
LESSON PLAN FOR

RELATIONS VIDEO: “WHAT ATTRACTED THE EUROPEANS TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST COAST?”

Lesson Overview

This lesson plan investigates what motivations and historical, political, and social developments brought European colonizers to the Pacific Northwest Coast from the late 1500s to late 1700s. Students are introduced to the search for the Northwest Passage, the development of the maritime fur trade on the Pacific Northwest Coast, and conflict over land claims in Yuquot. The lesson sets the stage for Captain Vancouver’s arrival by introducing how larger European politics came to a head at Yuquot.

Resources:

- Video “What attracted the Europeans to the Pacific Northwest Coast?”
- Video worksheet

Lesson Learnings

Inquiry Question:

- What brought European colonizers to the Northwest Coast?

Learning Objectives:

- Describe why finding the Northwest Passage was important for colonizers.
- Describe the role of the fur trade in colonizing the Pacific Northwest.
- Connect regional conflicts on the Pacific Northwest Coast to global rivalries between colonial empires.
- Consider Indigenous peoples’ role in the fur trade and how these events had a lasting impact on the communities.

Activate Prior Knowledge

Use any of the following questions for group discussion or as think-pair-share. Students could draw a mind map to keep track of words and ideas.

- During this time, there were rumours of a “Northwest Passage”. What do you know about the Northwest Passage? Why do you think they were looking for it? Why was it hard to find?
- What do you think Europeans in the late 1700s knew about the Pacific Northwest Coast? How would they understand Mowachaht/Muchahlat society? How would they interact with the people?
- Some major events highlighted in this lesson’s video took place at Yuquot, on the west side of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Using Google Maps, locate Yuquot and look at the surrounding area. Based on the nearby place names, who do you think has influenced the history of this area? (Answer: Spanish, English, Nuučaauł Nations)

Watch *Changing Perspectives* Video

Resource: accompanying review questions worksheet

Watch the video “What attracted the Europeans to the Pacific Northwest Coast?” as a class.

Video Worksheet

Ask students to answer the following questions, as written answers using the worksheet or as think-pair-share. These questions build from direct recall to active critical thinking.

Possible answers in red.

1. What was Captain Cook looking for and why?
 - He was looking for the Northwest Passage. Faster trade route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.
2. ___Sea otter pelts___ were worth a lot of money in China?
3. Which nations were sailing to the Pacific Northwest Coast in the 1700s?
 - Britain, USA, Spain, Russia, – also accompanied by Chinese laborers.
4. What did Europeans learn from their trips to the Pacific Northwest Coast?
 - Knowledge about trade networks, about other people, charts of the coast, sea otter pelts worth a lot of money in China.
5. How did Indigenous groups and European colonials participate in the early west coast fur trade?
 - Hint: timestamp [04:35-04:45]
 - Europeans: a new market, iron [trade good], established trade networks
 - Indigenous: expanded trade networks, routes, hunting knowledge, chiefs (like Chief Maquinna) gained influence and wealth through trades

6. Why did Europeans keep returning to the Pacific Northwest Coast?
 - They were economically motivated to keep returning to acquire more valuable pelts, and to compete for ownership of the region.
7. Summarize the main reason why the British and Spanish are in conflict. Who was impacted by this conflict?
 - Over territory – because Yuquot was proving to be an important fur trade location with important Mowachaht guides and relationships. Despite the Mowachaht living at Yuquot since time immemorial, the Spanish insisted the land was their territory and did not want the British trespassing.
 - Chief Callicum, the brother-in-law of Chief Maquinna was killed during the violent conflict. It is not entirely clear why this happened.

Analysis Prompts

These additional prompts challenge students to further analyze what they've learned from the video. These questions ask students to reflect on the practice of history and incorporate evidence to justify their claims. In some cases, students may benefit from further resources to explore these questions.

1. Why do we know the names of Captain Cook and Captain Vancouver and not the names of Indigenous guides?
2. Review the drawings made by the ship's artist on Captain Cook's expeditions. What do these drawings reflect? Are they biased? What is missing from these drawings? (Timestamp 2:53)
3. Why were furs such a lucrative trade product in this time period? How did global forces impact the local supply and trade of sea otters?
4. Europeans, Russians and Americans benefited from the late 1700s fur trade on the Pacific Northwest Coast. How did the fur trade impact Indigenous peoples?
5. Compare and contrast the motivations of different groups on the Pacific Northwest Coast (British, Spanish, Indigenous communities). Identify some sources of conflict and cooperation due to these motivations.
6. Look at the trade beads, axe, and muskets on the *Relations* webpage and use the "Close-Looking Activity Guide". What can you learn about Indigenous - British trade relations from these artifacts?

Wrap-Up Discussion

Wrap up your lesson with a reflective discussion. Ask students to give answers to the following questions, either as a class, in small groups, or as an independent writing exercise.

- What historical impacts do these events have on today?
 - Captain Vancouver laid the foundation for British colonization. Colonization also has a big role in shaping the historical narrative of this area and Canada.
- Has your thinking about the past changed from watching this video?

Creative & Inquiry Project Ideas

- Expand on learning with an inquiry-based or creative project, such as: Listen to Stan Roger's song, "Northwest Passage" with your class. What perspectives and bias are represented in this song? Are any important perspectives missing? Ask students to write an additional verse based on what they've learnt about the Northwest Passage, or to critique the song's lyrics.
- Although under international law the waterways in the Northwest Passage are considered international waters, who owns the surrounding land is still debated. Break into research groups to debate who owns the territory. Have a follow up conversation together about the act of owning and claiming territory and discuss the impact it's had in history and today.
- How was the sea otter fur trade similar to another historical natural resource industry? For example, you might think about the Fraser River Gold Rush, lumber, sport fishing, or sinking of the Nathan E. Stewart oil barge.
 - The term "natural resource" is a colonial perspective, that humans have the right to take from the land. However, an Indigenous perspective emphasizes "**other-than-human beings**". This is the idea that the plants, animals, and other parts of the land are living, they aren't just things that exist to serve human needs. This term points to more equitable relations with the natural world.