

A Role Play Lesson Exploring American Sign Language and Northern Cheyenne Sign Language as Examples of Culture

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Grade Level: 4 th /5 th
Subject: Native American Culture/Sign Language

Context for Teaching/Learning:

This lesson was taught to 26 fourth grade students at Alliance Intermediate School in Alliance, Ohio in the classroom of veteran teacher, Lorie Ann Osco. The class included 15 girls and 11 boys, one student with a 504 plan, and six students with an IEP plan. The IEPs focus on word & sound recognition, reading fluency, comprehension, and writing meaningful sentences. One student with hearing issues sits toward the front of the room and can see the board well. The children in this 4th grade class have articulated that they prefer working together rather than alone. Student groups are assigned to have at least one typical reader. The classroom is set up with 8 tables seating 3 to 4 students each facing each other for easy communication.

This fourth-grade class has already been exposed to some Native American history and culture, so we are expanding on their knowledge. This lesson uses the [Ahtove website](#) to teach them the Cheyenne sign language and spurs them to create a role play to show their understanding of how Cheyenne sign language. This engaging lesson creates an understanding of different cultures in numerous ways.

To be most effective, teachers should review the sign language on ahtove.org as well as a few basic American Sign Language (ASL) signs. This lesson was written and taught by team teachers, but it can be taught by one teacher alone.

This lesson builds on John Dewey's ideas of **learning by doing** to create a conceptual understanding of language and culture. Learning is formed through concrete experiences, observation, and reflection, forming abstract concepts, and testing in new situations. In this lesson, the students get to interact with one another through roleplay. They are practicing a new language with each other and present their new skills to the class.

Content Standard:

Ohio Social Studies Grade 5 Content Statement. Geography. Human systems 8. American Indians developed unique cultures with many different ways of life. American Indian tribes and nations can be classified into cultural groups based on geographic and cultural similarities.

Learning Objective:

After role playing Cheyenne Sign Language learned from the [ahtove website](#), students will explain how language is included in culture during class discussion and/or with a sentence or drawing on an exit ticket.

Signs & Academic Language Included in this lesson:

Solar plexus: core; where you start for each sign, means "good" in the Northern Cheyenne language

Ahtove: to listen

Northern Cheyenne: A Native American Tribe, unique group, that lives in southern Montana

Se'to'vaatse: A Cheyenne word that meaning “Appears”

pevehe voona'e: A Cheyenne word meaning “Good morning”

pevehe e'seeve'e: A Cheyenne word meaning “Good day”

pevehe taae eve'e: A Cheyenne word meaning “Good night”

E'saa hooe: A Cheyenne word meaning “He/She is not here”

ne' pevehe voom'atse: A Cheyenne word meaning “It's good to see you”

staha whose'voom atse: A Cheyenne word meaning “I'll see you again”

Culture: the shared characteristics of a group of people, which encompasses where the people live, religion, language, cuisine, social behaviors, art, literature, and music

Formative Assessment:

During the lesson, the teachers will be asking the students questions such as “what is your favorite sign & show me.”

“What other signs do you think their **culture** has?”

“Where else in our American culture would we think our life is most important in our body?”

Use questioning throughout the lesson to make sure students are connecting culture to the Native American Sign Language and thinking about why and how different cultures speak differently.

Summative Assessment:

The students will demonstrate their understanding of the Cheyenne language through role play. The students will be given a scenario at their table and will have to use the Cheyenne language to do the roleplay scenario. They will practice at their table and then present it to the class.

The students will fill out an [exit ticket](#) with the question of, “**How do you think the Native American sign language might be special to their culture?**”

If time, students will discuss how ASL represents deaf culture, and how the Native American Language represents Native American culture.

Lesson Introduction (5 mins):

1. The teachers will begin the lesson by saying “Hi” and introducing themselves in ASL. After the teachers introduce themselves, ask a student “What's your name?” in sign language.
2. The teachers will ask, “What do you think we were just doing?”
3. Allow students to share what they think. Ask the students, “What is deaf culture?”
4. Teachers can explain, “We were just using American Sign Language, the sign language we use in America to communicate with our deaf **culture**.”
5. The teachers will explain why we just did a mini role play to show them our sign language and transition into Cheyenne Sign Language.
6. Ask students, “Do you think there are other types of Sign Language?”
7. Encourage students to share their thoughts.
8. The teachers will say, “There are many other sign languages! The Northern Cheyenne **culture** has a universal sign language to communicate to other tribes in their region. It isn't necessarily for deaf people, it is for when different tribes meet and want to quickly communicate.”
9. The teachers will share the goals of today by saying, “We will be learning the Cheyenne's Sign Language and you will perform a role play to show us your new skills!”

Lesson Body(70 minutes):

1. The teachers will have the [Ahtove website](#) ready on the board showing the language tab.
2. “We are going to be watching actual people of the Cheyenne tribe teaching us part of their **culture** by showing us their universal sign language.”
3. The teachers will go to the videos and show each video while students watch.
4. The teachers will then show the class the sign and have the class join in and do it altogether.
5. These steps will be repeated for all nine signs. (15 minutes to watch videos & teach the whole class)
6. The teachers will make sure to point out to students that the first few signs all start with “good” and notice the hand placement. Where the sign starts is called your solar plexus. In Northern Cheyenne **culture**, they believe that sign shows “good” because it starts from where you breathe & if you're breathing, you are healthy and alive.
7. Ask the students to guess “Where else in our American culture would we think our life is most important in our body?” (while teaching, some children suggested heart and head)
8. After the signs are taught to students, they will be directed to get their chromebooks and head to the website.
9. On the board, we will have directions on where to find the video. “Google classroom-social studies-ahtove website-languauge tab-sign language with Marty.”
10. Each table will practice the signs in pairs. (7/8 minutes to practice) [timer](#) will be on board
11. While the students are practicing, the teachers will walk around and provide support if needed.
12. While students are practicing, the teachers will walk around and ask each student, “What is your favorite sign & show me.” if time: “What other important signs do you think their **culture** has?”
13. The teachers will pass out role play notecards (scenarios) to each table. The students will come up with a conversation using at least one sign of the Cheyenne sign language **culture**.
14. The teachers will ask, “Have you ever done a role play before?”
15. The teachers will tell the students, “In your groups, you'll be assigned a role play card and come up with a mini performance for us and the rest of the class.”
 - First scenario: Imagine you're on the playground and you're trying to find someone. Roles include: person you're looking for, two students looking, playground monitor
 - Second scenario: Classroom attendance. Roles include: teacher taking attendance, two students called on, student who you're looking for
 - Third scenario: Getting home from school. Roles include: You as student, Mom or caregiver, people looking for your sister/brother
 - Fourth scenario: Cafeteria line up: coming back from the cafeteria. Roles include: teacher, line leader missing, two students asking for line leader
16. The students will communicate in groups how they want to act out the scenario and which signs they want to use in their role play. (15 mins to practice)
17. Teachers rotate to keep children on-task and trouble-shoot.
18. While the students are practicing, the teachers will go around and suggest roles to individual students who may need that extra challenge of who's going to be doing more signs or more group leading.
19. Each group will share to the class their scenario. (20 mins)
20. The teacher will ask the students to identify the differences between each group's delivery.
21. The teachers will pass out the [exit ticket](#) to students to answer in a drawing or sentence. “**Today we learned about the Northern Cheyenne language. What did you learn about their culture?**”

Lesson Closure/De-Briefing (5 minutes):

1. The teachers will ask the students, “What scenario was your favorite that you saw acted out today?”
2. “What role play do you think was the most realistic (could really happen in real life) ?”
3. “ How were these role plays different from what we did at the beginning with ASL?” (compare/contrast the ASL at the beginning)
4. “**How do you think the Native American sign language might be special to their culture?**”

5. If time: “What other signs do you wish you would have learned?”
6. Encourage children to share their newfound knowledge with friends and families. Remind them that they can access the ahtove.org website at home, if they want to review.

Differentiation, Individualized Instruction, and Assessment:

- **Accommodations:** While going through the different Cheyenne language signs, the teachers will also demonstrate the signs as well for the students that have a hard time seeing the board or want to see it up close. There will also be subtitles on all of the videos shown.
- **Enrichment:** the students will participate in learning through collaboration with peers and teachers. The students are explicitly taught the Native Sign Language, then after that the students practice among peers and create their role play. The teachers will also suggest roles to individual students who may need that extra challenge of who's going to be doing more signs in the roleplay or more group leading.
- **Individualization:** children are able to decide their role within each group. Each group will have a typical reader to read the scenario. Students are a choice to write or draw their answers in the summative assessment.
- **Environment:** We used the environment to allow students to easily collaborate with peers in groups and made sure to stay wherever they are most comfortable working. Students will be allowed to collaborate and practice where they would like. Students can be in designated “quiet” spots if the room is too loud, or the hallway could be accessed for children who need more quiet.

Instructional Materials and Support:

- [Ahtove Website](#)
- [Roleplay notecards](#)
- [timers](#)
- [exit ticket](#)