

The Remedial Herstory Project

INQUIRY - BASED LESSON PLAN

STAGING THE INQUIRY

For this inquiry, teachers should consider opening with an intriguing and open ended question, then provide some background on this topic generally in the form of a video, brief lecture, or presentation. Close the introduction by asking students what questions they have, guide them in discussion to the question for the inquiry, highlighted at the top of the next page.

ACTIVITY TASKS

- Pose a broad open ended question. Provide background information.
- Students respond to questions in this packet independently or with a partner.
- Consider doing one of the following to extend the exercise:
 - Facilitate student discussion of the compelling question.
 - Facilitate a 4-corner debate.
 - Facilitate a structured academic controversy.
 - Students assume the characters involved and discuss the compelling question in character.
- Students craft an argument.

C3 FRAMEWORK

D1.1.9-12. Explain how a question reflects an enduring issue in the field.

D1.2.9-12. Explain points of agreement and disagreement experts have about interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts and ideas associated with a compelling question.

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.

D2.His.10.9-12. Detect possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary interpretations.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2.His.12.9-12. Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Inquiry Activity: Is there a single indigenous women’s narrative?

In this inquiry, students will examine the stories and lives of different women who’s lives were well documented and recorded in history. Students will consider whether there are any common themes, or if native tribes, divided by time, space, and culture are too different to have a single native women’s experience. As they read, students will annotate the sources, underlining things that are similar and putting a star for things that are different about that community or person. Students will summarize the similarities and differences in the organizer below.

Similarities	Differences

Background

In 1644, the Rev. John Megalopensis, minister at a Dutch Church in New Netherlands, complained that Native American women were “obliged to prepare the Land, to mow, to plant, and do every Thing; the Men do nothing except hunting, fishing, and going to War against their Enemies. . .” Many of his fellow Europeans described American Indian women as “slaves” to the men, because of the perceived differences in their labor [work], compared to European women. Indian women performed what Europeans considered to be men’s work. But, from the Native American perspective, women’s roles reflected their own cultural emphases on reciprocity [cooperation], balance, and autonomy [independence/freedom]. Most scholars agree that Native American women at the time of contact with Europeans had more authority and autonomy than did European women.

It is hard to make any generalizations about indigenous [native/earliest] societies, because North America’s First Peoples consisted of hundreds of separate cultures, each with their own belief systems, social structures, and cultural and political practices. Evidence is particularly scarce [hard to find] about women’s everyday lives and responsibilities. However, most cultures shared certain characteristics that promoted [encouraged] gender equality.

Kinship, extended family, and clan bound people together within a system of mutual obligation [duty/commitment] and respect. Lineage [ancestry/family] was central to determining status and responsibilities, consent [agreement] held communities together, and concepts of reciprocity [cooperation] extended to gender roles and divisions of authority.

Men were generally responsible for hunting, warfare, and interacting with outsiders, therefore they had more visible, public roles. Women, on the other hand, managed the internal operations of the community. They usually owned the family's housing and household goods, engaged in agricultural food production and gathering of foodstuffs, and reared [cared for] the children.

Because women's activities were central to the community's welfare, they also held important political, social, and economic [money making] power. In many North American societies, clan membership and material goods descended [shared downward] through women. For example, the Five (later Six) Nations of the Iroquois Confederation all practiced matrilineal descent [through the mother's line]. Clan matrons [women] selected men to serve as their chiefs, and they deposed [got rid of] chiefs with whom they were dissatisfied. Women's life-giving roles also played a part in their political and social authority. In Native American creation stories, it was often the woman who created life, through giving birth to children, or through the use of their own bodies to create the earth, from which plants and animals emerged.

Some scholars argue that, after contact, women's authority steadily declined because of cultural assimilation [taking-in of ideas]. Euro-American men insisted on dealing with Indian men in trade negotiations, and ministers demanded that Indians follow the Christian modes of patriarchy [system of society with men in power] and gendered division of labor that made men farmers and women housekeepers.

However, other scholars, such as SUNY Fredonia anthropologist Joy Bilharz and University of North Carolina historian Theda Perdue, argue that many indigenous [native/first] women maintained authority within their communities. Matrilineal inheritance [through the mother's line] of clan identity remained important parts of many cultures long after contact, and women continued to use their maternal authority to influence political decisions within and outside of their own nations.

For example, as the United States increased pressure against the Cherokee nation to relinquish [give up] their eastern lands and move west, groups of Cherokee women petitioned [requested] their Council to stand their ground. In these communications, they sternly reminded their "[b]eloved children" that they had raised the Council members on that land which "God gave us to inhabit and raise provisions." They admonished [scolded] their children not to "part with any more lands."

Another Cherokee woman wrote to Benjamin Franklin in 1787, advocating peace between the new United States and the Cherokee nation. She advised Franklin that political leaders ". . . ought to mind what a woman says, and look upon her as a mother - and I have Taken the prevelage to Speak to you as my own Children . . . and I am in hopes that you have a beloved woman amongst you who will help to put her children right if they do wrong, as I shall do the same. . . ." American Indian women assumed that their unique positions in their societies gave them the right to play the mother card when necessary.

Teaching History Editors. "American Indian Women." Teaching History. Last modified N.D. <https://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/23931>.

Story A: Native Women at Jamestown

Writing in 1621, the Virginia Company announced that only women would serve to 'tie and root the planters' minds to Virginia by the bonds of wives and children'. Before the arrival of the brides, there had been very few English women in the colony, leaving nearly all of the young, male colonists unmarried and available. There may have been brides before, who were written out of history though. Archaeologists at the Jamestown site have found plenty of material evidence to suggest that Native American women took up residence in the fort; perhaps as domestic helpmeets or sexual partners (although this was never documented in English records). But Native American women were not, in the eyes of contemporaries [peers], fitting partners. English women were needed if an English - Christian - society was to be kept intact.

Ewen, Misha. "The Real Wives of Jamestown." History Today. Last modified May 10, 2017. <https://www.historytoday.com/real-wives-jamestown>.

Story B: Story of Matrilineal Wampanoag Society

The Wampanoag Confederacy was a coalition [alliance] of over 30 Algonquian-speaking Native American tribes who lived in the region of modern-day New England... The Wampanoag have also been known as the Massasoit (after their most famous leader) Philip's Indians, Pokanoket, and Wopanaak. Wampanoag translates as "People of the First Light" ... as they considered themselves the first to see the sun rise. The tribes had lived in the region since c. 12,000-9,000 BCE as nomads until c. 7000 BCE, when permanent settlements and seasonal camps were established, then continuing a semi-nomadic [wandering] lifestyle afterwards.

...Wampanoag government was hierarchical with a Great Chief at the top, surrounded by his powwows (shamans) and counselors, known as pniese, comparable to the European concept of a noble knight. The pniese [counselors] were both elite [superior] warriors and spiritual protectors who guarded the chief against physical and metaphysical [spiritual] threats and provided counsel when asked. Each of the tribes that made up the Wampanoag Confederacy was set up in this same way but was subordinate [lower ranking] to the Great Chief (to whom they paid tribute) who, in the early 17th century CE, was Massasoit. Massasoit was the man's title (meaning Great Sachem = Great Chief), his given name was Ousamequin. When Massasoit became chief is unknown, but he had already organized the tribes into a confederacy with an economy based on agriculture by the early 17th century CE.

He would have been chosen by a council of female elders as the Wampanoag, and the other tribes of the confederacy, were matrilineal and matrifocal - meaning one's bloodline and status was passed down through the woman's side of the family and women were responsible for making many of the major decisions concerning the life of

the tribe, although men usually held the highest positions and were always responsible for warfare.

Women's duties included planting, tending, and harvesting crops as well as negotiating trade agreements between tribes. The principal crops were corn, beans, and squash which were irrigated by diverting stream beds. Women also built the longhouses of the permanent settlements as well as the temporary shelters of the wetuash (singular, wetu) for the men on hunting expeditions or for seasonal settlements. A wetu was a cone-shaped structure made of saplings covered with bark (often birchbark), and mats woven of reeds. Longhouses were larger, made of saplings bent U-shaped and fastened at both ends to the earth, covered with reed-woven mats and bark, some up to 200 feet long or, in the case of communal [common] structures, even longer. With both types of shelter, a hole in the roof allowed smoke from the fire out and the longhouse had a bark cover over this hole which kept out rain and could be adjusted for wind direction and changes in weather.

Daily – or nightly – activities for women also involved the production of clothing made from animal skins. Moccasins and outerwear such as cloaks were greased with fat for waterproofing. Women also made wampum, beads and shells strung tightly together which told a story and served as a type of currency but could also be – and often were – sacred objects of a tribe. Tobacco was chewed or smoked as part of religious rituals, in sealing contracts, as a stimulant (especially on hunts), and as medicine, but not recreationally [for fun]. While the women made clothes, the men made tools and weapons including axes, bows, arrows, hammers, knives, spears, tomahawks, and war clubs as well as canoes made of logs which were hollowed through controlled fires and scraping the burnt wood with shells or sharpened rocks.

Mark, Joshua J. "Wampanoag Confederacy." *World History Encyclopedia*. Last modified March 12, 2021. https://www.ancient.eu/Wampanoag_Confederacy/.
Source

Story C: Story of Native Mohawk Women Giving Birth

In the seventeenth century, Dutchman Adrien Van der Donck described a woman's preparation for childbirth among the Mohawk and Mahican Indians in what is now known as New York. He stated that pregnant women would "depart alone to a secluded place near a brook, or stream of water . . . and prepare a shelter for themselves with mats and coverings, where, provided with provisions necessary for them, they await their delivery without the company or aid of any person. . . . They rarely are sick from child-birth [and] suffer no inconveniences from the same." Many similar descriptions of solitary, painless births exist among European observers of the Native Americans, but because most of these observers were men, and men rarely attended the birth of children, these descriptions are probably inaccurate. Although each indigenous {native/first} culture had its own unique beliefs and rituals about childbirth, scholars believe that many First Peoples shared certain practices involving the participation of close family members and select others within the community.

During their pregnancies, women restricted their activities and took special care with their diet and behavior to protect the baby. The Cherokees, for example, believed

that certain foods affect the fetus. Pregnant women avoided foods that they believed would harm the baby or cause unwanted physical characteristics. For example, they believed that eating raccoon or pheasant would make the baby sickly, or could cause death; consuming speckled trout could cause birthmarks; and eating black walnuts could give the baby a big nose. They thought that wearing neckerchiefs while pregnant caused umbilical strangulation, and lingering in doorways slowed delivery. Expectant mothers and fathers participated in rituals to guarantee a safe delivery, such as daily washing of hands and feet and employing medicine men to perform rites that would make deliveries easier.

As the birth grew closer, women and their families observed other rituals to ensure an easy and healthy birth. Nineteenth-century anthropologist James Mooney recorded one Cherokee ritual intended to frighten the child out of the mother's womb. A female relative of the mother would say: "Listen! You little man, get up now at once. There comes an old woman. The horrible [old thing] is coming, only a little way off. Listen! Quick! Get your bed and let us run away. Yu!" The female relative then repeated the formula, substituting "little woman" and "your grandfather," in case the baby was a girl. Van der Donck described a Mahican concoction made of root bark that the mother drank shortly before labor began. Many indigenous peoples used similar remedies. Cherokee women drank an infusion of wild cherry bark to speed delivery.

Despite numerous descriptions of solitary births, other accounts describe births attended by a midwife and other close family members. Men were rarely allowed in the birth room, and they were never allowed to see the birth. A woman in labor stood, knelt, or sat, but she never gave birth lying down. Usually no one bothered to catch the baby, who fell onto leaves placed beneath the mother. Van der Donck and Mooney described post-delivery rituals in which the mothers ceremonially plunged the infant into the river, an act they repeated daily for two years. British Lieutenant Henry Timberlake, an envoy to the Cherokee in the mid-eighteenth century, stated that this ritual made "the children acquire such strength, that no ricketty or deformed are found among them."

European descriptions of Native American women's quick recovery from childbirth may have been exaggerated. But generally, Indian women's excellent physical conditioning certainly aided in their recovery from childbirth. Barring any serious complications – which, of course, did happen occasionally – Native American women returned to their regular duties in a very short period of time.

Teaching History Editors. "Native American Customs of Childbirth." Teaching History. Last modified N.D. <https://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/24097>.

Story D: Pocahontas

Among the most famous women in early American history, Pocahontas is credited with having helped the struggling English settlers in Virginia survive in the early 1600s. The explorer John Smith – who claimed Pocahontas saved his life – hailed her as "the instrument to pursue this colonie from death, famine, and utter confusion."

Born around 1596, Pocahontas was the daughter of Wahunsenaca (also known as Powhatan), the powerful chief of the Powhatans, a Native American group that

inhabited the Chesapeake Bay region. Little is known about her mother. Her given name was Amonute (privately, Matoaka), but she has been remembered by her nickname Pocahontas, meaning “playful one.”

Pocahontas first observed the English when they landed in Jamestown, Virginia in May of 1607. She secured her place in American history when Captain John Smith was captured by Powhatan’s brother Opechancanough that winter. In published accounts, Smith claimed that as he was about to be executed, Pocahontas raced in and laid her head next to his, where it was about to be smashed on some rocks. Historians have debated Smith’s claims and many believe it was simply a tribal ritual, possibly one of adoption since Powhatan thereafter referred to Smith as a member of the tribe.

Nonetheless, Pocahontas developed a friendship with him and other settlers. She delivered messages from her father and accompanied Indian men delivering gifts of food to the starving colonists. However, the peace ended when colonists demanded more food, and Powhatan – facing shortages and drought in 1608 and 1609 – declined. Colonists burned Indian villages and threatened violence, and from then on, Pocahontas ceased visiting Jamestown.

In 1610, Pocahontas married Kocoum, likely a member of the Patowomecks, and they settled in the Potomac region. In 1613, however, she was taken captive when Captain Samuel Argall invited her to visit his ship Treasurer. She was then transported to Jamestown. As ransom, English settlers demanded corn, the return of prisoners and stolen items, and a peace treaty. Some demands were met immediately; others Powhatan agreed to negotiate. Pocahontas was moved from Jamestown to the Henrico settlement near present-day Richmond and, in July 1613, met John Rolfe.

After a year of captivity, Sir Thomas Dale took Pocahontas and 150 armed men to Powhatan, demanding the remainder of the ransom. A skirmish [fight] occurred, and Englishmen burned villages and killed Indian men. During this event, Pocahontas told her father that she wished to marry Rolfe. Powhatan consented [agreed] and the April 5, 1614 marriage was viewed by all as a peace-making event – the “Peace of Pocahontas.” In 1614, Pocahontas converted to Christianity and was renamed Rebecca. Rolfe helped save the Virginia colony by promoting tobacco cultivation, and was likely aided in some part by his wife.

Pocahontas bore a son named Thomas and, in 1616, the Rolfes traveled to England, spending time in London and Norfolk, where the extended Rolfe family lived. While there, Pocahontas dressed in the Elizabethan style pictured in her famous portrait. Considered an Indian princess by the English, she was granted an audience with King James I and the royal family. Shortly after the Rolfes set sail for their return to Virginia in 1617, Pocahontas became gravely ill from tuberculosis or pneumonia. She died shortly thereafter at the age of 22 and was buried in a churchyard in Gravesend, England.

*Michals, Debra. "Pocahontas." National Women's History Museum. 2015.
www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/pocahontas.*

Story E: Weetamoo

Weetamoo was born between 1635 and 1640 on the shores of what is today known as Cape Cod. Her father, Corbitant, was the sachem, or leader, of the Pocasset

people, one of the tribes of the Wampanoag Confederacy that lived throughout the territory we today call New England. Weetamoo had one younger sister, but no brothers, so she knew from an early age that she would become the sachem [leader] of the Pocasset people. In addition to the traditional women's work of agriculture, preparing hides, and cooking, Weetamoo was trained to hunt, fish, and fight, and learned diplomacy and leadership by observing her father. Weetamoo grew up in a world that was changing fast. Just before she was born, European diseases brought by the first traders had killed 90 percent of the Wampanoag population. Rival tribes had started to try to take over Wampanoag land. At the same time, the Puritan English settlers were spreading out from their first settlement at Plymouth. When she became sachem, Weetamoo had to figure out how to protect her people from all of these threats.

One of her strategies was to marry men who would make her position stronger. Her first marriage was to the sachem of the Saugus, another tribe of the Wampanoag Confederacy. When he died shortly after their wedding, she married Wamsutta, the son of the Massasoit, the great sachem of the Wampanoag Confederacy. Her sister married Wamsutta's younger brother Metacom. These marriages brought the Pocasset people close to the center of Wampanoag power. At the time of her marriage, the Wampanoag Confederacy was following a policy of peaceful negotiation with the English, and used their English allies to keep aggressive neighboring tribes away.

Wamsutta became the great sachem when Massasoit died in 1661. As the sachem of the Pocasset, and the wife of the great sachem of the Wampanoag, Weetamoo's stature in the community grew. But trouble was brewing. The English colonists of Plymouth kept demanding more and more land from the Wampanoag, and the English government started to view the Wampanoag as enemies rather than allies. In 1662, Wamsutta was brought at gunpoint to Plymouth to answer for the crime of selling land to people other than the Plymouth government. While he was there, he became suddenly ill and died. Weetamoo and Metacom both believed he was poisoned, and they lost faith in the English as allies from that point forward. Metacom became the great sachem of the Wampanoag, and tensions with the English continued to rise.

Metacom started attacking English settlements in 1675. He was trying to stop the further spread of English people into Wampanoag lands. This was the start of Metacom's War. The English call the conflict King Philip's War (the English called Metacom "Philip" in their official documents after his father petitioned them for an English name for his sons). At this critical moment, Weetamoo had to make a choice: continue trying to negotiate with the English, or fight for the rights of her people. Her fourth husband decided to side with the English. But Metacom was her brother-in-law twice over, the great sachem of her people, and he was fighting to try to protect all of the Wampanoag from English aggression. Weetamoo dissolved her marriage, and committed her warriors to Metacom's cause. In the early days of the war, she further committed to Metacom by marrying his ally, the Narragansett sachem Quinnapin.

By the summer of 1675, Weetamoo's marital and family connections meant that she commanded the allegiance of every major tribe in Metacom's alliance. She was a powerful sachem, and a feared enemy of the English people. When writing about the

war, a Puritan leader described her as second only to Metacom in terms of “the mischief that has been done, and the blood that has been shed in this War.”

Metacom, Weetamoo, and Quinnapin led raids against English settlements in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island in 1675 and 1676. Outnumbered and outgunned, the allies had to stay one step ahead of the English while they tried to do enough damage to drive the English out of their lands. During this time Weetamoo gave birth to a baby, who died shortly after it was born. This personal tragedy does not seem to have slowed her down, which shows her mental strength and determination.

King Philip’s War proved disastrous for Weetamoo and her people. After a strong start, vicious English counterattacks wore away at the tribal alliance. Wampanoag society was destroyed. At least 750 Wampanoag were killed during the war, and all the Wampanoag who were captured were sold into slavery. Weetamoo drowned while crossing a river on her way to battle. Her body was found by English soldiers on August 3, 1676. She was so feared that the soldiers mounted her head on a pole outside an English settlement as proof that she had been defeated. The sight of her head sent captive Native warriors into a frenzy of grief, proof of the love she inspired in her people. Her endeavors may have failed, but her life story stands as a testament to the ways women in Native communities fought back against the aggression of European settlers.

New York Historical Society. “Life Story: Weetamoo (ca. 1635-1676): Fighting for Survival in New England, This is the story of a Native American warrior and her attempts to keep her people alive.” New York Historical Society. Last modified N.D.
<https://wams.nyhistory.org/early-encounters/english-colonies/weetamoo/#resource>.