

Year 8

Non-European Study

We start the year 8 history curriculum with a non-European study on Native American Peoples. This offers an alternative topic and it is one that most students haven't studied before in key stage 2.

The unit focuses on the conflict between the challenges and choices Native American peoples have had to make between maintaining their traditional culture and the pressures of adopting modern ideas and values. It also looks at the impact of European settlement on indigenous people and the environment.

Initially the programme of study focuses on being able to meet the survival challenges facing the Inuit people in the Arctic and the Native American groups on the Great Plains. In both case studies there is significant understanding of how these groups are required to work with their environments in order to survive. The reliance of a range of Plains Native Americans on the buffalo as a food source underlines the potential fragile nature of their survival challenges and is a key assessment focus.

How Native Americans see themselves as part of their environment provides an alternative approach to a colonial European culture which strove to dominate and control it. In doing so, the impact of climate change can clearly be seen to be threatening the traditions of the Inuit in the Arctic, for example. The culture, belief systems and harmony with nature of Native Americans, most notably the Sioux, are investigated leading to a wider diversity of knowledge and respect for alternative outlooks on life.

The impact of European settlers on Native American communities and the subsequent tension caused by ideas of European religious, political and moral 'superiority' is a focus for evaluation. How was the wastefulness of European settlers in almost wiping out buffalo herds and containing Native Americans on reservations justified at the time? Why is this clash of cultures so one sided? We will explore the concept of 'first world' manifest destiny in terms of its contemporary justification as 'civilising' of indigenous peoples and compare this with our modern-day viewpoints.

The study of The Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 reflects the desperate fight of the last remaining group of Sioux Native Americans to avoid capture and highlights the impact of conquest on minority groups that is still a global issue which resonates today. As the actual facts of the last stages of the battle are based only on Native American accounts, is it right for some American historians to doubt its reliability preferring to exaggerate the bravery of figures such as Custer and, up until relatively recently, commemorate only white American deaths on the battlefield? There are contemporary links to the idea of how public figures are portrayed by the media and how someone's public image can be distorted.

The Making of The United Kingdom

This unit of work continues the theme of continuity and change following on from Year 7 on the effects, both positive and negative, of The Norman Conquest.

The main areas of study are the cultural, political and religious impacts on Britain of the Tudor and Stuart dynasties.

Historical inquiries are initially carried out on the structure and status of the distinctive layers of social class in Tudor England and the extent to which the structure still exists today.

The impact of the 'religious roller-coaster' of Tudor England between the catholic and the newly formed protestant religion represents an insight into the lengths to which monarchs, wholeheartedly believing in their 'divine right,' went to transform religious thinking, most notably Henry VIII and the Protestant Reformation. Contemporary parallels can also be made with enforced religious changes also culminating in examples of genocide. There is also emphasis on the threat religion could present to ruling Tudor monarchs such as the threat from the catholic Mary Queen of Scots to Queen Elizabeth I and the threat of invasion from the catholic King Philip of Spain in the form of the Spanish Armada. This once again underlines the consequences of religious intolerance. Why the Armada was sent and how this threat was overcome by the English Royal Navy is a key assessment focus

Investigations into Tudor policy making which perhaps reflected a different set of values to modern day views provides a thought provoking insight into unnecessary violence and a level of disregard for significant proportions of English society at the time. This is highlighted by Henry VIII's decision to execute two of his wives, his propensity for warfare and his self-indulgent lifestyle which involved over spending on himself at the expense of the poverty of thousands of his citizens. Comparison and conclusions can be made on how values may have changed.

The symbolism of artwork and portrait painting as a communication method is the focus of a range of paintings of Elizabeth I which can contrast with the ways in which governments and public figures communicate key messages today.

We also consider the themes of religious and gender-based intolerance and the persecution of 'outsiders' highlighted by a study of witchcraft in the 16th and 17th centuries. This time period also highlights how easy it is for disagreements and breakdowns in communication between monarchs such as Charles I and Parliament can lead to conflicts, such as the English Civil War. There are obvious links to contemporary issues about where political power is located within society and whether the executive or non-elected advisers hold too much power today.