



Historical Investigation

Maryland Colonists meet the Native Americans

Grades: 4

Time: 45 minutes

Common Core Standards for Literacy, Informational Text:

RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI.4.9 Integrate information from two texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Common Core Standards for Writing:

W.4.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Common Core Standards for Language Arts:

L.4.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies:

D2.His.6.3-5 Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.

D2.His.10.3-5 Compare information provided by different historical sources about the past.

D2.His.16.3-5 Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

Materials:

- Graphic organizer, one per student
- Primary source packet, one per pair

Primary Sources:

Alsop, George. *A Character of the Province of Maryland*. London: 1666.

White, Father Andrew. *A Brief Relation of a Voyage Unto Maryland*, 1634. In *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684*, edited by Clayton C. Hall. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

White, John. *Warrior of the Secotan Indians*. 1585. British Museum, London.

I. Engage the Students

- Ask students to recall a time when they met someone who looked or acted very differently from them. How did the students react? What did they think? You can simply share responses as a class or have students record their responses in their journals.
- As a class, brainstorm a list of words and phrases that the students associate with Native Americans? Tell students to think about appearance, behavior, clothing, homes, etc.
- Ask: Do these descriptions tend to be positive or negative?
- Ask: Why do you think people sometimes think negatively about others who are different from them? Is this fair?

II. Conduct the Investigation

- Tell students that they are going to be analyzing several primary sources that will help them understand what the first Maryland colonists thought and felt about the Piscataway Indians that they met.
- Ask: What is a primary source? (A first-hand, or eyewitness, account of an event, person, place, etc.)
- Ask: If primary sources are created by people who were “there,” does that mean that they are always accurate? Why or why not? Allow students to discuss this point.
- Explain that primary sources are interpretations. People always have a unique point-of-view or perspective about their experiences, and those perspectives, or feelings, come out in the primary sources they create.
- One way to help us understand a written primary source’s perspective or point-of-view is to look at the connotations of the words the author used. Introduce the concept of word connotations, which are the emotions a word conveys in addition to its explicit meaning. Provide several examples of words with specific connotations and have students discuss their relative emotional values. Possibilities include: slender/thin/skinny; chilly/cold/freezing; self-confident/proud/conceited; tease/joke/taunt.
- Tell students that it will be especially important that they pay close attention to words and connotations used in the written sources they will see today.
- Explain that it’s not only written sources that convey perspectives; visual sources do the same.
- Distribute the graphic organizer.
- Tell students they will be analyzing several primary sources to answer the following compelling question: What did Maryland’s first European colonists think of the Native Americans? (Note that we are looking for the colonists’ perspectives. We are not just trying to determine “what the Native Americans looked like.”)

Guided Practice

- Distribute Source #1, Father White’s Description. Individually or in pairs, have students read the source. To assist with and assess comprehension, have them use crayons or colored pencils to draw the Native Americans as described by Father White.
- Share some of the students’ artwork.
- As a class, read the source aloud in chunks, pausing to extract the meaning from each chunk. Depending upon your students’ experience level with primary source analysis, you might begin with a “think aloud” of the first chunk.
- As a class, go back through the source and fill in the graphic organizer, noting words with positive and negative connotations.

Independent Practice

- Working in pairs, have students analyze Source #2, George Alsop’s Description, to fill in the graphic organizer.
- Distribute Source #3, which is an images. Remind students that images reflect their creators’ perspectives, too. Have students analyze this source to fill in the graphic organizer.

III. Discussions

- As a class, review each source and fill in a class copy of the graphic organizer.
- Ask: Based on these sources, what do you think the first European colonists thought – and felt – about the Native Americans they met?
- Conduct a class discussion surrounding the compelling question. Require students to support their opinions with evidence from the primary sources. For example:
 - “I think the colonists thought the Native Americans were strange and they were afraid of them because John White painted the Native Americans’ faces to look kind of scary and George Alsop said they were wild and dreadful.”
 - “I think the colonists thought the Native Americans were interesting and friendly because Father White said they were smart and John White painted them with smiles.”

IV. Report the Findings

- Have students imagine that they came to Maryland aboard the *Ark* in 1634. They have brothers and/or sisters still in England who are considering coming to Maryland but are afraid of the Native Americans.
- Ask students to write a letter to their family describing the Native Americans in either positive or negative terms, depending upon how they have decided the first colonists thought and felt about the Native Americans. Students should support their opinions by citing details from the primary sources. Also remind the students that they can help convey their opinion by choosing words with specific connotations.

Extension

- Conduct a class discussion about the impact that primary sources' perspectives have on historians.
- Ask: What challenges does it create for historians that every source presents the creator's own unique perspective? (It is more difficult to know what "really" happened.)
- Ask: How does an historian know what "REALLY" happened if the primary sources' perspectives are different? (They consult many, many sources to try to find out where most of the sources agree.)
- Ask: What advantages are offered by the fact that every source presents the creator's own unique perspective? (We know how people felt at the time.)

SOURCE #1: FATHER ANDREW WHITE'S DESCRIPTION

. . . The natives of person be very proper [*straight*] and tall men, by nature swarthy [*dark-skinned*], but much more by art, painting themselves with colours in oile a darke read, especially about the head . . .

. . . As for their faces they use sometimes other colours, as blew from the nose downward, and read upward, and sometimes contrary wise with great variety, and in gastly [*horrible*] manner. .

. . . They weare their hair diversly [*in different ways*] some having it cut all short, one halfe of the head, and long on the other; others have it all long, but generally they weare all a locke [*piece of hair*] at the left eare, and sometimes at both eares . . .

. . . The naturall wit of these men is good, conceiving [*understanding*] a thing quick to. They excell in smell and taste, and have farre sharper sight than we have . . .

Source: White, Father Andrew. *A Brief Relation of a Voyage Unto Maryland*, 1634. In *Narratives of Early Maryland 1633-1684*, edited by Clayton C. Hall. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

SOURCE #2: GEORGE ALSOP'S DESCRIPTION

. . . Here is a sort of naked Inhabitants, or wilde people, that have for many ages I believe lived here in the Woods of Maryland, as well as in other parts of the Continent . . .

. . . being a people strange to behold [*see*], as well as in their looks, which by confused paintings [*body art*] makes them seem dreadful, as in their sterne [*grim, serious*] and heroick gate [*way of walking*] and deportments [*posture*];

the Men are mighty tall and big limbed, the Women not altogether so large; they are most of them very well featured, did not their wilde and ridiculous dresses [*clothing*] alter their original excellences [*positive features*]:

The men are great Warriors and Hunters, the Women ingenious [*smart*] and laborious [*hard-working*] Housewives.

Source: Alsop, George. *A Character of the Province of Maryland*. London: 1666.

SOURCE #3: JOHN WHITE'S PAINTING



Source: White, John. Warrior of the Secotan Indians. 1585. British Museum, London.

WORKSHEET

What did Maryland's first European colonists think of the Native Americans they met?

Source	Positive Words/Phrases	Negative Words/Phrases	What is this author's perspective on Native Americans?
1: Father White's Description			
2: George Alsop's Description			
3: John White's Painting			