Eighth Grade Multicultural Curriculum Lesson Plan

Navajo Code Talkers of WWII

Content/Theme: Minority Contributions
Grade: 8

Primary Benchmark:
- SS.912.A.2.7 Review the Native American experience

Secondary Benchmark:
- SS.912.A.6.1 Examine causes, course, and consequences of World War II on the United States and the world.

Time: 1-2 class periods

Objectives:
1. Students will use a Navajo code talker’s dictionary to create and decode messages.

Teacher Preparation/Materials:
- Multicultural Reading Passage
- Handouts of Navajo Code Talkers
- Website for original Navajo Code: [http://www.lapahie.com/navajo_code_talker_original_code.cfm](http://www.lapahie.com/navajo_code_talker_original_code.cfm)

Activities:
1. Read and discuss multicultural information on Navajo Code Talkers.
2. In cooperative groups, students will create messages using the dictionary then will exchange papers to decode other groups messages.
   
   Example:
   
   Wol-la-chee   Gah   Na-as-tso-si   Tsah-as-zih
   A   R   M   Y

Review of Lesson/Assessment:
1. Optional short answer response quiz on reading passage

ESOL Strategies:
- Cooperative Learning/Visuals

Resources:
   
Multicultural Information:

During the fighting in the Pacific in World War II, the Japanese were able to decode all the U.S. Radio messages. A white man (Phillip Johnson) who had been raised on a Navajo Indian Reservation believed the Navajo language could be used as a code. He thought that the Native American language was very hard to decode because it was an unwritten language. Also, he knew that other Native American languages were used in the past in WWI.

Eventually, 400 Navajo Code Talkers were trained, and they developed a new code for words that didn't exist in Navajo. The Navajos went through basic training, and then had to memorize their newly created words. They were immediately sent to the Pacific theater. One specific unit had six Navajo talkers and claimed they sent and received over 800 messages, all without error.

The Japanese were never clever enough to figure out that the language was Navajo, and even had one Navajo prisoner. When they forced him to translate, it sounded like nonsense. They were still unable to break the code. The Marines were lucky to have the Code Talkers, especially since the Japanese had broken the air-force and the army codes before. The Code Talkers participated in every Marine attack including Iwo Jima. Some say without them, they would have never had as much success (Hodges & Margulies, 9).

As with other minority groups, the Navajo only recently received recognition (1992) from the Government and the public as potentially valuable to the armed forces. Exhibits, and photography, and movies depict their bravery and outstanding valor.
Navajo Code Talkers

Name___________________________________________________ Date__________

Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. Why do you think Phillip Johnston thought the Navajo language would be useful to the army?

2. What kind of training did the Navajo Indians receive before they went to the Pacific?

3. During WWII, how many attacks did the Navajo participate in?

4. How frequently was the Navajo code broken? Why?