

The Spiro Mounds Builders

Oklahoma History

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	90-120 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	2-3 class period(s)
Course	Oklahoma History		

Essential Question

How did the accomplishments of the Spiro Mound Builders and other pre-contact cultures shape life in North America prior to European arrival?

Summary

This lesson focuses on the accomplishments and culture of the Spiro Mound builders, as well as their impact on Oklahoma history. Students will begin the lesson by completing a short written activity that shows their prior knowledge. Next, students will watch an interview with a Spiro Mounds archaeologist and read about pre-contact cultures to learn more about how the Caddo tribe lived in the Americas prior to European colonization. To extend their learning, students will complete another brief written activity that will allow students to summarize what they have learned about the Spiro Mound builders and the importance of preserving pre-contact cultures. Finally, students will revisit their activity from the beginning of the lesson to reflect on how their understanding of pre-contact cultures has changed by using the S-I-T instructional strategy.

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 filling out 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 before completing a brief reflection activity.

Standards

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

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages
CLR403: Draw simple logical conclusions in more 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.1.2: Summarize the accomplishments of pre-contact cultures including the Spiro Mound Builders.

Attachments

- Always, Sometimes, or Never True (Teacher's Version)—The Spiro Mound Builders.docx
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True (Teacher's Version)—The Spiro Mound Builders.pdf
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mound Builders - Spanish.docx
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mound Builders - Spanish.pdf
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mound Builders.docx
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True—The Spiro Mound Builders.pdf
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer (Teacher's Version)—The Spiro Mound Builders.docx
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer (Teacher's Version)—The Spiro Mound Builders.pdf
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mound Builders - Spanish.docx
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mound Builders - Spanish.pdf
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mound Builders.docx
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer—The Spiro Mound 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 handout (attached, one per student)
- Always, Sometimes, or Never True (Teacher’s Version) (attached)
- GRAPES Graphic Organizer (Teacher’s Version) (attached)
- Internet access (to view the Jigsaw documents linked below)
- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Dry erase markers (optional)
- Dry erase pockets (optional)

20 minutes

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 lesson. 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 their thoughts for each statement with the whole class.

30 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 6** and pass out a copy of the **GRAPES Graphic Organizer** handout 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

The **GRAPES Graphic Organizer (Teacher's Version)** and **Always, Sometimes, or Never True (Teacher's Version)** documents 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

As students watch and listen to the archaeologist in the video, have them add relevant information about the Spiro Mounds to their GRAPES Graphic Organizer handouts.

After the video ends, display **slide 8** and ask students to share out any particularly interesting information from the video and explain how and why they categorized that information on their GRAPES Graphic Organizer handouts.

25 minutes

Explain

Display **slide 9**. Ask students to keep their GRAPES Graphic Organizer handouts with them as you arrange them into groups of four and assign each group member a number 1–4.

Teacher's Note: Using the Jigsaw Documents

Links and URLs for articles about the Spiro Mounds can be found 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 by Dennis A. Peterson (Oklahoma Historical Society)
2. Investigating Spiro Mounds by George Sabo III (Arkansas Archeological Survey)
3. The Treasure of the Spiro Mounds by M.J. Alexander (405 Magazine)
4. Spiro Mounds: North America's lost civilisation by Larry Bleiberg (BBC)

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

When students have completed reading and writing their summaries, display **slide 10** 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.

30 minutes

Extend

Ask students to get out a blank sheet of paper. Show **slide 11** 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 those found at the Spiro Mounds?" Students should use the Two-Minute Paper strategy to respond 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.

15 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 12** 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 the changes they made with the rest of the class. Encourage students to explain what led to the change in their answer.

Display **slide 13**. Using the S-I-T strategy, ask students to consider what they have learned about in this lesson and work independently to identify each of the following about the Spiro Mound Builders:

- A surprising fact or idea
- An interesting fact or idea
- A troubling fact or idea

Students can record their answers for the S-I-T Reflection on the back of their Always, Sometimes, or Never True handouts.

Once students have had enough time to record their responses, bring students back together to share their thoughts.

Conclude the discussion by noting that, in order to solve the issues facing our communities today, it is important to understand how things came to be the way they are now (in other words, our history). For Americans, understanding the relevance of slavery to the country's past will create opportunities now and in the future to better work toward a more just and equal society.

Have students turn in their GRAPES Graphic Organizer handouts, Always, Sometimes, Never True 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/
- Bleiberg, L. (2022, October 20). *Spiro Mounds: North America's lost civilisation*. BBC News. https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20210621-spiro-mounds-north-americas-lost-civilisation
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Always, sometimes, or never true. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/145
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- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179
- K20 Center. (n.d.). S-I-T. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/926
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Two-minute paper. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/152
- 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
- Peterson, D. A. (n.d.). | *Oklahoma Historical Society*. Oklahoma Historical Society | OHS. https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=SP012
- 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
- Sabo, G. (2017, June 26). *Investigating Spiro Mounds*. Arkansas Archeological Survey. https://archeology.uark.edu/who-we-are/50moments/spiromounds/