

5 E's Lesson Plan Template

Lesson: *Owehanhan*—Indian Humor

One of the best ways to understand a people is to know what makes them laugh.

Objective: To create cartoons or a comic strip that depicts an aspect of your life and Indian humor, in a positive way.

“What did the buffalo say to his son as the youngster was leaving for school?” Answer: “By-Son.”

Essential Question(s):

Why does humor hold a special place in Lakota life?

How it is that humor is a basic human need but exists in different forms depending on a peculiar culture?

How can humor work in the lives of all people?

Materials/Resources

Teacher:

Appendix Nos. 1 and 2
Basic Art Supplies

Student:

Materials for constructing comic strips
such as colored pencils, markers,
drawing paper

Essential Vocabulary

Humor
Corrective Humor
Iktomi
Heyoka
Parody, Satire, Irony

Learning Experience

Standards and Practice:

OSEU 2: Identity and Resiliency

Anchor Standard 1: K-12.Cr.1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. HSA.VA.Cr.1.2

Anchor Standard10: K-12.Cn.10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. HSA.VA.Cn.10.1

Cultural Integration:

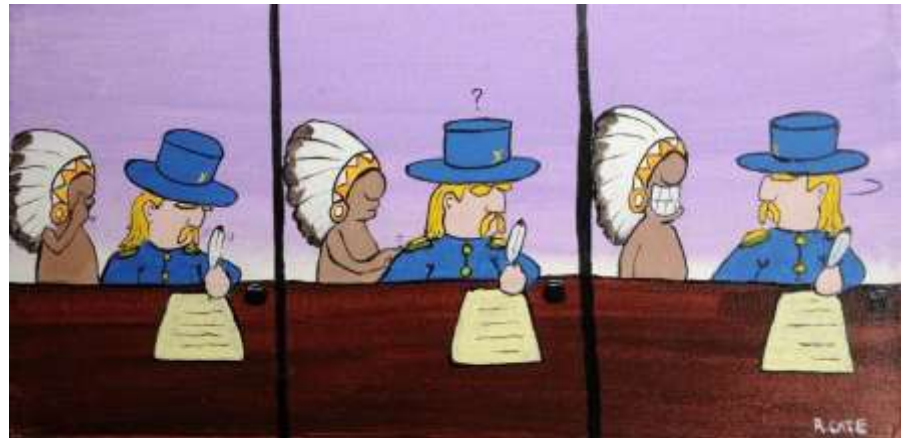


Aspects of Indian life or issues they face will be represented in a positive context through comic strips or three drawings to meet the objective of this lesson. For example, Indian people may laugh when they see a picture, which is an example of stereotype even though it is a barrier, a misconception about Indian people.

I Can Statement(s):

- I can see how humor is an important aspect of Indian culture.
- I can understand how humor works for Indian people.
- I can use the idea that “laughter is the best medicine” in my life.
- I can have a good laugh even when times are hard.

Engage: Activating Strategy/Hook:



Explore: Learning Experience

Students will be given think-time for the statements listed, at right. They will choose 2-3 they find most interesting and write them down. (Their statements will be used in the **Elaborate: Extending and Defining** section below)

The Big Idea:

Humor exists in many forms and is essential as a basic human need.



- Indian humor is about identity
- Indian humor is much more than laughter
- Indian humor is medicine, a healing agent that we all need
- Indian humor is a reflection of our past and in all of us...
- Indian humor is the ability to be flexible while sometimes feeling powerless against the government and cultural mainstream in control of life
- Indian humor is unique and as such, is the heart of resilience and survivability
- Indian humor is a way to understand and heal from personal or historical trauma, as well as a way to fight adversity
- Indian humor is culturally distinct and complex
- Indian humor means to escape from a dominant society that has imposed its values on Indian people and measures Indians against their standards
- Indian humor is much more than a social lubricant, it's a tool, an attitude, a mentality
- Indian humor is an answer to poverty, not the best one, but at least it is a response
- Indian humor is way of survival
- Indian humor is being an optimist in a world of dominant culture
- Indian humor is sharing emotions with others
- Indian humor is being around Indians who are laughing and there is nothing else like it in the world

Explain: Learning Experiences

The comic strip or comics you draw must depict an aspect of Indian life or issue they face, in a positive context. Choose an idea from your own life experience and challenge yourself to link it with the concept of Indian humor.

Drawing the Comic

1. First sketch the frames.
2. Sketch the characters. Next, sketch in where the characters will go.
3. Add speech bubbles, if characters speak to each other. Sketch in where the speech bubbles will go.
4. Sketch in backgrounds and scenes.
5. Do your line work and other elements of art.
6. Add text.
7. Add color.

Activity: The class will examine a variety of cartoon strips and take notes about what they see, with attention to the message (idea), format, color, size, length, and characters. Following a class discussion about the cartoons, each student will decide on a message he/she wants to communicate in a comic strip or comic (3 separate messages) and use the seven steps for *Drawing the Comic*, at left.

- How can a message you find in a cartoon strip apply to any of the points listed above in the *Explore Learning Experience* section of this lesson? How does it relate to your own experience? How can you explain the connection?
- What are some defining moments of humor in your life?
- What experiences have been funny?
- What makes you laugh?
- How can telling jokes or funny stories about your family or friends be appropriate for sharing?
- At what times would it inappropriate to tell a joke?
- Can you explain why it may be appropriate to laugh at a funeral?

Elaborate: Extending & Defining

Students will offer their statements from the **Explore: Learning Experience section** above, as part of the “*Opinion Continuum*” activity. (Attachment 1) Teacher may ask open, probing questions to get more information or clarify to help students think more deeply about their perspectives.”

Students will make a list of statements that hold the most meaning for them— from the **Explore: Learning Experience** section of this lesson— and connect them to their own personal experience

Indian humor takes many forms including: teasing, joking, storytelling about *Iktomi*/foolish trickster or personal silly things/experiences, using “corrective humor”, listening/dancing to ‘49 songs, and the clowning around of the *heyoka* (clowns). See Attachment 2.

Evaluate: Summarizing Strategy

Rumor has it that Columbus began his journey with four ships. But one went over the edge so he arrived in the new world with only three.

Good thing Columbus was not looking for Turkey or the Virgins (Islands).

Not all jokes are funny though. For example, Indian humor is filled with

Each student will make a list of questions from the content contained in this lesson plan. They will make flash cards that have questions on the front and answers on the back. The class will play *Question and Answer* to “test” their understanding of the objective: humor is an important aspect of Indian life.

Columbus, Custer, and the BIA are favorite Indian jokes. Stupid, incompetent and inept, it is easy to joke about them: *What did Custer tell the BIA agent before leaving for the Little Big Horn? He said, “Don’t do anything until I get back.”*

parody, satire, and irony to make points about stereotype and cultural ignorance. People presume to know, when they really do not know, what it is really like to be an Indian. Part of getting to know Indians is learning how other people treat them. To experience racism and prejudice is part of being Indian and Indian people have learned to joke about it. From Fixco, scholar. *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century*.

It has been said that sometimes laughing is the only thing to do when you have almost run out of tears. My grandmother had so many traumatic experiences, she actually did run out of tears. Fixco explains that there is very little difference between the emotional threads of crying and laughing. It is a fine line as tears are involved in both emotions. The human emotion of laughing has sustained Indian people throughout time. It is a way of survival. Fixco, scholar. *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century*.

Differentiation Strategies

Extension	Intervention	Language Development
Students will examine a topic of interest from the content on Attachment 2. They will describe it through any media of their choice (illustrated story, for example).	Bruce Blitz How to Draw a COMIC STRIP - YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHtVJdaqdqU	

Assessment(s)

Formative	Summative
<p>Teacher will check for understanding (Thumbs up, middle, down) after giving explicit instructions as the lesson proceeds.</p> <p>Teacher will observe as students fill in comic strip frames</p>	See Rubric (Attachment 3)

Teacher Reflection: (Next steps?)

Attachment 1

Opinion Continuum

An "opinion continuum" gives students an active way to consider and express their opinions, listen to others' opinions, and begin discussing the issue. Begin by establishing some ground rules for the discussion. Ground rules should include:

- listen carefully to statements made by other students
- no interrupting
- it's okay to disagree

Designate different corners of the room as "Strongly agree," "strongly disagree," and "not sure, don't know or no opinion." Then read a statement and ask each student to react to the statement by moving to the appropriate part of the room.

Begin with a trivial statement, such as "Chocolate is the best flavor of ice cream." Then move on to the "Indian Humor is..." statements in the *Explore: Learning and Experiencing* section of this lesson.

Ask students representing each point of view to state several reasons why they hold their view. Make sure to get a wide range of opinions. It is helpful to summarize what students say to make sure all students understand each perspective. It is also helpful to ask open, probing questions to get more information or clarifying questions to help students think more deeply about their own perspective. A variation is to have each speaker summarize the opinion of the previous speaker before expressing his/her own views.

After several students with different opinions have shared their thoughts, ask if anyone would like to change their opinion based on new information. It is important to acknowledge the value of remaining open to new information and being able to change one's mind when presented with new information. This is a way that we all learn.

Use some of the statements in the *Explore: Learning and Experiencing* section at the beginning of the lesson. These steps can be repeated using other statements or by making up your own statements based on what you think would make sense for your students—at a midpoint or at the end of the lesson. A vital part of this lesson is to provide safety for opinions that might be unpopular.

Attachment 2

Indian humor takes many forms including teasing, joking, storytelling (personal silly things and experiences; *Iktomi*/foolish trickster), listening/dancing to '49 songs, acknowledging *heyoka* (clowns) and "corrective humor".

Corrective Humor— Felix Cohen, the great legal scholar, tells about this: "A chief who forgets that he is a public servant and *tries to order others around* has always been an object of ridicule." He wrote, "...and Indian laughter has rippled down the centuries and upset many thrones."

Teasing— gradually people learned to anticipate teasing and began to tease themselves as a means of showing humility and at the same time advocating a course of action they deeply believed in.

Vine DeLoria, Jr. (Sioux) Indian Humor warehouse.ole.edu/~prooks/webfolder/.../DeLoria_-_Indian_humor.pdf

Joking— According to the Lakota/Navajo cultural coordinator at the American Indian Center of Chicago, this is not only American Indian Heritage Month, aka Native American Awareness Month, but, as he put it, "Rent-an-Indian Month". And this coming Thursday? In some circles, it is commemorated as *Thankstaking*. . . Most Native people I know realize that mainstream Americans have no idea that Indian Humor, as it is called, exists. "We're either stoic and noble or tragically flawed, you know? I get so tired of that," an Osage lawyer in Washington, DC told me, sighing, before returning to what she called her "roast beast" sandwich. Disconnections run deep.

Non Natives ask me, furtively, "What do you call them?" Them. Well, because I'm not a them, I say Native Americans. Those who are them, though, generally call one another — if the group goes beyond family, clan, or tribal affiliation — Indians. Here again, though, is joke opportunity. A Lakota woman told me an uncle often carried on about having been "just an Indin," as old folks tended to pronounce it, then figured he had to call himself an American Indian, then worked on being a Native, then Native American, then to keep all bases covered, identified himself as a Native American Indian, while going from being considered Sioux to Lakota. At some point, he felt he should call himself "indigenous," too. His recital ended, life was much simpler when he was "just an Indin."

Where did the notion of Native Americans not having a sense of humor come from? Maybe it started with photography, when people had to stand unsmiling, still rather than blur the image. Maybe posing for photo ops with federal officials who were trying to seize more of one's land did not bring smiles, either. Nor have I ever seen happy faces in photos of Native people waiting for promised rations (in exchange for the land) that were late, spoiled, meager, or all three. Photos of Native children unwillingly taken from their homes to boarding schools to be "civilized," by stripping them of their own civilization, also are bereft of humor — bereft the operative word.

Things are much funnier now. There is, for example, the assumption by many nons that since the advent of Indian casinos, all Indians are rich. That's rich. The mascot issue is another laff riot: naming sports teams for a group of humans as if they are inhuman. The Washington Redskins! Idaho's Salmon Savages!

Around the world, Americans are known...for their humor. Why shouldn't Native Americans contribute to that reputation, as they contribute to America's Armed Forces and, yes, tax base? Furthermore, how does any minority group cope with mind-boggling cluelessness from outsiders? They laugh...

At a Native conference I attended, a Yakama woman described her frustrations trying to educate clueless nons about tribal fishing rights. "College students," she said, as if they should know better, ask, "Are you full-blooded?" The hundred or so conference attendees gasped at this rudest of questions. "I say, 'No, I'm a pint short. Just came back from the Red Cross.'"

This Thanksgiving, let us solemnly remember what one Native person said to another while watching the pilgrims arrive. "There goes the neighborhood." See more by Alison Owings at: [HuffPosthttps://www.huffingtonpost.com/alison.../indian-humor-during-thank_b_786651.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/alison.../indian-humor-during-thank_b_786651.html)

Storytelling— Kenneth Lincoln author, *Native American Resistance* says that Indians survive through laughter as we revitalize old stories. Indian humor is rooted in life lessons according to Deloria, *Custer Died for your Sins*. The stories are lessons in morality and social order, especially those of *Iktomi* who does humorous foolish things, even though his example has a sacred context. The spirituality nature comes through as AICA executive director Janeen Antoine (Sicangu Lakota) has said, "Humor gives us a

cosmic fix and takes us out of our center of the universe, enabling us to laugh at ourselves.” The stories bond friends, relatives, and communities; making them laugh brings them together. Fixco, scholar, *Daily Life of Native Americans in the Twentieth Century*.

'49 Songs— are another genre of Indian humor. The "'49" song has humorous lyrics almost always in English. These intertribal songs tell of unrequited love, heartache, poverty, and reservation life, all in round-dance cadence. From WWII to the present, "49" songs - sometimes along with a six pack or two, have put a happy ending to many pow-wow nights and convention afterhours.

Heyoka—Charles Trimble Red Willow, Oglala Lakota (indiancountrymedia.com) says that among the various roles of the *heyoka*, “the contrary” was that of making fun and laughter. Mylo Redwater Smith, professional comedian, elaborates: *Indian humor is much more than a social lubricant, it's a tool, an attitude, a mentality...just like the heyokas (Dakota comedians who are sacred) did a long time ago.*

Attachment 3

Comic Strip Rubric

Student Name _

Period

Organization	Original illustrations are detailed, attractive, creative and reflect to Indian issues/humor or related personal experiences.	Original illustrations are somewhat detailed, attractive, and reflect Indian issues/humor or related personal experiences.	Original illustrations relate Indian concepts found within this lesson.	Illustrations are not present OR they are not original.
Clarity/ Neatness/ Organization	Comic Strip or Cartoon is easy to read clearly written and drawn. All information is organized appropriately.	Comic Strip or Cartoon is easy to read clearly written and drawn. Most information is organized appropriately.	Comic Strip or Cartoon is somewhat easy to read and clearly written and drawn. Some information is organized appropriately.	Organization of material is confusing to the reader. Comic Strip or Cartoon is hard to read and not clearly written and drawn.
Spelling, Grammar & Proofreading	No spelling errors	No more than 1 spelling error	No more than 3 spelling errors	Several spelling errors
Dialogue/ Text	There is an appropriate amount of dialogue and text to bring the characters to life, make the message clear and it is always clear which character is speaking.	There is too much dialogue and text in this story, but the message is clear and it clear which character is speaking.	There is not quite enough dialogue or text in this story to make the message clear, but it is always clear which character is speaking.	The message is not clear. It is not clear which character is speaking.