



Teaching About Thanksgiving with Equity

Purpose: This is an optional opportunity to explore resources to feel better prepared to teach units that address potentially harmful content through a lens of culturally responsive pedagogy. You can complete this protocol individually or with a team.

Step 1: Review Original Lesson

15 minutes


As educators, we are required to review educational materials for simplistic and demeaning generalizations on the basis of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. When generalizations are identified, appropriate activities, discussions, and/or supplementary materials can provide balance and context for any such stereotypes depicted in such materials. Through this process, we can create pathways to ensure that students can reflect on potentially problematic educational materials in ways that are inclusive, equitable, and create a sense of belonging and community.

[College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for State Social Studies Standards](#) provide valuable curriculum resources for social studies educators. One of these inquiries titled, [Pilgrims and Wampanoag](#) notes, “In this inquiry, students investigate one of the best-known stories in American history—the interaction between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags that included the first Thanksgiving.” This particular inquiry, if not facilitated through a lens of equity, has the potential to create harm and perpetuate stereotypes. **Note:** This is not a judgment on C3 inquiries in general. We want to highlight how this particular lesson can be reviewed and revised through the lens of UDL and culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Step 2: UDL Revision

20-30 minutes

Review the chart below that provides tools about how to deliver this inquiry through a lens of Universal Design for Learning and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Potential Barrier	UDL Make-Over
<p>All primary sources provided are written by European settlers and this single lens includes simplistic and demeaning generalizations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lesson provides primary sources from the perspective of European settlers which is a biased account of history. PBS Education provides a text set, "An Authentic Look at Thanksgiving," that includes resources from The National Museum of the American Indian. These resources can be paired with provided sources. • You may also want to share the NPR story "Apology to American Indians Moves Forward" to pair with the provided texts. • When sharing the texts, provide options for students to read silently, read with a partner, or access the text digitally so they can use read-aloud functions and translation tools. Additionally, you may want to record audio versions of the texts on a free platform like https://vocaroo.com/
<p>Staging the Question: Using a painting to spark interest, record prior knowledge about the English, the Wampanoag, and the positive and negative Pilgrim-Wampanoag interactions.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before sharing the painting with students, set norms for courageous conversations. You can use agreements for courageous conversations about race, which is the work of Glenn Singleton • Begin by discussing that there are common narratives about Indigenous people and early settlers that may perpetuate harmful stereotypes and some of these are present in the painting. • Here is a 20 min video of a teacher, presenting in a remote setting, who challenges common narratives about Blackness. Consider how you could create an anticipatory set to this C3 inquiry where you highlight and challenge common narratives around American Indians, and how these narratives are presented in the painting.
<p>Formative Performative Task: Write a first-person account from the perspective of a Pilgrim and/or a Wampanoag man or</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking students to write in voices that are not their own can be problematic. In 2019, the state department of Education in Massachusetts created a writing prompt for a standardized test that asked

<p>woman about their early contact in 1621.</p>	<p>students to take on a point of view of an openly racist character which caused significant harm to many students of color. You can read more about the incident here. One student noted, “While I was taking the test, I thought about other students in other towns taking the test and what they were writing and thinking about people like me. I imagined white students writing negative things about me.” Asking students to write from the perspective of a Pilgrim as they write about their interactions with the Wampanoags may result in similar outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarly, asking all students to write from the perspective of a Wampanoag Indian may create problematic narratives because many students are not writing from a place where they have cultural knowledge. When writing from the perspective of underrepresented/marginalized groups, it is important to elevate and celebrate <i>Own Voices narratives</i> as a means of being confident that the worlds described in the narratives are represented as authentically as possible. • #OwnVoices is a term that was coined by YA author, Corinne Duyvis. The term refers to writing in which characters from underrepresented/marginalized groups share the same identity as the author. Own Voices authors and illustrators write with the cultural nuance from being an active member of that culture. <p>Because of the barriers above, we recommend rephrasing the prompt. To summarize everything students have learned, have a conversation about how their perception and understanding of American Indians and Thanksgiving have changed. Provide them with the following prompt:</p> <p>What new things have you learned about the early contact of American Indians and European settlers? Share your answer to this question, using textual evidence, in one of the following ways:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write your answer • Create a video or podcast where you answer the question • Create a multi-media infographic where you share what you have learned
<p>Formative Performative Task: Create an annotated illustration that highlights how the Pilgrims and the Wampanoags cooperated in the early years after their first contact.</p>	<p>Again, through the lens of UDL, you can provide multiple means of action and expression for students to respond to the prompt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write your answer • Create a video or podcast where you answer the question • Create a multi-media infographic where you share what you have learned • Alternatively, write/record/share an apology to American Indian people • If students do choose an illustration, reflect back on harmful narratives to ensure that students do not perpetuate stereotypes in their illustration.
<p>To extend their learning, students could create comic strips that illustrate an argument for how and why the English-Wampanoag relationship deteriorated over time, including support from a variety of sources.</p>	<p>A comic strip is only a single means of action and expression and has the potential to perpetuate stereotypes. Instead, provide options/choices for students to answer the question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write your answer • Create a video or podcast where you answer the question • Create a multi-media infographic where you share what you have learned <p>As an additional option, students can prepare a response about why an apology might be important to American Indian people. Note: This assignment was adapted from American Indian Perspectives on Thanksgiving. Alternatively, students can write/record/share an apology to the American Indian people.</p>

Step 3: Discussion

20 minutes

Before entering a discussion, reflect on the [agreements for courageous conversations about race](#), which is the work of Glenn Singleton. One excellent resource to support this work expands upon [Courageous Conversations About Race](#). This resource unpacks the “norms,” for conversations and also offers sentence stems that help to engage more deeply in the conversations. Consider the following (p.21)

- Can you tell me what you mean when you say...
- Is it possible for you to say more about?
- Have the thoughts you shared been shaped by others or is this your own personal perspective?
- Why do you think others might want to challenge your perspective?

Choose one or more of the following discussion questions to reflect on how you can generalize and transfer what you learned in this activity and apply takeaways to future lessons that have the potential to create triggers for students who have been historically minoritized and marginalized. Provide all team members with the option to either write answers and share in a discussion board, Padlet, etc. as they express their understanding.

- As you reflected on the original lesson, what barriers did you identify? How would you have minimized those barriers through design? After exploring the resources in this tool, how were your original thoughts affirmed, challenged, or expanded upon?
- Why is it important to address difficult history and content in our classrooms through the lens of UDL, equity, and culturally responsive teaching and learning?
- What is challenging about this work?
- What additional resources would you add to this activity to ensure that you are meeting the needs of all learners, challenging implicit bias, and affirming the identities of all learners in authentic and meaningful ways?