



The Spiro Mounds Builders

Oklahoma History



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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	120 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	1-2 class period(s)
Course	Oklahoma History		

Essential Question

What are the significant symbols and icons of civilizations/cultures? How can we know about the past if we were not there?

Summary

This lesson focuses on the accomplishments and culture of the Spiro Mounds builders and their impact on Oklahoma history. Students will take notes as they watch an interview with a Spiro Mounds archaeologist and read about pre-contact cultures before completing a Two-Minute Paper to summarize what they've learned.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in an Always, Sometimes, or Never True activity to assess prior knowledge.

Explore

Students watch a short video about the Spiro Mounds while working on a graphic organizer.

Explain

Students read articles about pre-contact cultures and finish their graphic organizer.

Extend

Students write a Two-Minute Paper using their knowledge of pre-contact cultures.

Evaluate

Students re-evaluate and revise their Always, Sometimes, or Never True responses.

Standards

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

OKH.1.2: Summarize the accomplishments of pre-contact cultures including the Spiro Mound Builders.

Attachments

- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True with Teacher's Notes—The Spiro Mounds Builders.docx](#)
- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True with Teacher's Notes—The Spiro Mounds Builders.pdf](#)
- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mounds Builders - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mounds Builders - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mounds Builders.docx](#)
- [Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mounds Builders.pdf](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer with Teacher's Notes—The Spiro Mounds Builders.docx](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer with Teacher's Notes—The Spiro Mounds Builders.pdf](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mounds Builders - Spanish.docx](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mounds Builders - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mounds Builders.docx](#)
- [GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mounds Builders.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Spiro Mounds Builders.pptx](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True handout (attached, one per student)
- GRAPES graphic organizer (attached, one per student)
- Internet access (to view the Jigsaw documents linked below)
- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Dry erase markers (optional)
- Dry erase pockets (optional)

Engage

Teacher's Note: Pre-Contact Cultures

Before you get started with the first activity, make sure students understand the term "pre-contact cultures," or the similar term "pre-Columbian cultures." (We use "pre-contact cultures" in this lesson to match the verbiage of Oklahoma Social Studies Academic Standards.) These terms are used to denote indigenous cultures in the American continents prior to the arrival of European explorers and settlers.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the instruction. Display **slide 5** and tell students that they are going to participate in an **Always, Sometimes, or Never True** activity to analyze some statements about indigenous, pre-contact cultures in Oklahoma.

Pass out the **Always, Sometimes, or Never True** handouts to students and ask them to mark each statement as always, sometimes, or never true. Next to each designation, students should write a short reason for their decision. Once students have labeled and justified each statement, have them discuss their reasoning with an [Elbow Partner](#). Then, ask for 2–3 volunteers to share out their thoughts for each statement with the whole class.

Optional Materials

Dry erase pockets and markers allow groups to complete activity together while you have a reusable set of handouts for all classes.

Explore

Display **slide 6** and pass out a copy of the **GRAPES Graphic Organizer** to each student. They can use this handout to organize the information about a civilization into six major areas of focus. Some questions associated with each area are listed below, but students are not limited to just these questions.

- **Geography**—Where was the civilization located? What were/are the major geographic features of the region?
- **Religion**—Was the civilization polytheistic or monotheistic? Who or what did they worship? What were their places of worship called?
- **Arts**—What kinds of items did they create? Were there common themes?
- **Politics**—Who ruled? Were there key political figures?
- **Economics**—Did the civilization trade with others? What did they trade? Did they pay taxes?
- **Social**—Was there a hierarchy? How did members of the civilization interact with one another?

Guiding Student Responses

Teachers' versions of the GRAPES and Always, Sometimes, or Never True handouts are included to help you guide student responses.

Move to **slide 7**. Have students watch an Oklahoma News Report video about the Spiro Mounds: "[OETA Story on Highway 9: Spiro Mounds.](#)"

Embedded video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP1h8bVhs7s>

Explain

Display **slide 8**. Ask students to keep their GRAPES handouts with them as you arrange them into groups of four and assign each group member a number from 1 to 4.

Teacher's Note: Using the Jigsaw Documents

Links and URLs for articles about the Spiro Mounds can be found in the attached document and below. You may have your students access these readings digitally if they have Internet-connected devices available, or you may prefer to print copies for students to read within their groups.

Direct students to the readings in the **Jigsaw Documents** attachment and lead a [jigsaw](#) learning activity. Each student is responsible for becoming an expert on one of the documents in the packet, based on their assigned number.

1. [Spiro Mounds Hold Mystery](#) by Bonnie Spears (The Oklahoman)
2. [Spiro Mounds Excavations Visits To Resume in Eastern Oklahoma](#) by Max Nichols (The Oklahoman)
3. [The Treasure of the Spiro Mounds](#) by M.J. Alexander (405 Magazine)
4. [Spiro Started Upward Spiral in 700 A.D.](#) by Teddye Snell (Tahlequah Daily Press)

As students read their assigned documents, ask them to add information that fits into the six categories of the GRAPES handouts. On the back of their GRAPES handouts, ask them to write down a brief summary of their article.

When students have completed reading and writing their summaries, display **slide 9** and have them summarize their document and highlight any important information to other members of their group. As one group member shares out, the rest of the members should be writing down that information in their handouts.

When all students have shared out with group members, ask students to share out the important information they found in the articles with the whole class, and go over the GRAPES responses to ensure that all groups found the key information.

Extend

Ask students to get out a blank sheet of paper. Show **slide 10** and read the prompt: "Why is it important to preserve historical sites such as the Spiro Mounds?" or "What can we learn from the preservation of pre-contact cultures like that found at the Spiro Mounds?" Students will write a [Two-Minute Paper](#) responding to this prompt.

Teacher's Note: Two-Minute Paper

While this strategy is meant to be brief, if students are still working on their responses after two minutes, feel free to adjust the time limit accordingly. This activity should not take all hour, but it could be extended to 5–7 minutes, if needed.

Evaluate

Display **slide 11** and ask students to return to their **Always, Sometimes, or Never True** handouts from the beginning of the lesson. Tell students to review their original labels and make any changes they deem necessary to their labels or their reasoning. Allow students to share out their changes to the class.

Have students turn in their GRAPES handouts and/or their Two-Minute Papers for a formative assessment.

Resources

- Alexander, M. J. (2013, May). The Treasure of Spiro Mounds. 405 Magazine. <https://www.405magazine.com/the-treasure-of-spiro-mounds/>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Always, Sometimes, or Never True. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-Minute Paper. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152>
- Nichols, M. (2014, February 23). Spiro mounds excavations visits to resume in Eastern Oklahoma. The Oklahoman. <https://oklahoman.com/article/3936596/spiro-mounds-excavations-visits-to-resume-in-eastern-oklahoma>
- Oklahoma Historical Society. (2017, March 29). Spiro Mounds and archaeology [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEi8BIGcpc8>
- The Oklahoma News Report. (2013, January 8). OETA story on Highway 9: Spiro Mounds aired 12-14-12 [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP1h8bVhs7s>
- Roe, H. (n.d.). Photo of an engraved shell gorget with S.E.C.C. imagery from Spiro Mounds Oklahoma. Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6866521>
- Snell, T. (2011, February 23). Spiro started upward spiral in 700 A.D. Tahlequah Daily Press. https://www.tahlequahdailypress.com/news/features/spiro-started-upward-spiral-in-a-d/article_61c7d558-312e-5cb4-8165-13d086ddfc16.html
- Speer, B. (1982, September 12). Spiro mounds hold mystery. The Oklahoman. <https://oklahoman.com/article/1995755/spiro-mounds-hold-mystery>