

Indigenous Voices: Crossroads between Monuments and Trees

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Abstract

In the United States, our educational system often neglects and fails to honor and recognize Indigenous Peoples as valuable contributors, and an integral part of our colonial and contemporary history. This unit titled *Indigenous Voices: Crossroads between Monuments and Trees*, is designed to challenge 5th to 8th grade students with three essential questions:

- 1) Whose history gets remembered with monuments?
- 2) How “missing narratives” are changing the public engagement with monuments and nature?
- 3) What student-actions can amplify and empower the indigenous voices?

The unit will allow students to analyze maps of the United States using Google Earth, evaluate how locations and sizes of monuments (like Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse) matter, and how the renaming of a national monument like the Little Bighorn Battlefield from the former Custer Battlefield, OR a tree in Mexico City from the Tree of the Sad Night to the Tree of the Victorious Night alter historical narratives and promote public engagement. Students will design an alternative for an existing monument as a culminating activity. The unit incorporates Social Studies Standards SS.5.A.2.3 (Native American cultures), SS.5.2.6.G (Civic participation), English Language Arts Common Cores Standards RL.5.6 (Point of view in literature), and RI.5.6 (Multiple accounts in Informational Text).

Chief Qwatsinas (a.k.a. Edward Moody, 1947-2010), of the Nuxalk Nation, British Columbia, Canada once said: *We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren, and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can't speak for themselves, such as the birds, animals, fish, and trees.*¹

One important educational aim of this unit is to provide teachers with content, strategies, lessons, and classroom activities using the concept of monuments and trees to raise student engagement, deepen their knowledge, and empower more civic actions. In turn, I hope to create opportunities for educators and their students to amplify the voices of Indigenous Peoples, and reinvent the social justice aspects of monuments and its relationship to nature.

Keywords: Indigenous People, monuments, Penn Treaty Tree, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse, Little Bighorn Battlefield.

Unit Content

Every year teachers across the United States (from kindergarten to college) are assigned to teach a course, a subject, or a topic that they know very little about. Everyone in education is aware of

this common “malpractice,” but frequently a forward-thinking mindset is missing to prepare and support teachers with deep content knowledge beforehand.

When it comes to Indigenous Peoples and their history, the challenges become even more “monumental,” because the majority of U.S. teachers (like myself) are not of Indigenous descent, thus don’t share their cultural background, and don’t understand fully the heritage and diversity of what it means to be Indigenous. According to a 2020 National Center for Educational Statistics report, there are about 3.5 million K to 12th teachers in the United States, but only a small percentage (0.5%) are American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN).² A 2013 database published by the National Congress of Indians identified more than 2,000 U.S. schools with mascots that are demeaning and offensive to Native Americans.³ Even though the majority of AI/AN students (close to 640,000 students in 2020) enrolled in public schools, AI/AN students are often a minority group within each public school.⁴ For instance, most of my students had never met a student, a teacher, or a person of AI/AN descent. As a 5th grade public school teacher in an urban setting, I’m currently assigned to teach the history of Native Americans as part of the Social Studies State Standards, and the book “In the Footsteps of Crazy Horse” by Joseph Marshall as the first novel study of English Language Arts curriculum. For these reasons, I decided to research and write a unit about Indigenous Peoples and monuments. This curriculum unit is designed with ten 45-minute learning sessions, and aims to help 5th to 8th grade teachers who have to teach the history of Native Americans. Students will analyze monuments, and explore the changing landscape of public engagement with three essential questions:

- 1) Whose history gets remembered with monuments?
- 2) How “missing narratives” are changing the public engagement with monuments and nature?
- 3) What student-actions can amplify and empower the indigenous voices?

According to the Amnesty International’s website (2022), there are approximately 476 million Indigenous Peoples worldwide; that’s 5% of the world’s population with a majority (70%) living in Asia.⁵ All together they represent over 5,000 different groups, 4,000 languages, and 90 countries.⁶ Although Indigenous Peoples live on lands that cover more than 50% of the world’s surface, they safeguard 80% of the planet’s biodiversity and legally owned only 5% of these lands.⁷ More than 20% of the carbon stored above ground is found in land managed by Indigenous Peoples in places like the Amazon Basin, the Congo River, and the wilderness of Indonesia.⁸ In the U.S., the majority of its biodiverse places are founded in national parks owned by the government. Currently, about a dozen out of indigenous languages spoken in the North America are at risk of extinction.

Based on the U.S. Census, the American Indian and American Native (AI/AN) population, *alone or in combination*, comprised about 2.9% (9.7 million) of the U.S. population in 2020, up from 1.7% (5.2 million) in 2010.⁹ In 2019, the largest AI/AN populations were in 10 states: Arizona, California, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas, North Carolina, Alaska, Washington, South Dakota, New York.¹⁰ As of 2022, there are 574 federally recognized tribes in 37 states, and 13% of AI/AN population lives in the 324 federally recognized reservations.¹¹ The alive, flourishing, and diverse cultures of Indigenous Peoples are often ignored, misrepresented or skimmed over through appropriation in the American school system. Due to generations of European colonial

exploitation, Indigenous Peoples all over the globe suffer higher rates of poverty, landlessness, malnutrition, displacement, illiteracy, unemployment and lower rates of life expectancy. Even though Indigenous Peoples continue to face the practices of exclusion, marginalization, and unequal access to services like education, they are the most active contributors in protecting our forests, and combating climate change due to their interaction with nature.

Monuments of Indigenous Peoples around the globe are often hurtful misrepresentations of Indigenous cultures, heritages, and voices. Indigenous Peoples are often stereotyped to be uncivilized savages, bloodthirsty warriors, with stoic emotions, exotic features, and names that must be anglicized or translated into English. For instance, the English name “Crazy Horse” was passed down to the Lakota leader later in his life by his father.¹² In most Native American cultures, a person’s name changes as the person changes. Crazy Horse was given the name *Čhán Óhaŋ* (*Among the Trees*) at birth, and had the nicknames *Pěhíŋ Yuháħa* (*Curly*) and *Žíži* (*Light Hair*) because of his lighter complexion and other physical features.¹³ His grandfather was also named *Thášúnke Witkó* (*literally means His Horse is Crazy*) and the name got passed down to his dad. When Crazy Horse showed to be a great warrior, his dad took the nickname *Waghúla* (*Worm*), and passed down the name Crazy Horse to him.¹⁴

During Colonial America (1492-1763), Native Americans did not view land as a private commodity like the Europeans did. For Indigenous Peoples, they generally understood that land is to be cared for through stewardship regardless of ownership. This idea was not understood and not respected by the European newcomers, resulting in brutal destruction and exploitation of the ancestral land of the Native Americans.

As a public-school teacher, I want my students to understand how national treasures such as the Statue of Liberty, the Liberty Bell, and the Independence Hall do not serve as symbols of freedom for ALL people. Many would view my beliefs as unpatriotic. From Mount Rushmore in South Dakota to Columbus Circle in New York City, Native Americans are faced with monuments that neglect their past and presence, celebrate genocidal figures like Hernán Cortés, and make false promises of peace with treaties and laws. When a society erects a national monument like the Statue of Liberty, but then goes on to exploit and mistreat its native peoples, as a teacher, I feel the moral responsibility to ask my students to think critically about what freedom is guaranteed to whom in America. In this curriculum unit, I will use monuments across the United States and Mexico to help students to understand the complexity of American history in regard to Indigenous Peoples.

My School Demographic

My school demographics represent a highly diverse community with a wide range of cultural and language backgrounds. The languages spoken by this diverse group of multilingual students, teachers, administrators, and parents include: Arabic, Burmese, Chinese, French, Hindi (India), Indonesian, Italian, Karen (Myanmar and Thailand), Khmer (Cambodia), Korean, Laos, Malays, Chichewa (Malawi), Nahuatl (Aztec/Mexica), Nepali, Pashto (Afghanistan and Pakistan), Poqomchi (Guatemala), Q’eqchi’ (Central America), Spanish, Swahili, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese, and other Indigenous languages. In 2020-2021, we have an enrollment of 419 students: 41% Hispanic, 38% Asian, 10% White, 8% Black, and 3% Multi-Racial.¹⁵ That’s 90% minority students. About 67% is ELL, 5% had exited out of ELL services, and 15% are children

of immigrants who are American-born (these students are NOT classified to receive English Language Learners (ELL) services, even though a language other than English is primarily spoken at home).¹⁶ That's an estimate of 87% of the student body is recent immigrants and/or children of immigrants. The student population is made up of 43% female students and 57% male students from K to 6th grades.

Content Objective

In the United States, our educational system often fails to honor and recognize native peoples as valuable contributors, and an integral part of our past, present, and future history. Before Christopher Columbus, Indigenous Peoples were in America for at least 30,000 years, but most textbooks continue to only emphasize 1776 as the most important start date of our history. Most children are taught that the “Pilgrims and Indians” were friends living in peace, and they celebrated the First Thanksgiving together with a big feast, but very few children are taught that the Pilgrims had also mistreated the natives, stolen their corn, robbed their ancestral graves, and even captured 27 Native Americans to be sold as slaves in England.¹⁷ Nowadays, there is a growing public consciousness that Columbus does not merely mark the arrival of Europeans in the New World on October 12, 1492, but also the onset of violence, exploitation, and great suffering from Indigenous Peoples across the Americas. An increasing number of countries in the Americas and several states in the U.S. have replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day to celebrate Indigenous Peoples across the Americas.

I believe it is important to see “heritage” are flexible, malleable, and in flux because “The past is not a simple, single temporal line, but rather one that is complex and twisted—one that starts and stops—and one that is differentially identified and recognized in the present.”¹⁸

Lesson 1: Monuments, Maps, and Locations

What is a monument? By western values and models, monuments are built to commemorate a person, group of people, or event and can come in many different forms, ranging from a mountain, a simple stone marker, an elaborate statue, a burial ground, a building, and a towering obelisk. Monuments can be catalogized into the followings: 1) statues, 2) memorials (burials), 3) historical buildings, 4) archaeological sites, 5) cultural heritage assets (natural, tangible, and intangible such as arts, artifacts, music, traditions, stories and traditions). To be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a monument must meet certain criteria to be nominated, and then the country in which the property is located can make a proposal for inscription.

A site must meet one or more of the ten World Heritage Committee selection criteria, be on a State Party's Tentative List, and go through a nomination process before being considered for inscription on the World Heritage List. A site can be proposed for inscription only by the country in which the property is located.

In the United States, the identification of national monuments began when President Theodore Roosevelt signed into law the Antiquities Act of 1906, and exercised his executive powers to create the Devils Tower National Monument on September 24, 1906.¹⁹ Between 1906 and 1909, Roosevelt created 18 National Monuments of which 5 are now National Parks.²⁰ To this date, a total of 201 National Monuments were created (161 by Presidents and 40 by Congress), but only

129 remains.²¹ Where did those 72 National Monuments go? Most of the 72 National Monuments were redesigned as something else. The breakdown reveals how the definition of what is a National Monument is in flux: 31 elevated to National Park status, 6 incorporated into existing National Parks, 11 converted to National Historic Parks, 6 transferred to state or local government control, 4 converted to National Historic Sites, 4 converted to National Preserves, 3 incorporated into a National Forest, 2 converted to National Wildlife Refuges, 1 converted to a National Battlefield, 1 converted to a Parkway, 1 returned to the Zuni Nation, 1 deauthorized as the land (was never acquired by the federal government), and 1 deauthorized due to mismanagement resulting in the theft of all the fossils it was meant to protect.²²

Whose land, and where are the monuments? In contrast to the western model, Indigenous Peoples often see the natural spaces as sacred and meaningful but not easily written down and identifiable, unless Indigenous Peoples are included in the discussion. In this way, an area of sacred land of trees and waters should also be protected, preserved, and commemorated for both the human and natural history. With that sensibility, Native Land Digital (<https://native-land.ca/>) was created in 2015 as an online platform where students can interact with maps of Indigenous territories, treaties, and languages, and locate themselves on the map.²³ Overall, the western model of monuments can be problematic and troubling for Indigenous Peoples. For instance, in Philadelphia, a prominent statue of William Penn is on top of the City Hall building, and two statues of Tamanend. Both statues of Tamanend are difficult to spot if you are looking for them. One statue is located on Market and Front Streets designed more for cars driving through a highway than pedestrians, and the other statue is hidden from view in the midst of overgrowth trees at Fairmont Park.

Lesson 2: Trees as Symbols and Places of Worship

Trees that stand for thousands of years are often treated as sacred symbols of renewal, inner strength, and life, and are entitled to special treatment and importance, similarly to ancient and unique buildings. Old-growth elms are traditionally found on college campuses. In the arboretum of Haverford College, there is an elm tree claimed to be the descendant of the Penn Treaty Elm where William Penn made a pact of unity with the Lenni Lenape Nation in 1682. In 1915, C. Cresson Wistar, Class of 1865, donated seven American elm grafts that were planted in a circle on the lawn behind Barclay Hall.²⁴ Each graft was treated as a descendant of the Treaty Elm, but six fell victims to Dutch elm disease. Today, only one majestic tree from the original seven is still standing and dominates the lawn.

An iconic painting titled “Penn’s Treaty with the Indians” by Benjamin West was commissioned by Thomas Penn, son of William Penn (Pennsylvania’s founder). The painting was completed in 1772, ninety years after the legendary meeting in 1682 between William Penn and Lenape Chief Tamanend at Shackamaxon on the Delaware River.²⁵ Under an elm tree (also known as the heritage tree, Great Elm at Shackamaxon, and Treaty Elm), two men from two very different societies made a pact to live in peace and friendship. Years later Penn’s son, Thomas, broke that promise by using the trickery of the Walking Purchase. The elm tree that served as backdrop for that promise, survived a wartime wood shortage, and grew in significance until it fell down during a storm over 200 years ago.²⁶ A tree has great symbolic meaning for the Native Americans. For instance, Native America gave John Hancock (one of our Founding Fathers) the name “Karanduwan” which means “The Great Tree of Liberty.”²⁷

In Mexico City, there is a large Moctezuma cypress tree that serves as a monument of Mexico's pride. Even though this giant tree has stood in the plaza only since 1921, it is claimed to be the descendant of the original tree under which Hernán Cortés cried after he suffered severe losses in a battle against the Aztecs in 1520.²⁸ On July 26, 2021, it was renamed from *Tree of the Sad Night* to *Tree of the Victorious Night*.²⁹ The renaming and change of plates show that the people of Mexico are aware that Mexico should not be saddened by the defeat of the Spaniards, but should rejoice in the victory of "the original peoples."

Lesson 3: Mount Rushmore v. Crazy Horse Memorial

Two of the most recognizable monuments of the United States are Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial; both located in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The large size of both monuments speaks of importance and power; most viewers are convinced that larger must mean more significant.

According to the National Park Service, over two million people visit it each year; visitors can walk up the 422 stairs of the Presidential trail and get close to the faces of the monument.³⁰ The construction of Mount Rushmore began during the height of the Great Depression, it took 14 years to completed, and was opened to the public in 1941.³¹ Four 60-foot tall granite faces of American presidents: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Abraham Lincoln were selected by the Danish American sculptor Gutzon Borglum and assisted by his son Lincoln Borglum and another artist named Ivan Houser.³² As the son of polygamist Mormons from Idaho, Borglum had no ties to the Confederacy, Borglum had white supremacist leanings and strong ties to the Ku Klux Klan, but these facts are usually omitted in textbooks, and public tours.³³ He once said, "I would not trust an Indian, off-hand, 9 out of 10, where I would not trust a white man 1 out of 10."³⁴ Above all, he was an opportunist. Borglum began carving Mount Rushmore in 1927 at age 60, and famously devoted the last 14 years of his life to the project.³⁵ His son, Lincoln, oversaw the finishing touches.

Most Native Americans view Mount Rushmore as a desecration and treaty violation of indigenous land. Six Grandfathers (Thunjkášila Šákpe) was a name given by the Lakota medicine man Nicolas Black Elk for Mount Rushmore, after he saw a vision of the ancestral spirits representing six sacred directions —west, east, north, south, above, and below.³⁶ Like human grandfathers, the six sacred directions symbolize kindness, love, and wisdom. In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* that the land was taken illegally, breaking the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868.³⁷

The Crazy Horse Memorial is only 17 miles southwest of Mount Rushmore, and its construction started in 1947 (six years after the completion of Mount Rushmore), and remained unfinished after 7 decades.³⁸ It is about 641 feet long, 563 feet high (27th highest mountain in South Dakota), made from pegmatite granite. Located in the heart of Black Hills of South Dakota with the GPS coordinates: +43.820279, -103.640092 and 6,532 feet above sea level.³⁹ Crazy Horse was a project that began with a letter from Chief Henry Standing Bear (1874-1953) inviting the sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski (1908-1982) to carve a memorial to honor the Native peoples, later transitioned to the matriarch Ruth Ziolkowski (1926-2014).⁴⁰ As of today, it is still a work in progress as the world's largest sculptural undertaking with the Ziolkowski family advancing the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation's mission.⁴¹ The Foundation is governed by a Board of

Directors that include Native and non-Native, but remains controversial that the Ziolkowski Family is continuing the project for self-interest and financial gains.

Lesson 4: Little Bighorn Battlefield and Bethel Burying Ground

In 1876, Lt. Col. George A. Custer and 263 soldiers of the U.S. Army died fighting several thousand Lakota and Cheyenne warriors at the Black Hills of South Dakota.⁴² On December 7, 1886, the site was proclaimed as the National Cemetery of Custer's Battlefield Reservation and later shortened to “Custer National Cemetery” to include the burials of Custer, the U.S. Army’s 7th Cavalry, and other campaigns and wars.⁴³ In 1991, the site was renamed Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument with a law signed by President George H. W. Bush.⁴⁴

The Bethel Burying Ground (1810-1864) in South Philadelphia may be the first independent cemetery for the internment of the African American community. It was purchased in 1810 by Bishop Richard Allen and the Trustees of Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, but burials stopped in 1864, and later in 1889 it was sold by Mother Bethel AME to the City of Philadelphia with the intention to transform it into a park.⁴⁵ At the time of its purchase, the Bethel Burying Ground was known as the Southwark District. It was a vibrant residential and economic center for the county’s free Black community with churches and affordable housing, and by 1820 the area was home to nearly 10,000 free African Americans – about two-thirds of the city’s Black population at that time.⁴⁶ This community also experienced strong and violent opposition. The remains of over 5,000 African American women, men, and children were left under what is now Weccacoe Playground – located at 400 Catherine Street in Queen Village – and the burial was rediscovered in 2013.⁴⁷ The Weccacoe (also spelled Wicaco) Playground was named by the first settlers of Queen Village; it’s a Lenni Lenape word for “pleasant or peaceful place.”⁴⁸ In 2020, four teams of artists were selected by the City of Philadelphia and the Bethel Burying Ground Historic Site Memorial Committee to design a public art memorial to celebrate the 5,000 African-Americans buried at the site, and the members of the public were invited to contribute feedback.⁴⁹ In 2021, Lead Artist Karyn Olivier and her team’s design were announced as the winning design.⁵⁰

Lesson 5: Student Designs of Monuments [plagues, replacements, and collages]

With the removal of Columbus Statues or other genocidal figures of Indigenous Peoples all over the globe (about 600 monuments), where do we go from here? According to a 2021 article from Bloomberg, there are 149 statues of Columbus, and more than 6,000 places named after Columbus in the U.S.⁵¹ According to the Philadelphia-based nonprofit Monument Lab, Columbus is the third most venerated figure, following Abraham Lincoln and George Washington.⁵² Since the American Indian Movement in the 1970s, at least 36 monuments of Columbus have been removed, but most Americans are not ready to let go of Columbus as their heroes. MIT researchers Elizabeth Borneman, Lily Xie and Hua Xi documented the history of “protests, takedowns and counter-proposals to the commemoration of Columbus” in their zine, *For We Never Wanted Him Here*.⁵³

On a busy traffic roundabout along Mexico City’s major boulevard (*Paseo de la Reforma*), a 1877 statue of Christopher Columbus (*Monumento a Colón*) was removed on October 10, 2020, originally for restoration to be carried out by the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH).⁵⁴ Two days later a protest erupted to show the public outrage against Columbus and

European colonialism. On September 5, 2021, Claudia Sheinbaum, Mayor of Mexico City and possible candidate in Mexico's 2024 presidential election, announced to replace the Columbus statue with *Tlalli*, a sculpture by the contemporary artist Pedro Reyes, of a large stylized indigenous woman's head based on ancient Olmeca heads to honor 500 years of indigenous resistance.⁵⁵ *Tlalli* (Earth in Nahuatl) sparked controversies about the motive of the announcement, the design, the sculpture's name, the artist selection, and the removal of Columbus. Pedro Reyes was criticized as a poor choice because he was a mestizo man who created a generalized portrait of an indigenous woman. A few days later, a petition signed by more than 300 people forced the government to announce *Tlalli* would not be the replacement.⁵⁶ Due to the controversies, the government postponed the installation and set up a committee to handle the situation.

On September 25, 2021, a group of feminist collectives crossed the fences that surrounded the Columbus monument and installed an anti-monument figure, a woman with one arm raised, the word "Justice" written on its support, and secured to the base with ties.⁵⁷ The figure was to honor the invisible Afro-Mexican and indigenous women who defended their lands, education, the right to life, as well as the women who were erased from history, the Zapatistas and the human rights defenders.⁵⁸ In addition, the protesters painted the names of dozens of missing and murdered women and the phrase *Glorieta de las Mujeres que Luchan* (Roundabout of Women Who Fight). The next morning the names were painted over by the city government retaliated and painted over the names. Hours later, the group of feminists returned and painted the names again, adding the phrase: "They will not erase us."⁵⁹ During a pro-abortion rally on October 3, 2021, the names were read aloud after being covered again by the city.

Later on October 12, 2021, the city announced that the Columbus statue would be replaced with *La Joven de Amajac* (*The Young Woman of Amajac*), a replica of a sculpture of an indigenous Huastec woman.⁶⁰ The piece was discovered in January 2021 in the Huastec region, and is now on display at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City.⁶¹ On October 30, 2021, feminist activists erected a temporary offering to honor the victims of femicide in the country.⁶² In March 2022, a feminist collective placed a new steel silhouette in the roundabout, larger than the first; as well as a clothesline with testimonies from 300 women where they reported cases of domestic abuse, gender violence, and femicides.⁶³ Mexico has one of the highest rates of violence against in Latin America; it is reported that at least 10 women (girls included) were murdered every day in the year 2020, and most of these crimes were not investigated.⁶⁴

Teaching Strategies:

This unit will focus on teaching strategies and performance tasks that promote students to: 1) locate and study sites that honor or discredit contributions of the Indigenous Peoples with online and hands-on maps; 2) read and research information about monuments; 3) debate over controversial monuments that warrant removal, and write a report; 4) design a monument dedicate to one's family culture, the school community, or the Indigenous Peoples of the United States. Indigenous Peoples' Day in October may be a good entrance point to introduce this unit. Please note: Indigenous Peoples' Day is also known as First People's Day, National Indigenous Peoples Day, Indian Day (Brazil), or Native American Day across the globe. I will implore the following teaching strategies:

Monuments as Primary Sources

Monuments are great primary sources for teaching and learning. Because photographs and videos of monuments are ubiquitous online and in print, students have easy access. Furthermore, most monuments belong to the public in terms of free accessibility and viewing, i.e. if you can get to the location, you can see it. In Philadelphia, I have the opportunity to take my students to see the following monuments related to this unit: statue of William Penn (top of City Hall building), statue of Tamanend (Market and Front Streets), statue of Tamenend (hidden in Fairmont Park), descendant of the Treaty Elm (Haverford College), and Bethel Burying Ground (Weccacoe Playground, 400 Catherine Street). Also, the painting “Penn’s Treaty with the Indians” by Benjamin West is in the permanent collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (Broad and Cherry Streets).

In the study of history, monuments are often treated as secondary sources that teach us the unchanging permanence of our past. Supporters of Confederate monuments often equate the removal of these monuments as a form of erasure of our American history, not understanding that there is a change to how people choose to interpret the past, and honor what and whose history got to be commemorated.

Paper Maps and Google Earths:

Getting to the physical location of any monument can be difficult due to transportation and time. Paper maps are a good substitute and can help students locate the monuments and visualize the distance from the city where they live. Also, free computer programs like Google Earths can give students a virtual tour from one monument to the next. Here is a link to a sample Google Earth’s virtual tour of indigenous monuments that I made for this unit:

<https://earth.google.com/earth/d/1XHQmvCEFYNI-YptSEJYPCV7ZvVKQwmIr?usp=sharing>

Research, Graphic Organizers, and Probing Questions:

Graphic organizers like a KWL chart will be used to define the term monument for Lesson 1. For Lesson 3, teachers can even generate a Venn Diagram to compare Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial at websites like GeoGebra, <https://www.geogebra.org/m/XUH9erSR>

When looking at a monument, teachers simply use the Notice and Wonder strategy with or without additional probing questions such as: 1) What is the dimension or area? How tall is it? 2) Who made it? Who pays for it to be made? For whom? Who is telling the story and who is excluded? 3) How was it made? What material is it made out of? How long did it take? 4) What history, memory, or idea does it depict? 5) What emotion does it evoke for you?

Debate and Writing:

Have students read an article(s) about the controversy regarding monuments. Here are a few sources: “The monument controversy nobody is talking about,” Washington Post (Prescott, 2022); “Cities add signs to Confederate statues to tell the full truth about them,” Newsela (2019); “Cities move to change schools named after Confederate generals,” Newsela (2017); “13 of the world’s most controversial monuments,” Insider (Shaw, 2020). After some student research, set up a debate like a Socratic Seminar or a circle meeting based on a controversial claim(s) or

question(s): Some examples include: 1) Confederate monuments and statues of Columbus should be left alone. 2) All public schools that named after a racist should be renamed to honor an indigenous person. 3) Mount Rushmore was designed by a racist and carved on stolen land. 4) A tree is not a monument; nature should not be claimed as a monument. 5) Public money should be used to build monuments like the 9/11 Memorial, regardless of cost.

Art Project in Three Approaches (Remove, Rename, Replace)

Have students choose a controversial monument or project like a statue of Tamanend, Crazy Horse Memorial, a tree like Mexico's Son of the Tree of the Night of Sorrows, Bethel Burial Ground, or a statue of Columbus. Use the "Rename, Remove, and Replace" approach: 1) have students to give the existing monument a new name or a new sign, and explain their reasoning. 2) have students figure out the steps to remove the original monument and what to do with it. 3) have students design, draw and write a description of a replacement monument.

Reflection Questions at the End of the Unit:

How do people choose (who and what) to remember and commemorate about our past, present and future? Name three events and/or people that were memorialized and explain why.

Name three artistic choices that a monument proposal should consider (Possible questions: has the monument been moved, restored, or altered, has the area where the monument is located changed since it was erected?) How did your research or in-person visit impact your experience? Name some controversial issues related to monuments. What do you think about the controversy after your research and experience?

Classroom Activities

Present the unit with the following three essential questions. Write them on a large chart paper, post it in the classroom, and revisit them throughout the unit.

- 1) Whose history gets remembered with monuments?
- 2) How "missing narratives" are changing the public engagement with monuments and nature?
- 3) What student-actions can amplify and empower the indigenous voices?

Lesson 1: Introduction

Part A: Using a KWL chart (see Visual Paradigm webpage <https://online.visual-paradigm.com/> for different templates), to write down what students Know, and what student Want to know. After each lesson, add what students Learned. Teachers may want to set up a collaborative group work with online programs like Jamboard, Padlet, or Google Slides. The following prompts may help students to focus and deepen the conversation: Define the term monument, list the different types of monuments, list all the monuments that they have seen or want to see. What does it mean to memorialize something or someone with a monument?

Part B: In small groups, give students a blank U.S. or World map to locate the most notable monuments. Reference and download a free poster (map) of landmarks from the ShareAmerica webpage <https://share.america.gov/download-this-free-poster-of-famous-u-s-landmarks/>

Lesson 2: Trees as Monuments

Part A: Show students the iconic painting “Penn’s Treaty with the Indians” by Benjamin West. Ask: What is the event? Who are the important people? Whose history get to be remembered, and who get to preserve and witness these public monuments? Have students read about the decedent (grandchild) of [Penn] Treaty Elm planted on the ground of Haverford College, and discuss why a tree that is not the original tree still possesses symbolic power and meaning.

Part B: Show students a photograph of the tree that was renamed as “Son of the Tree of the Night of Sorrows” and explain the reason why it was renamed. Ask students why changing the name of this tree monument was so important to people of Mexico. Have students come up with a new name for this tree that would create a narrative from an indigenous person’s point of view.

Lesson 3: Mount Rushmore v. Crazy Horse Memorial

Part A: Show a photo of Mount Rushmore. Ask students which Presidents are being depicted and who are excluded (women, indigenous people, Blacks, and other marginalized groups). Provide facts about the monument and the sculptor’s ties to white supremacy groups (See Content Objective). Ask: How size & location matter or not? Do the moral values and political views of the artist(s) and funders matter? Who gets to decide whose history is being remembered?

Part B: Show a photo of Crazy Horse Memorial and have students read a description about it (See Content Objective). On a Venn Diagram, ask students what are the similarities and differences between Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse Memorial. Ask: Should the Crazy Horse Memorial be completed using public funds? Why or why not? What are some criticisms from the Native American community?

Lesson 4: What’s in a Name?

Part A: After reading Chapter 9 of the book “In the Steps of Crazy Horse” about the Battle of Little Bighorn or a short article, show students an aerial map and different photos of the Little Bighorn Memorial. Point out that the name was changed in 1991 by President George H. W. Bush from “Custer National Cemetery” to “Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument.” What are the motives and reasons for the name change? Extension: For homework, ask students to interview their parents about the origin of their family name and/or their own name.

Part B: Introduce the history of Bethel Burying Ground (1810-1864) in the Weccacoe Playground. Explain that buildings, parks, and playgrounds are often built on top of burial grounds of Blacks, Native Americans, the poor, and other marginalized people. As a whole group, watch the 15-minute video that included four design proposals from four artist teams <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWaJ9b8W04w&t=207s>. Have students discuss in small groups the pros and cons of each design and record their response on a T-chart. Give students the opportunity to persuade each other before voting for their favorite design.

Lesson 5: Debate, Writing, and Student Design

Part A: Tell students that they will design (individually or in small group) a replacement for a Columbus statue that was removed in Mexico City or another controversial monument. Remind students how different the four proposals for the Bethel Burying Ground Memorial were. Have students watch a video(s) about the Glorieta de la Mujeres que Luchan, its temporary statue, and protests of a feminist-activist movement. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bt3Z-Bou0e0> (4:39 minutes). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBEwpHKaMts> (3:03 minutes). Suggest to students to use the “Rename, Remove, Rename” design approach: A short list of probing questions: Is your choice to replace, substitute an old monument with a new monument? What about leaving something (spaces) empty and alone? Should we use monuments to: 1) vindicate minority and non-hegemonic groups like the Indigenous People who were violated and denigrated, 2) reinterpret historical events and, 3) rescue cultures from oblivion, particularly indigenous women?

Part B: Plan a celebration to publicly exhibit the different student designs. Allow time and opportunities for students to present (informally or formally) their design and writing. Invite other classrooms, parents, administrators and other community members to the event.

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Appendix

Social Studies Pennsylvania State Standards:

SS.5.A.2.3: Compare cultural aspects of Native American tribes from different geographic regions of North America including but not limited to clothing, shelter, food, major beliefs and practices, music, art, and interactions with the environment. SS.5.2.6.G. Explain the importance of participating in government and civic life.

English Language Arts Common Cores Standards:

RL.5.6 (Literature): Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described. RI.5.6 (Informational Text): Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.