 1: Sitting Bull Quotations

Excerpt 1: On Making Peace with the U.S. Government (1867)

“I have killed, robbed and injured too many white men to believe in a good peace. They are bad medicine; I would rather have my skin pierced with bullet holes. I don’t want anything to do with a people who makes a brave carry water on his shoulders, or haul manure.”¹

Excerpt 2: On Why He Didn’t Surrender and Live on the Reservation (Winter 1876–77)

“If the Great Spirit had desired me to be a white man he would have made me so in the first place. He put in your heart certain wishes and plans, in my heart he put other and different desires. Each man is good in his sight. It is not necessary for eagles to be crows. Now we are poor but we are free. No white man controls our footsteps. If we must die we die defending our rights.”²

Excerpt 3: On His Surrender and Return from Canada (1881)

“I do not come in anger toward the white soldiers. I am very sad . . . I will fight no more. I do not love war. I was never the aggressor. I fought only to defend my women and children. Now all my people want to return to their native land. Therefore I submit . . . [Later] I do not wish to be shut up in a corral. It is bad for young men to be fed by an agent. It makes them lazy and drunken. All agency Indians I have seen are worthless. They are neither red warriors nor white farmers. They are neither wolf nor dog. But my followers are weary of cold and hunger. They wish to see their brothers and their old home, therefore I bow my head.”³

Excerpt 4: On Keeping Treaties (1891)

“What treaty that the whites have kept has the red man broken? Not one. What treaty that the

whites ever made with us red men have they kept? Not one. When I was a boy the Sioux owned the world. The sun rose and the sun set in their lands. They sent 10,000 horsemen to battle. Where are the warriors today? Who slew them? Where are our lands? Who owns them? What white man can say I ever stole his lands or a penny of his money? Yet they say I am a thief. What white woman . . . was ever when a captive insulted by me? Yet they say that I am a bad Indian. What white man has ever seen me drunk? Who has ever come to me hungry and gone unfed? Who has ever seen me beat my wives or abuse my children? What law have I broken? Is it wrong for me to love my own? Is it wicked in me because my skin is red; because I am a Sioux; because I was born where my fathers lived; because I would die for my people and my country?”⁴

Notes

1. Sitting Bull quoted in Charles Larpenteur, *Forty Years a Fur Trader* (Chicago: Donnelley, 1941), 359, as quoted in Virginia Irving Armstrong, ed., *I Have Spoken: American History through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), 83.
2. Sitting Bull quoted in Homer W. Wheeler, *Buffalo Days*, 253, as quoted in Virginia Irving Armstrong, ed., *I Have Spoken: American History through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), 112.
3. Sitting Bull quoted in Hamlin Garland, *The Book of the American Indian* (New York: Harper, 1923), 254, as quoted in Virginia Irving Armstrong, ed., *I Have Spoken: American History through the Voices of the Indians* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1971), 126.
4. Sitting Bull quoted in W. Fletcher Johnson, *Life of Sitting Bull* (1891), 201, as quoted in Wayne Moquin and Charles Van Doren, eds., *Great Documents in American Indian History* (New York: Praeger, 1973), 262.

Document 2: Plenty Coups Quotations

Excerpt 1: On Alliance with the United States

“The Absarokees are red men . . . and so are their enemies, the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe, three tribes of people, speaking three different languages, who always combined against us and who greatly outnumbered the Crows. When I was young they had better weapons too. But in spite of all of this we have held our beautiful country to this day. War was always with us until the white man came; then because we were not against him he became our friend. Our lands are ours by treaty and not by chance gift. I have been told that I am the only living chief who signed a treaty with the United States.

I was a chief when I was twenty-eight [1875], and well remember that when white men found gold in the Black Hills the Sioux and Cheyenne made war on them. The Crow were wiser. We knew the white men were strong, without number in their own country, and that there was no good in fighting them; so that when other tribes wished us to fight them we refused. Our leading chiefs saw that to help the white men fight their enemies and ours would make them [the whites] our friends. We had always fought the three tribes, Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe, anyway, and might as well do so now. The complete destruction of our old enemies would please us. Our decision was reached, not because we loved the white man who was already crowding other tribes into our country, or because we hated the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe, but because we plainly saw that this course was the only one which might save our beautiful country for us. When I think back my heart sings because we acted as we did. It was the only way open to us.”¹

Excerpt 2: Speech to His Followers, March 27, 1890

“These are my people here today, I am their chief, and I will talk for them. I would like to see all of them supplied with wagons, plows, mowing machines, and such farming implements as they may need. I understand that the money obtained by [grazing] leases is used toward purchasing these things. That is a good plan. Let the cattlemen stay who pay; those who don’t put them off. Don’t let any more come on, don’t let those who are on now bring any more stock and put them with theirs. I want the men who have cattle here to employ half Crow and half white men to work their cattle. I want them to pay the Crows as much as they pay white men. I want [the whites] to make [the Crows] work and teach them the white man’s ways so that they may learn. We may have stock of our own someday, if we don’t our children will. I don’t want any white man to cut hay on Crow lands. The Great Father has given us mowing machines to cut hay with, we want to cut our own hay; we want the white man to buy hay from us, we don’t want to beg and buy our hay from them. This is our land and not the white men’s . . . I don’t like sheep on Crow lands. I don’t like horses on Crow lands, if they won’t employ Crows to work, put them off entirely. I have spoken, if my people are not satisfied, let them get up and come here and talk, I am ready to listen.”²

Notes

1. Plenty Coups quoted in Frank B Linderman, *Plenty Coups: Chief of the Crows* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 153–54.
2. *Billings Gazette*, March 27, 1890, quoted in Fred C. Krieg, “Plenty Coups: The Final Dignity,” *Montana The Magazine of Western History* 16, no. 4 (October 1966): 28–39.

Word Sort Graphic Organizer

After reading the excerpts from *Sitting Bull* and *Plenty Coups*, cut out and sort the words and phrases below by labeling whether they were used by **Sitting Bull**, **Plenty Coups**, or **both**.

| | | |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Treaty | Enemies | Aggressor |
| Wiser | Land | Beautiful |
| Defending | Slew | Crowding |
| Refused | Thief | Bad medicine |
| Great Father/Great Spirit | Destruction | Corral |
| Worthless | Teach | Cattlemen |
| Crow | Weary | Sioux |

Point of View Graphic Organizer

Compare the points of view of Plenty Coups and Sitting Bull. What strategies did each use to help his people survive? What did each believe regarding the U.S. government?

Then use the middle column to organize the similarities and differences between the two leaders.

| Plenty Coups | Similarities | Sitting Bull |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Differences | |

A Poem for Two Voices Template

Read in numerical order. Both readers should read middle column together simultaneously.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. I am (name). | 3. (Declare the subject of our debate.) | 2. I am (name). |
| 4. (Declare why I have taken this side of the debate.) | 6. (Declare a point of agreement.) | 5. (Declare why I have taken this side of the debate.) |
| 7. (Explain the reasoning behind my point of view.) | | 8. (Explain the reasoning behind my point of view.) |
| 9. (Respond to the previous statement made by my opponent.) | 11. (Declare another point of agreement or rephrase earlier statement.) | 10. (Respond to the previous statement made by my opponent.) |
| 11. (Use extended reasoning or elaboration to explain my point of view.) | 13. (Summarize with a strong statement upon which we both agree.) | 12. (Use extended reasoning or elaboration to explain my point of view.) |

