



Native Americans and Westward Expansion featuring Redbone

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What were the experiences of Native Americans during Westward Expansion and how did the U.S. government use music and other aspects of culture to force assimilation on Native Americans?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students are introduced to Pat Vegas and Redbone by way of interviews and music from the documentary film, RUMBLE: The Indians Who Rocked the World. They then look back to the late 19th century to consider the significance of Redbone's success in the 1970s. Students will use clips from RUMBLE, as well as a set of source documents to assess the U.S. Government's attempt to control Native American populations by way of culture, particularly music. Students will also examine the relationship between the U.S. Government and Native Americans in terms of reservations and treaties. Lastly, students will connect the past with the present when they analyze information about the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Standing Rock Indian Reservation from 2016, comparing it to events from the lesson.



Remington, Frederic, Artist. The Ghost dance by the Ogallala sic Sioux at Pine Ridge Agency ... Dakota / Frederic Remington, Pine Ridge, S. Dak. South Dakota Dance, 1890. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/90707734/>.

As settlers moved West in the last part of the 19th century, the Federal Government came into conflict with Native American tribes living on their homelands. During this time period, the government implemented a policy of forced assimilation in an attempt to control Native American populations. The implementation of the policy included banning traditional music, enrolling Native children in the Federal Indian Boarding Schools system, and controlling land allotments under the Dawes Act. Above all, these actions sought to erase various aspects of Native American culture and tradition. The Federal Government also developed the reservation system to resettle Native American tribes, promising through treaty agreements that reservation land would belong to Native Americans and their communities would be provided resources. The reality was that Native American reservations did not get the resources promised and the U.S. Government violated treaty agreements. For example, when gold was discovered in the Black Hills of the Great Sioux Reservation in 1874, the U.S. Government displaced Native Americans in violation of their treaty agreement.

To a present-day listener with no additional context, Redbone's single "Come and Get Your Love" may just sound like a classic mid-'70s Rock tune. The song, which many might recognize from the

opening sequence of the film *Guardians of the Galaxy*, consists of sparse lyrics repeated over a loose funky groove—not necessarily a song with a message or a “deep” meaning. However, “Come and Get Your Love” is in many ways a breakthrough track. It peaked at No. 5 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 singles chart in 1974, and achieved “Gold” status, meaning it sold at least half a million copies in the United States. This marked the first time an outwardly Native American ensemble had reached such popular culture heights in America.

Pat and Lolly Vegas, the Yaqui, Shoshone, and Mexican American brothers who founded Redbone in 1969, hadn’t always been “outwardly” Native American in performance. In the early 1960s, the brothers began their professional careers playing “Surf” music in Los Angeles. They recognized that their family surname, “Vasquez,” would mark them as Mexican American and limit their potential. So, the Vegas brothers were born. However, as national attitudes toward identity and ethnicity began to evolve later in the decade, the Vegas brothers decided to take the advice of part-Cherokee friend Jimi Hendrix and, as Pat Vegas puts it, “do the Indian thing.” Redbone performed in Native American clothing, and also worked traditional drum, dance, and song into performances, even on TV.

Redbone’s success came less than a century after the U.S. Government banned traditional expressions of Native American song and dance. Notably, the group’s musical triumph occurred 84 years after the Wounded Knee Massacre. The Wounded Knee Massacre is considered by many to be the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. On December 29, 1890, the U.S. Army murdered nearly three-hundred Lakota men, women, and children, ostensibly because they refused to cease performing a pan-tribal ritual known as the “Ghost Dance.”

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The history of the Wounded Knee Massacre
- Native American reservations in terms of the Dawes Act and Treaty of Fort Laramie
- The U.S. Government’s Federal Indian Boarding School policies to force assimilation
- The movement to “civilize” Native Americans during this period by attempting to control music and other aspects of culture
- The Dakota Access Pipeline and the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in 2016

2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE:

- Students will be able to describe the Native American experience during Westward Expansion through the analysis of media and primary sources.

ACTIVITIES

DISCLAIMER

This lesson contains primary source documents and other materials that may include terms and images reflecting the attitudes, perspectives, and beliefs of different times that today are considered offensive and demeaning. Teachrock.org does not endorse the views expressed in these documents, but recognizes the value such materials provide for historical inquiry. For guidance on introducing controversial historical materials into the classroom, we suggest reviewing this document from The Library of Congress: <https://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/2011/11/dealing-with-difficult-subjects-in-primary-sources>.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Four large sheets of paper

PREPARATION

1. Create four stations around the room using the following handouts from the *Rumble* lesson collection and the four large sheets of paper (one handout and one large sheet of paper at each station).
 - Station 1 - Excerpts from Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites.”
 - Station 2 - Native American Students Write Letters Home from Boarding School
 - Station 3 - The Dawes Act
 - Station 4 - Reservations and Broken Treaties
2. Write or print the Document Based Question below at the top of each large sheet of paper:
 - In what ways did the U.S. Government attempt to control Native Americans in the late 19th Century as the West was settled?

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:
 - Can you think of any times when music feels like more than entertainment to you? When it might say something about who you are? (*Encourage students to think of how music functions in rituals from religion, to “The Star-Spangled Banner,” to the singing of “Happy Birthday.” Also have students consider how music plays a role in shaping identity, e.g. “I’m a metalhead.”*)

PROCEDURE

1. Inform students that they will now watch a clip featuring Pat Vegas, a Yaqui, Shoshone, and Mexican American musician whose band Redbone became the first Native American group to have a Gold (more than half-a-million sold) record in 1974. Play **Clip 1, “Do the Indian Thing.”** Then ask students:
 - What do you think Jimi Hendrix meant when he told Pat Vegas to “do the Indian thing”?
 - Why do you think Pat Vegas might have chosen to downplay or hide his heritage before Redbone?
 - What do you think David Fricke might mean when he says, “ultimately, getting through is the best revenge?” In what ways did Redbone “get through”?
2. Ask students to make a T-chart on which each side represents one of the Redbone performances (the “traditional” and the Rock and Roll) in Clip 1. Play **Clip 1a, “Redbone Chant,”** and then play **Clip 1b, “Come and Get Your Love.”** Have students record their answers to the following questions:
 - What instruments are being used?
 - How would you describe the singing?
 - How would you describe the dancing?
 - Do you notice any similarities between the two clips?
3. Play the **Library of Congress clip, “Sioux Ghost Dance.”** Then ask students:
 - What is happening in the video?
 - What do you think the purpose of this dance might be?
- Do you think there is anything dangerous or threatening about this dance? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the dancing?
4. Distribute **Handout - Ghost Dance Primary Sources** to students and instruct them to follow the directions on the handout. Then, ask students:
 - How are the newspaper articles different in their descriptions of Native Americans and the Ghost Dance?
 - What do you think accounts for these differences?
5. Play **Clip 2, “The Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee.”** Then ask students:
 - Why do you think Native American music was seen as “dangerous” and a “threat” by U.S. officials? What power do you think they might have believed Native American music had? (*Encourage students to consider the power music has to create a collective identity, how many Native Americans could say “our music” as a way of being apart from the white power structure, and what collective tribal identity might have represented to those who wished to control the tribes.*)
 - In this clip, John Trudell suggests that the government agents wished to completely erase Native American culture, so “of course they came after our music.” Why do you think John Trudell feels so sure that controlling music was a way for the government to control the people? (*Among many things, encourage students to explore the idea that many songs were “songs of ancestors” and*

parts of oral history; ending the songs could destroy the connections to history.)

- How do you think an event such as the Wounded Knee Massacre might impact the practice of traditional song and dance among other tribes in what is today the United States?
 - In what ways is the “Ghost Dance” more than just music and entertainment during this time period?
6. Explain to students that as settlers moved West during this period of history, this was just one example of the clashes between Native Americans and the U.S Government that resulted from Westward Expansion. During this time the U.S. Government would attempt to control Native Americans through their culture as seen in the Wounded Knee Massacre.
7. Display **Image 1, Document Based Question**.
8. Divide the class into groups of two or three for the Stations activity. Explain that they will analyze documents that are set up around the room to answer the question.
9. Explain to students as they visit each document, they should read and examine the

documents thinking about the question above. After reading, they should discuss with their partner(s) one sentence, phrase, or summary statement from the document that they can write on the large sheet of paper that answers the question. (*Remind students that they just learned about one answer to this question with music and the Wounded Knee Massacre.*)

- Station 1 - Excerpts from Richard H. Pratt, “The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites.”
 - Station 2 - Native American Students Write Letters Home from Boarding School
 - Station 3 - The Dawes Act
 - Station 4 - Reservations and Broken Treaties
10. After student groups have visited each station, bring the class back together and review what was written at each handout. Then ask students:
- Considering what you discovered today, what makes the accomplishments of the group Redbone significant in 1974, 84 years after the Massacre at Wounded Knee?

SUMMARY ACTIVITY

1. Distribute **Handout - Standing Rock** and inform students that they will look at the conflict over the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Reservation that started in 2016.
2. Instruct students to read Step 1 about the Dakota Access Pipeline and then complete the chart in Step 2. (*Encourage students to go deeper than “they both happened to Native Americans.”*)
3. Play **Clip 3, “Stand Up / Stand N Rock”**. Instruct students to complete the questions on the handout after viewing the video. Then ask students:
 - In what ways is this song more than just entertainment?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Explore what happened with the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Standing Rock Reservation after 2016.
2. Explore lessons in the Teachrock *Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World* lesson collection.
3. Read more about the “Ghost Dance” and the Massacre at Wounded Knee here: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/american-oz-lakota-ghost-dance-massacre-wounded-knee/>



STANDARDS

COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE (C3) SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

History

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

D2.His.3.9-12. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.9-12. Analyze how historical contexts shaped and continue to shape people's perspectives.

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK STANDARDS

Topic 6. Rebuilding the United States: industry and immigration [USI.T6]

5. Analyze the causes and long and short term consequences of America's westward expansion from 1800 to 1854 (e.g., the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, growing diplomatic assertiveness after the Monroe Doctrine of 1823; the concept of Manifest Destiny and pan-Indian resistance, the establishment of slave states and free states in the West, the acquisition of Texas and the Southwestern territories as a consequence of the Mexican-American War in 1846–48, the California Gold Rush, and the rapid rise of Chinese immigration in California).

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

11.2. Students analyze the transformation of the American economy and the changing social and political conditions in the United States in response to the Industrial Revolution.

2. Outline the reasons for the development of federal Indian policy, the wars with American Indians, and their relationship to agricultural development and industrialization. (G, P, M, E)

CONNECTICUT SECONDARY SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORK

US-2. Immigration, Industrialization, and Progressivism

US.His.12.a. Develop questions about the rise of nativism and assimilation efforts of immigrants and Indigenous peoples (e.g., Punjabi Migration, Indian Boarding Schools,



Chinese Exclusion Act, Rock Spring Massacre, 1907 Bellingham Riots, Immigration Act of 1917).

NEW JERSEY STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS - SOCIAL STUDIES

Era 5. The Development of the Industrial United States (1870–1900)

6.1.12.HistoryCA.4.a: Analyze the debate about how to reunite the country and determine the extent to which enacted Reconstruction policies achieved their goals.

6.1.12.CivicsDP.5.a: Analyze the effectiveness of governmental policies and of actions by groups and individuals to address discrimination against new immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans.

SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

College and Career Readiness Reading Information Text Standards for Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person’s life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.9 Analyze seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (including



The Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address) for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening for Grades 9-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.



RESOURCES

VIDEO RESOURCES

- *Rumble* - "Do the Indian Thing"
- *Rumble* - "Redbone Chant"
- *Rumble* - "Come and Get Your Love"
- *Library of Congress* - "Sioux Grass Dance"
- *Rumble* - "The Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee"
- "Stand Up / Stand N Rock"

HANDOUTS

- Handout - Ghost Dance Primary Sources
- Handout - Document 1: Excerpts from Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites"
- Handout - Documents 2 and 3: Native American Students Write Letters Home from Boarding School
- Handout - Document 4: The Dawes Act Excerpts
- Handout - Document 5: Reservations and Broken Treaties
- Handout - Standing Rock