

Surviving Assimilation

American Indian Boarding Schools

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Grade Level	9th Grade	**Time Frame**	90-100 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	2 periods
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History		

Essential Question

How were American Indians assimilated in the past? What effect did assimilation have on their identity and culture?

Summary

In this lesson, students will examine the boarding school experiences of American Indians from Oklahoma and other states and territories. They will identify the ways in which American Indians resisted assimilation and preserved their cultural and individual identities during and after the time they spent at boarding schools.

Snapshot

Engage

Students compare and contrast two photos of a student at a boarding school and acquire an understanding of the term *assimilate*.

Explore

Students analyze quotes relating to American Indian boarding schools.

Explain

Students examine an infographic and use the Window Notes strategy to organize the information they find to be interesting and important.

Extend

Students choose two videos from a digital choice board to critically analyze how boarding school students responded to attempts of assimilation.

Evaluate

Students summarize their understanding of the experiences of American Indian students at boarding school by responding to a writing prompt.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR302: Draw simple logical conclusions in somewhat challenging passages
CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages
IDT403: Summarize key supporting ideas and details in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

OKH.5.1: Examine the policies of the United States and their effects on American Indian identity, culture, economy, tribal government and sovereignty including:
OKH.5.1B: effects of the federal policy of assimilation including Indian boarding schools (1880s-1940s)

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: Oklahoma History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.1.3C: Examine the rationale behind federal policies toward American Indians including the establishment of reservations, attempts at assimilation, the end of the Indian Wars at Wounded Knee, and the impact of the Dawes Act on tribal sovereignty and land ownership.

Attachments

- H-Chart—Surviving Assimilation.docx
- H-Chart—Surviving Assimilation.pdf
- Lesson Slides—Surviving Assimilation.pptx
- SIT Quotes—Surviving Assimilation.docx
- SIT Quotes—Surviving Assimilation.pdf
- Teacher's Guide—Surviving Assimilation.docx
- Teacher's Guide—Surviving Assimilation.pdf
- Window Notes—Surviving Assimilation.docx
- Window Notes—Surviving Assimilation.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Teacher’s Guide document (attached)
- SIT Quotes handout (attached; one per student)
- Window Notes handout (attached; one per student)
- H-Chart handout (attached; one per student)
- Student devices with internet access
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Highlighters

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Prior to teaching the lesson, review the attached **Teacher's Guide**. It contains a short article that provides a detailed account of the circumstances that led to the creation of off-reservation boarding schools, as well as the events that ultimately led to implementing reforms at many of them.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson, beginning with **slide 3**. Provide a few moments for students to examine the before and after photos on the slide. Then, have students discuss the questions on **slide 4**:

- *What do you notice about these two photos?*
- *How are they similar? How do they differ?*
- *Where do you think these two photos were taken?*
- *When do you think they were taken?*
- *Why do you think they were taken?*
- *Who do you think took them?*

After students discuss, display **slide 5** and explain that the photos are of Tom Torlino, a citizen of the Navajo Nation in New Mexico. The first photo was taken in 1882 at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The second photo was taken three or four years later. Explain that the purpose of Carlisle and other boarding schools was to *assimilate* American Indians from around the country.

Display both definitions of *assimilate* on **slide 6.** Make sure that students know that to *assimilate* means to adopt the behaviors and traditions of a cultural group that is different from their own.

Teacher's Note: An Untold Story

This image of Tom Torlino is often used to teach students about American Indian boarding schools. While he is often portrayed as a victim of forced assimilation, the "Manuelito's Legacy" article recently published by the *Navajo Times* reveals that, in spite of the time he spent at Carlisle, he was able to hold onto his traditions and spent the rest of his life as an active member of the Navajo Nation. Consider sharing some of the information from this article with students.

Display **slide 7** and review the essential questions, then **slide 8** to review the lesson objectives.

25 minutes

Explore

Place students into groups of four and display **slide 9**. Introduce the S-I-T (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling) strategy to students and pass out the attached **SIT Quotes** handout and a highlighter to each student. Tell students to read and highlight something that is surprising, interesting, or troubling about each quote with their group.

After providing time for groups to analyze each quote, call on a volunteer from each group to talk about the thing that they found *surprising*, *interesting*, or *troubling*. Invite student groups to share their reasoning with the class.

Possible Student Responses: S-I-T

Surprising: We were surprised that some students had positive experiences while they lived at the boarding schools. **Interesting:** We found it interesting that the boarding schools prepared the Comanche code talkers well for their service during WWII. **Troubling:** We were troubled to learn that students at Riverside were punished for speaking their native languages by being forced to brush their teeth with lye.

20 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 10** and have students use their personal devices to access the Boarding Schools Infographic by using the provided link on the slide: **https://k20.ou.edu/mf.**

Pass out the attached **Window Notes** handout to each student. Have students use the handout to take notes as they read Boarding Schools Infographic. The infographic contains a timeline, statistics about the boarding schools, and a yearbook showing images that were taken at several boarding schools over the years.

After providing time for students to analyze the infographic, display **slide 11.** Have students discuss the questions on the slide:

- Facts Quadrant: Which facts do you find interesting?
- Feelings Quadrant: What are you feeling as you learn these facts? (Sad? Angry? Embarrassed? Disappointed?)
- Questions Quadrant: What questions do you have now?
- Connections Quadrant: Can you relate what you have just read to prior experiences or things you have learned before today?

20 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note: Lesson Connection

For information about Native Americans who provided exemplary service during World War II, consider the "Word Warriors" lesson. This lesson invites students to view a documentary and read an article about World War II veterans known as "code talkers" from the Comanche, Pawnee, Choctaw, Seminole, and other tribal nations.

Display **slide 12.** Tell students that they will watch two videos about boarding schools. Pass out the attached **H-Chart** handout to each student and ensure that each group of four students has access to at least one computer. Have students access the link using the short url on the slide: https://k20.ou.edu/mh.

The videos in the left column are primarily informational and tell the stories of some of the people who attended the boarding schools. These videos examine efforts being made today to remember what happened at the schools. The videos in the right column are interviews with people who attended the schools.

Instruct students to follow the steps listed below:

- After student groups have picked a video from the left column, give them 5–10 minutes to watch and answer the prompt on the **left** side of the H-Chart:
  - *Summarize the video about American Indian boarding schools.*
- Next, have students pick one video from the right column and give them another 5–10 minutes to watch and answer the prompt on the **right** side of the H-Chart:
  - *Describe what you learned from the person who attended a boarding school.*
- Finally, give student groups an additional 10 minutes to answer the question in the **center** of the H-Chart:
  - *How did the boarding schools attempt to make American Indian students assimilate and how did students keep their traditions despite those attempts?*

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 13.** Ask students to take out a piece of paper in order to complete a brief writing assignment as an Exit Ticket. Have students answer the question on the slide: *If you were writing a book about the experiences of American Indian students at boarding schools, what is one thing you would want your readers to know? Why?*

Collect the students' responses to review and check for student understanding of the lesson content.

Resources

- Choate, J.N. (c. 1885). *Tom Torlino - after* [Photo]. Cumberland County Historical Society. https://carlisleindian.historicalsociety.com/images/tom-torlino-after/.
- Choate, J.N. (c. 1882). *Tom Torlino - before* [Photo]. Cumberland County Historical Society. https://carlisleindian.historicalsociety.com/images/tom-torlino-before/.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Native American boarding schools infogram. https://infogram.com/1pmn5z655017vyb3ypnxnd2633szle1len0?live
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Paired texts H-chart. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/132.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). S-I-T (Surprising, interesting, troubling). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/926.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Window notes. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/189
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Word warriors. 5E Lessons. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/lesson/1759
- Yurth, C. (2013, February 14). Manuelito's legacy: Several famous Navajos called Coyote Canyon home. Navajo Times. https://www.navajotimes.com/news/chapters/021413coy.php