

Rethinking American

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Grade Level/Course: Earth Citizenship (elective) grades 9-12

Time Frame to Allow for Lesson: 90 minutes or two 45 minute classes.

Introduction:

Course Description: This course will explore two major subjects: the Earth and its most evolved inhabitants - humans. Through the study of the four major elements which we cannot live without, Food, Water, Money, and Energy - we will discover the potential and limits of our resources while journeying inward into the spirit of humanity and our power to change and sustainable living.

Lesson Description/Placement: This lesson serves as an introductory activity for students to awaken to the condition of our global environment, with a specific look at America. Drawing inspiration from Horace Miner's anthropological exploration of *Body Rituals Among the Nacirema*, I use the semordnilap of "Nacirema" to refer to "American." The lesson is designed for students to take the roles of researchers and anthropologists from the future, in a quest to discover what caused the disappearance of the Nacirema (American) people. By examining current primary and secondary sources (which have been edited to create the illusion that cities and people are not American; Examples: New Orleans = Leaner Owns, Katrina = Karat In, Massachusetts = Machs Statues, Utah = Hatu, Austin, Texas= Tunasi, Saxte...etc.), students will learn about the environmental challenges that plagued the Nacirema people and led to their fictional destruction. The intention behind this lesson is to support student awareness of how our thoughtless actions have contributed to the ill effects of climate change.

Learner Background: Prior to this lesson students should have general understanding and awareness of climate change, global warming, and the potential consequences of these events.

Unit:	Food and Climate Change
Duration:	4-6 weeks
Unit Essential Question:	What drives our hunger and what are we really hungry for?

NYS Common Core:	Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Text Complexity, Key Ideas and Details.
Geographic Connection:	Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements D2.Geo.4.9-12. Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them.

21st Century Skills:	Life and Career: Initiative and Self-Direction,
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Aim: What can we learn from the Nacirema people and their disappearance?

Objective: Students will be able to :

- Make connections between our current environmental condition and the potential consequences of our impact on the environment.
- Question/Reflect on the roles and responsibilities of each individual's contribution to climate change

Differentiation/Modification: Have each station reading/document available electronically. The reading material is not difficult and should not restrict student understanding despite potential levels of student reading.

Lesson Development/Instructional Strategy:

Time	Activity	Teacher Procedures:	Student Procedure:
1-2 minutes	Greeting and Introduction	<p>Have the Aim, agenda, and Do Now (DN) projected on the board.</p> <p>Greet students upon entering. Instruct their attention to the Aim and and the DN prompt. Allow students 3-5 minutes to work on DN prompt independently. Take attendance.</p>	Students take seats and begin Do Now in their notebooks.
10-12 min.	<p>Do Now & Review: Projected on the board, students respond independently in the NB to: “What does an archaeologist do?” How do they gather their research? Why do we need archaeologists? What are some examples of what archaeologists have discovered? What have we learned from archeology?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite a student to volunteer to take notes on the board for everyone. • Invite multiple students to comfortably share their responses to the DN prompt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students share their responses and take/add to their notes in their notebooks.
2-3 min	Vocabulary : (Dictionary.com)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite students to copy this definition or a similar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students build on the understanding

	<p>Archaeologist: a specialist in the scientific study of prehistoric peoples and their cultures by analysis of their artifacts, inscriptions, and monuments.</p>	<p>definition created by the class into their notebooks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review with students what an artifact is. 	<p>of the word and copy into their notebook.</p>
1 min.	<p>Transition: Review the Aim for today: What can we learn from the Nacirema people and their disappearance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell students today they will become archeologists in the quest to: 1- learn about who the Nacirema people were 2- What caused their disappearance and 3- what can we learn from them? 	
30-35 minutes	<p>Station Activity: There will be 3 stations; each station has a document/artifact from the time of the Nacirema people (these are real artifacts). The articles have been edited to conceal their original names from the students. Students will have 10 minutes to work through each station.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separate the class into 3 different groups (each group can be doubled depending on the size of the classroom. Groups should have 4-6 kids to a station. ● Explain to students that we will be working at 3 different stations to examine 3 different documents from the time of the Nacirema. Our goal is to be able to respond to our Aim: What can we learn from the Nacirema people and their disappearance? ● Explain to students that for each station, they are required to read/analyze/interpret the document and respond to their corresponding questions on their worksheet. Students should discuss their responses with their station peers upon completing the response questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students work through station activity and accompanying worksheet.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As students are working, be mindful of the time. Allow 10-12 minutes per station and announce when students have 5 minutes remaining. Give 20-30 seconds to transition into each station. ● As students work, circulate around stations. Check for understanding by reviewing document based/interpretive questions. 	
5min.	Transition/Brain Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gather students back to their seats. ● Ask students generally: “Let’s check in, how are you doing?” Listen to student response to gather a sense of their energy and focus. If students seem stressed and lack focus, practice a brain game: “Pinky Thumb” (see Sources for direction. This is useful to refresh the mind and reconnect the left and right brain. Follow this with deep breathing exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students return to seats and practice Brain game and deep breathing exercises.
15-20 min.	Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invite students to focus their attention back to our lesson. ● Review each document by using the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Who, What, When, Where, Why? * Why don’t any of these documents have dates? What time period did the Nacirema live?</i> ○ <i>Impression about</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students respond to and discuss response questions and newly prompted question. ● Ask clarifying questions.

		<p><i>the Nacirema people</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “What is our general feeling about the Nacirema? What happened to them? Why? How do you know?” ● Make sure students get the following points: (Introduce these new vocabulary terms) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Nacirema disappeared because of climate change, desertification, pollution, and drought. 	
10min	Recap/Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If students have not yet guessed who the Nacirema are, ask them the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Does anyone know who Leonardo DaVinci was?</i> ○ <i>He invented many things and had a very unique style to writing, does anyone know?</i> ○ <i>DaVinci often left hidden messages in his work and wrote words backwards: Let’s use his style to read: NACIREMA.</i> ○ Allow students time to process and react and inform them that for the next coming weeks we will focus on how 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students respond/react/ask questions.

		<p>climate change, desertification, pollution, and drought and truly lead to our potential extinctions. Our quest is to become more mindful of our actions and change the way we use the Earth.</p>	
2-3 min.	Exit Ticket (Formative Assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout Index cards, ask students to respond to the following on the exit ticket: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In your opinion, what are some of the effects of climate change you see in your world/life today? Is climate change affecting you? Why or why now? How? ● Use this exit ticket to see how deep a connection students made, from there assess the start point of the unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students use the index card to respond to the prompts.

Sources/Material::

- New York Times [article](#) on Hurricane Katrina
- Google Images on : deforestation, oil spills, desertification
- Huffington Post [blog](#): A Warning about our Food Supply by Fred Lundgren
- Brain Education for Enhanced Learning from Power Brain Training : Pinky/Thumb activity: Take your left hand and have your fingers in, and your thumb up. Then take your right hand and put your thumb in and all your fingers in except your pinkie. So other words, your thumb up and pinkie out. Now switch the roles of your hands. Repeat 10-15X.

Formative Assessment: Class discussion/participation, independent work, document analysis, exit ticket.

Document 1: Newspaper Article

Hurricane **Karat-In** struck the Nacirema with devastating force at daybreak on Aug. 29, [pummeling a region](#) that included the fabled city of **Leaner Owns** and heaping damage on neighboring **Missipii**. In all, more than 1,700 people were killed and hundreds of thousands of others [displaced](#).

Packing 145-mile-an-hour winds as it made landfall, the category 3 storm left more than a million people in three regions without power and submerged highways even hundreds of miles from its center. The hurricane's storm surge — a 29-foot wall of water pushed ashore when the hurricane struck the Coastlines — was the highest ever measured in **Nacirema's** history...

Hurricane **Karat In** ranks as one of the most punishing hurricanes ever to hit. Damage, costing billions of dollars, has made it one of the costliest storms on record. In **Leaner Owns**, floodwaters from the breached levee rose to rooftops in the poorest neighborhood, and in many areas residents were rescued from roofs of homes that became uninhabitable. The hurricane's howling winds stripped 15-foot sections off the roof of the Superdome, where as many as [10,000 evacuees](#) had taken shelter. An [exodus](#) of hundreds of thousands left the city, many becoming refugees, finding shelter with nearby relatives or restarting their lives in states as far away as **Machs Statutes** and **Hatu**.

Experts who studied these repeated disasters say the hurricanes were more like [four storms](#) — at least — that battered the area in different ways. They say the flood protection system in **Leaner Owns** was flawed from the start because the model storm it was designed to stop was simplistic, and led to an inadequate network of levees, flood-walls, storm gates and pumps. And experts say that understanding the failings is essential in planning the next generation of flood protection for a rebuilt **Leaner Owns**, and for systems across **Naciremas** land.

Reflective Response Questions:

1. According to this excerpt about the weather conditions of Nacirema land, describe the events that caused such destruction and displacement to the Nacirema people? What does this event suggest?
2. Do you think this event could have contributed to their disappearance? Why or Why not? Explain.
3. What does the end of the article suggest? Were they Nacirema successful at planning for their future? Explain your response.

Document 2: Photographs

Task: Carefully analyze the images and:

1. Describe what you see.
2. Does this remind you of anything? Explain.
3. Is this environment habitual? Explain.
4. What do you think is the cause and potential effect of these conditions on the land and people? Explain.

Image A:



Image B:



Image C:



PHOTO: SCOTT OLCOM/BETTY IMAGES

Document 3: Journal Entry of a business owner

In recent years, the idea of global warming has evolved from a political debate to a general acceptance that climate change is real and it's causing more violent weather and wild extremes in temperature. It serves no purpose to live in fear but there are common sense signs that suggests the weather is impacting our food supply.

The "NDA" makes annual forecasts of our nation's corn crop each year. It's instructive to review recent corn yields since a majority of our diet contains corn in one form or another. Did you know that corn production in **Nacirema** has fallen below normal for several years? In the year '12 crop averaged only 123.4 bushels to the acre, which was almost one-quarter below USDA projections. This year, the USDA is projecting another record crop while half of the country remains in a severe drought.

This **Nacirema** drought monitor map is produced in partnership between the National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of N-L, the Nacirema Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The map hasn't changed much for several years. Basically every region west of the "Midland River" is experiencing drought. At the same time, we are eating our way through our cattle herds as ranchers scale back herd size due to drought. This year's calf crop will be the lowest since 1949 and the annual calf crop has been declining since '95. Cows and replacement heifers are at the lowest numbers since 1941.

None of this is good news. I'm not an alarmist and I'm not here to forecast a famine because these trends can be altered by a few "normal" years. What **Nacirema** needs is a normal year but not the new abnormal of the past several years.

My mom and dad farmed for 62 years and during that time, they experienced drought, floods, insect plagues, hail storms, hurricanes and two devastating tornadoes. They got through it all with the hope that "things will get better next year." The weather trends of the past several years have reinforced something that every farmer knows, "There is really no such thing as a normal year." We should all hope that next year morphs into that elusive "normal" year because **Nacirema** really needs it!

Reflective Response Questions:

- 1- What is this journal entry about? What's the author saying? Please provide evidence from the text to support your answer.
- 2- As an anthropologist, what does the journal entry suggest about what happened to the people in Nacirema? Use evidence to support your response. How do you feel about it?
- 3- How would you identify the Nacirema people?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

Aim: What can we learn from the Nacirema people and their disappearance?

Directions: Using the documents on at each stations please respond the each question using evidence from the documents to support your response.

Document 1:

1. According to this excerpt about the weather conditions of Nacirema land, describe the events that caused such destruction and displacement to the Nacirema people? What does this event suggest?
2. Do you think this event could have contributed to their disappearance? Why or Why not? Explain.
3. What does the end of the article suggest? Were they Nacirema successful at planning for their future? Explain your response.

Document 2:

Task: Carefully Analyze the images and:

1- describe what you see:

Image A:

Image B:

Image C:

2- Does this remind you of anything? Explain. How does this make you feel?

3- Is this environment habitual? Explain.

4- What do you think is the cause and potential effect of these conditions on the land and people? Explain.

Document 3:

1- What is this journal entry about? What's the author saying? Please provide evidence from the text to support your answer.

2- As an anthropologist, what does the journal entry suggest about what happened to the Nacirema people? Use evidence to support your response. How do you feel about it?

3- How would you identify the Nacirema people? How did they live?