



Surviving Assimilation

American Indian Boarding Schools



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Grade Level	9th Grade	Time Frame	90-100 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	2 periods
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History		

Essential Question

How were American Indians assimilated in the past? What effect did assimilation have on their identity and culture?

Summary

Students will understand the events and ideologies that led to the establishment of federally funded and religious boarding schools for American Indians. Students will examine the boarding school experiences of American Indians from Oklahoma and other states and territories, and they will identify the ways in which American Indians resisted assimilation and preserved their cultural and individual identities during and after the time they spent at school.

Snapshot

Engage

Students compare and contrast two photos of a student at a boarding school and acquire an understanding of the term *assimilate*.

Explore

Students use the S-I-T strategy in groups to analyze quotes relating to American Indian boarding schools and reflect on how those quotes make them feel.

Explain

Students examine an infographic and use the Window Notes strategy to organize the information they find to be interesting and important.

Extend

Students use a modified version of the Paired Texts H-Chart strategy to summarize two videos from a Resource Choice Board. Students think critically about how those videos demonstrate how boarding school students responded to attempts to assimilate them.

Evaluate

As an Exit Ticket, students write a paragraph that summarizes their understanding of the experiences of American Indian students at boarding schools.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

OKH.5.1: Examine the policies of the United States and their effects on American Indian identity, culture, economy, tribal government and sovereignty including:

OKH.5.1B: effects of the federal policy of assimilation including Indian boarding schools (1880s-1940s)

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.1.3C: Examine the rationale behind federal policies toward American Indians including the establishment of reservations, attempts at assimilation, the end of the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee, and the impact of the Dawes Act on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.

Attachments

- [Lesson-Slides-Surviving-Assimilation.pptx](#)
- [Paired-Videos-H-Chart-Surviving-Assimilation - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Paired-Videos-H-Chart-Surviving-Assimilation - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Paired-Videos-H-Chart-Surviving-Assimilation.docx](#)
- [Paired-Videos-H-Chart-Surviving-Assimilation.pdf](#)
- [Resource-Choice-Board-Surviving-Assimilation.pdf](#)
- [S-I-T-Quotations-Surviving-Assimilation-Handout - Spanish.docx](#)
- [S-I-T-Quotations-Surviving-Assimilation-Handout - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [S-I-T-Quotations-Surviving-Assimilation-Handout.docx](#)
- [S-I-T-Quotations-Surviving-Assimilation-Handout.pdf](#)
- [Teacher-s-Guide-Surviving-Assimilation.docx](#)
- [Teacher-s-Guide-Surviving-Assimilation.pdf](#)
- [Window-Notes-Surviving-Assimilation - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Window-Notes-Surviving-Assimilation - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Window-Notes-Surviving-Assimilation.docx](#)
- [Window-Notes-Surviving-Assimilation.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- S-I-T (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling) handout (attached; one per student)
- Window Notes handout (attached; one per student)
- Paired Videos H-Chart handout (attached; one per student)
- Resource Choice Board (attached; one per student group)
- [Boarding Schools Infographic](#) (linked)
- Teacher's Guide (attached; optional)
- K20 Center lesson: "[Word Warriors](#)" (linked; optional)
- Computers with internet access
- Paper
- Pens or pencils

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note

As you prepare to teach this lesson, you may find the attached **Teacher's Guide** useful. It contains a short article that will provide you with a detailed account of the circumstances that led to the creation of off-reservation boarding schools, as well as the events that ultimately led to implementing reforms at many of them.

Begin the lesson by displaying **slide 2** of the attached **Lesson Slides**. Give students a moment to examine the before-and-after photos. Ask students the following questions, which are included in the notes at the bottom of the slide:

- *What do you notice about these two photos? How are they similar? How do they differ?*
- *Where do you think these two photos were taken?*
- *When do you think they were taken?*
- *Why do you think they were taken?*
- *Who do you think took them?*

Optional Tech Integration: Juxtapose

As an alternative to using **slide 2**, consider sharing with students the following link:

<https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/juxtapose/latest/embed/index.html?uid=0da1d5a8-1d68-11ec-abb7-b9a7ff2ee17c>.

Make sure the vertical line is placed at the right side of the original image. You could ask students similar questions to those listed above but apply them only to this photo. Once they have had a chance to share their observations, drag the vertical line all the way to the left, revealing the newer image. Ask students the same questions again about the second photo. Conclude by placing the vertical line in the middle and ask students how the photos are similar and how they differ.

After you have allowed about 5 minutes for students to share their observations regarding the photos, explain to them that both are photographs of Tom Torlino, a citizen of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. The first photo was taken in 1882 at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The second photo was taken three or four years later. Explain that the purpose of Carlisle and other boarding schools was to *assimilate* American Indians from around the country.

Display both definitions of *assimilate* on **slide 3**. Make sure that students know that to *assimilate* means to adopt the behaviors and traditions of a cultural group that is different from their own.

Teacher's Note: An Untold Story

This image of Tom Torlino is often used to teach students about American Indian boarding schools. While he is often portrayed as a victim of forced assimilation, an article recently published by the *Navajo Times* reveals that, in spite of the time he spent at Carlisle, he was able to hold onto his traditions and spent the rest of his life as an active member of the Navajo Nation. Consider sharing some of the information from this article with students:

<https://www.navajotimes.com/news/chapters/021413coy.php>.

Show students **slide 4**, which identifies the title of the lesson. Next, take a couple of minutes to go over the essential questions on **slide 5** and lesson objectives on **slide 6**.

25 minutes

Explore

Teacher's Note: S-I-T (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling)

Decide in advance if you want students to record their responses or simply have a discussion within their groups. If you choose to have students record their answers, consider having students write down a sentence or two explaining why they viewed the quotes as *surprising*, *interesting*, or *troubling*.

Arrange students into groups of four.

Display **slide 7**. Pass out the attached **S-I-T (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling)** handout. This handout contains a list of quotations that are taken from oral history interviews and other sources. Give students at least 10 minutes to read through the quotations with their groups. Next, ask student groups to use the [S-I-T](#) strategy to choose one thing they learned while reading that strikes them as *surprising*, *interesting*, and/or *troubling*.

After groups have had another 10 minutes or so to make their decisions, call on a volunteer from each group to talk about the thing that they found *surprising*, *interesting*, and/or *troubling*. Invite student groups to share their reasoning with the class.

Possible Student Responses: S-I-T

Surprising: We were surprised that some students had positive experiences while they lived at the boarding schools.

Interesting: We found it interesting that the boarding schools prepared the Comanche code talkers well for their service during WWII. **Troubling:** We were troubled to learn that students at Riverside were punished for speaking their native languages by being forced to brush their teeth with lye.

20 minutes

Explain

Keep students in groups of four and direct them to a link for the [Boarding Schools Infographic](#). Tell students that they will be spending approximately 10 minutes examining the infographic, which contains a timeline, statistics about the boarding schools, and a yearbook showing images that were taken at several boarding schools over the years.

Display **slide 8**. Pass out the **Window Notes** handout. As you go over the [Window Notes](#) strategy with students, point out that the quadrants are labeled as follows: Facts, Feelings, Questions, and Connections.

Display **slide 9**. Instruct students to use the Window Notes handout to capture their responses to the Boarding Schools Infographic. Ask them to consider the following questions:

- Facts Quadrant: Which facts do you find interesting?
- Feelings Quadrant: What are you feeling as you learn these facts? (Sad? Angry? Embarrassed? Disappointed?)
- Questions Quadrant: What questions do you have now?
- Connections Quadrant: Can you relate what you have just read to prior experiences or things you have learned before today?

Make sure that students have an additional 10 minutes after looking through the Infographic to complete their Window Notes.

20 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note

For information about Native Americans who provided exemplary service during World War II, you may want to incorporate or review the LEARN lesson "[Word Warriors](#)." This lesson invites students to view a documentary and read an article about World War II veterans known as "code talkers" from the Comanche, Pawnee, Choctaw, Seminole, and other tribal nations.

Display **slide 10**. Tell students that they will be watching a couple of videos about boarding schools. Pass out copies of the attached **Paired Videos H-Chart** handout to the students. Make sure that each group of four students has access to at least one computer. Use **slides 10-11** to explain how the H-Chart strategy works.

The activity is an adaptation of the [Paired Texts H-Chart](#) strategy. Instead of texts, however, students will be working with videos. Direct student groups to the attached **Resource Choice Board**. Ask them to watch one video from each column of the [Choice Board](#). The videos in the left column are primarily informational and tell the stories of some of the people who attended the boarding schools. These videos examine efforts being made today to remember what happened at the schools. The videos in the right column are interviews with people who attended the schools.

Instruct students to follow the steps listed below:

- After student groups have picked a video from the left column, give them 5-10 minutes to watch and answer the prompt on the **left** side of the H-Chart: *Summarize the video about American Indian boarding schools.*
- Next, have students pick one video from the right column and give them another 5-10 minutes to watch and answer the prompt on the **right** side of the H-Chart: *Describe what you learned from the person who attended a boarding school.*
- Finally, give student groups an additional 10 minutes to answer the question in the **center** of the H-Chart: *How did the boarding schools attempt to make American Indian students assimilate and how did students keep their traditions despite those attempts?*

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 12**. Ask students to take out a piece of paper in order to complete a brief writing assignment as an [Exit Ticket](#). Ask students to answer the following question: *If you were writing a book about the experiences of American Indian students at boarding schools, what is one thing you would want your readers to know? Why?*

Teacher's Note: Reassuring Students

Reassure students that they will be evaluated on their content, not grammar. Their goal is to write down a few sentences detailing one important fact they learned relating to the history of American Indian boarding schools and to explain why they think it would be important for other people to know about it.

After students have had about 10 minutes to write, collect their responses, which will serve as a summative assessment.

Resources

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- Lomawaima, K.T. (2019, December 18). Interview with Adam Fortunate Eagle. Clip 2: Life at American Indian boarding schools. (Interview). [Video]. Heard Museum. <https://vimeo.com/380616952>
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