

Art of the Story

Subjects: Social Studies; History; American Indians; Language Arts; Visual Arts

Location: Classroom, Homework

Duration: 45 minutes

Vocabulary: Oral history; sacred narrative; indigenous

Curriculum Standards: ELA-Literacy RF, RL, SL; Visual Arts: Cr, Pr, Re, Cn; National Social Studies Standards for Culture, Time & Groups



Objectives: Students will be able to explain the importance of the Tower to American Indians. They will be able to give at least one indigenous name for Devils Tower. After completing this lesson, they will be prepared for the distance learning program “Indigenous People of the Tower.”

Materials:

- Blank paper
- Drawing materials
- Narratives & Worksheets (provided)

Background: There are 26 tribes associated with the Tower site. Each tribe has its own history and culture. With those cultures come different names for the Tower, and different oral histories linking tribes to this place. This lesson, and its distance learning program, will explore some of the connections different tribes have with the Tower. It will expose students to American Indian oral histories, and how those are relevant to American Indians today.

Procedures:

Use a map to show the students where Devils Tower National Monument is located. Use the park website (or another source) to show an image of Devils Tower. Explain that this site is very important to many American Indian cultures. Some tribes consider it sacred, and many have oral histories that include the Tower and how it was created.

Tell the students that they will be learning from a park ranger about some American Indian cultures associated with the Tower. Before they meet the park ranger, they will read sacred narratives about the Tower. After reading the story, they will answer questions and draw a picture that depicts their story.

Define terms related to this lesson:

- **Indigenous** - descended from the original inhabitants of a region
- **Oral History** - a story passed down through generations of a culture through the medium of spoken words
- **Sacred Narrative** - a cultural story which explains how the world and humanity came to be in their present forms

Have students work individually or in groups. Give each group/student one copy of a sacred narrative and the “Elements of a Story” worksheet. Let them read the story and answer the questions. After reading and thinking about the story, students should draw a picture which depicts something from their story. These drawings will be shared with the ranger during their program; students will be expected to summarize the story they read and explain how their drawing relates to that story.

Extension:

Have students research the tribe from which their narrative came. Historically, where was the geographic location of this tribe? Do they have a reservation today? If so, where is it, and how does it compare with their past geographic location?

Most cultures have sacred narratives, and they often contain fantastic or unbelievable events. Although these stories may not be factual, they continue to be shared. Do you think sacred narratives are important? Why or why not?