



# Sending Smoke Signals by Webcam

Donna Shafer, WVPT

## Overview

Topic: Native American culture and history. Students will create a Native American journal for use in social studies and language arts. Students will write and perform their own Native American-style stories after reading several examples. The lesson culminates with performing the stories for another class via web camera.

## Time Allotment

8-10 days (Not each part of the lesson requires a whole lesson block. The teacher may determine in how many days she would like to complete the lesson. The lesson also gives the option of extending into parallel social studies lessons.)

## Media Components

*Native-American Folktales.* United Learning. 1997. unitedstreaming. 28 August 2005  
[www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/](http://www.wvpt.unitedstreaming.com/)

Segments Used:

- Segment 1: Turkey Girl (Pueblo) (04:25)
- Segment 2: The Boy Who Loves the Bears (Pawnee) (04:58)
- Segment 3: Pelican Girl (Miwok) (06:03)
- Segment 4: Storytelling Stone (Seneca) (06:24)

Websites:

Technology Rich Native American Unit — How to make story bags. <http://faldo.atmos.uiuc.edu/CLA/LESSONS/449.html>.

Story and Memory — One website with links to Native American tales and background on oral storytelling. [www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/memory.asp](http://www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/memory.asp).

House of Hugs Spring Fling — Directions for making rain sticks. [www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8004/spring.html](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8004/spring.html)

Web camera  
Digital camera

## Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- create a personalized faux Native American journal
- revise and edit their own writing
- write their own original Native American tale
- use a story bag to perform their tale for their classmates and another class via web camera
- relate lessons in social studies about Native Americans to lessons in language arts on the same topic

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL History 2.2; English 2.1, 2.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.11, 2.12 )

## Materials

For Introductory Activity:

- Props for types of storytelling

For Learning Activity:

- A box of inexpensive tea bags
- Packages of lined paper, enough for each student to have several pages
- Old brown paper bags or rolls of postal paper, enough to make to two cover sheets for each student's journal



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- Baling twine, cut into three inch sections (multiply the number of students times three to get the correct amount)
- Rolls of waxed paper
- Crayons or markers for each student
- Brown lunch bags
- Empty potato chip can or paper towel rolls for each student (optional)
- Empty oatmeal can for each student (optional)
- Bags of split peas (optional)
- Several boxes of 1-inch nails (optional)
- Masking tape (optional)
- Glue
- Construction paper for each student
- Scissors for each student
- Hole punch
- Construction paper

### Teacher Preparations

1. Boil and cool containers of tea for aging the paper
2. Cut baling twine into sections
3. Collect brown paper bags or purchase postal paper
4. Make a story bag for your own story and materials inside to go with your story
5. Acquire a web camera and learn to use it. Contact a teacher at another school anywhere in the world and ask if your students can perform their stories for the class. If necessary, you could even perform the stories for another class inside the same school.

### Introductory Activity

What are some of the different ways we can tell stories? (List responses on the board. You might have some props to prompt answers when they start to run out—a DVD or VHS tape, a puppet or marionette, a dancer in a music box, a cassette or CD.) Do you like to tell stories? I do. I love to tell stories and listen to stories. Do you think anyone has ever lived who didn't like to tell or listen to stories? Why do you think we tell stories? What are your favorite stories? Why are they your favorites? What kinds of lessons can we learn from stories? Are stories meant

as lessons or just for fun? Can they be both? Is there a best way to tell a story? (Discuss.)

### Learning Activities

**1. Focus:** You know we are studying the Native Americans now. Do you ever wish you could be a Native American and do some of the things they did? Some of you might have had ancestors—family members who lived a long time before you—who were Native Americans. Just like all the other people who have lived on Earth, the Native Americans loved to tell and listen to stories. We are going to pretend we are Native Americans. We are going to make journals to write in when we study about the Native Americans, and we are going to also use our journals to make pretend stories—what we call fictional stories—just as they did.

**Activity:** Ask the students to put lined paper into cooled tea water to age it. Let it stand for 1-2 hours. At the end of that time, ask students to carefully lift the papers out and onto sheets of waxed paper on the floor to dry until the next day. Have a roll of paper towels handy for drips.

The next day, distribute old brown grocery bags or sheets of brown postal paper. Ask students to crumple the paper, then smooth it, to give it a look of faux leather. Show them how to position the paper to make a cover and how to use the hole punch on the cover.

(Optional) You can ask the students to create a Native American name for themselves and draw themselves as a Native American on the cover. (A more detailed lesson for creating a name and also examining the art of George Catlin is at [www.nga.gov/kids/catlin/catlin1.html](http://www.nga.gov/kids/catlin/catlin1.html).) You can also just ask them to decorate the covers with nature symbols or whatever you choose.

**Follow-up:** You now have a real Native American journal for writing your thoughts and stories as we pretend that we are Native Americans. Sometimes, when we are talking about the homes they lived in, the food they ate, the games they played, and all the things they did, I might ask you to write what you think about it or I might ask you to pretend you are doing the same thing and to write about it.

The journal may now be utilized in social studies and language arts as you go through your particular

unit on Native Americans. Put the journals away until the next day.

### Videostreaming

In order to use videostreaming interactively with students, teachers should use pre-segmented clips provided by the videostreaming company. If you wish to conduct a discussion before the clip is over and then resume after the discussion, use PAUSE, as this will cause the media player to remain at the current location in the stream. If the remainder of the video clip will not be used and the teacher wants to return to the beginning of the video clip, then use STOP so that the media player will revert to the beginning of the stream.

### Note to the Teacher

When video is a dramatic sequence rather than a documentary, the teacher may be justified in using longer segments. Be sure to provide specific focus tasks so that students do not lose the essential questions they are to discern from the drama, and use rewind and replay, when necessary.

### Note to the Teacher

Show the four segments of the United Streaming video *Native American Folktales*. You might choose to show them consecutively in one language arts block or in four different blocks. You will also find many folk tales in your library and online. One suggested site is “Story and Memory” at [www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/memory.asp](http://www.callofstory.org/en/storytelling/memory.asp). Decide in how many lessons you want to watch and read folk tales.

**2. Focus:** Would you like to hear some stories that the Native Americans told? You have been learning that where they lived influenced how they dressed, the houses they lived in, and the food they ate. Sometimes it also influenced the stories they told. For example, if you lived near the ocean, you might tell stories about the ocean and the creatures that live in it. If you lived in a forest, you might want to tell a story about the creatures that live there. Let’s begin with a story about bears. What are bears like? Would you ever be able to become friends with a bear? Why or why not? We’re going to watch this

story from the Pawnee about someone who became friends with a bear. As you watch, think about ways that the boy and bear were friends. Also, think about whether this story could really happen.

**PLAY** the clip, *The Boy Who Loved Bears* from the beginning. (04:25)

When it is finished, **STOP**.

**Follow-up:** In what ways were the boy and the bear friends? Could it have really happened this way? Since it probably couldn’t have happened this way, what do you think the Pawnee wanted people to learn from this story? What are some ways we can be friends with animals? Why should we be friends with animals?

**3. Focus:** At the beginning of the story, the narrator says, “Long ago the people could change themselves into animals.” Do you think this is a true story? Why would anyone want to turn into an animal? Would you? Which animal would you like to be? What kind of adventures might you have as an animal? As you watch the story, I want you to listen for the reason Pelican Girl found that she should listen to what her mother told her.

**PLAY** *Pelican Girl* starting at the beginning. (04:58)

**STOP** at the end.

**Follow-up:** Why should Pelican Girl have listened to her mother? How did her people rescue her? Why did Coyote turn the people into mice? Would another animal have worked as well? Which one? What would it have done instead of what the mice did?

**4. Focus:** Have you ever felt like no one noticed you? When was that? How did it make you feel? This video is about a girl who felt like that. Listen to see who noticed her and made her feel better.

**PLAY** *Turkey Girl* from the beginning. (06:03)

**Follow-up:** Did you think that was a sad story? I did, too. Why was it sad? Do you think the turkeys should have given her another chance? Sometimes animal stories are told to explain something animals naturally do. Do turkeys naturally run away from people? Should they? Why? If they didn’t run away from people, what would happen to them? Is everyone as nice to turkeys as Turkey Girl? After the story was over, do you think Turkey Girl learned to make friends with people? Tell me your ideas about how she made friends with people now that the turkeys weren’t her friends any longer.

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**5. Focus:** Listen for what made Flying Crow feel not so lonely. Raise your hand when you hear it.

**PLAY** *Storytelling Stone* from the beginning.

**PAUSE** the video when they raise their hands. Most likely it will be somewhere between 2:58, audio cue: "...it was his from that time onward" and 3:42, audio cue: "...soon fell fast asleep."

**Follow-up:** What is it that made him feel less lonely? What words help us know he is happier? Why do you think stories had this effect on Flying Crow? Do stories help you not to feel as lonely sometimes? Why do you think that is?

**6. Focus:** As I play the rest of the story, I want you to see what he puts into his story bag because you will be making a story bag of your own.

**RESUME** the video from the pause point. (3:42)

**STOP** at the end (6:25).

**Follow-up:** What did Flying Crow put into his story bag? Do you think that helped to make his stories more interesting? Why? Would you rather just listen to someone tell stories or see them use a puppet or a picture? Why do you think that is?

(End Viewing Activity)

**7. Focus:** We've heard a lot of stories that the Native Americans told. We've been pretending to be Native Americans ourselves, so I suppose that means it's about time we started telling our own stories. Let's think about some of the things we've seen and heard in the stories. (List them on the board). Would you like to start writing your own stories now? Let's not put them into your journals yet. You know when we've talked about writing we've talked about how it doesn't happen all at once, but over time. Let's take out a piece of paper and start our story by writing down who we think will be in it. How many characters are usually in these stories? (We usually see no more than two to four characters.) Who are your characters?

(You should also write your own story and let students see you doing it.)

After the students have written their characters down, SAY: Now write down what you think will happen to them. All good stories have some kind of problem to solve. Some problems are very big and some are very small. What kind of problem will happen to your characters? After they have written this rough draft, ask them to put it away for the day.

**Activity:** SAY: Remember the story you begin yesterday? I want you to take turns reading it to another student. You cannot talk while the other person is reading. When you finish reading, your partners should tell you three things that they would like to know more about in your story. When we have all had a chance to do that, you will have time to add those things to your story. After students have finished, put the story away for the day.

You should take the students through a daily revision process until each student is satisfied with his story. During the process, you might conference with each student and offer feedback, if that is possible. When you feel students have finished their stories, SAY: Now you can copy your finished story into your writing journal.

**Follow-up:** You have some wonderful stories. Stories are even more fun when we tell them. Did you notice in the video that the storytellers sometimes used music? Sometimes they also showed something from the story. It could even be a picture you made of a character. If you are telling a story about a bird, you might have a feather. I am going to give each of you a bag to decorate. You then need to decide what will go into the bag. We will go on a nature walk first after decorating the bags. I will then bring you back to class so you can use construction paper to make other materials you need. Distribute the bags and make markers or crayons available for decorating. You might also make other things available, like sequins, fake feathers, yarn, stickers, etc. When the students finish, go outside and let them look for materials for their stories.

When you go inside, put the bags away and tell students they can look for materials at home. The next day, make construction paper available to make anything they do not now have to tell their stories. (Optional) To provide background music and extend your social studies unit, you may have the students make instruments.

**A. Drums:** using an empty oatmeal can with construction paper glued to the outside and pieces of yarn or thong glued in Xs.

**B. Rain sticks:** Directions for making a rain stick are from [www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8004/spring.html](http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Valley/8004/spring.html): Cover the end of the cardboard roll with masking tape and then poke in one and half inch nails randomly all over the tube so that they go all the way into the tube but not out the

other side. Use quite a few to get a good sound effect. Then you put a half a cup of dried peas in the tube and tape up the other end. Have the children decorate the outside of the tube. You can use paper, fabric, or even natural things such as leaves, flower petals, etc. Turn the cylinder over and over to hear the rain stick sounds.

### **Culminating Activities**

**1. Focus:** I have some very exciting news. I have spoken to a teacher at \_\_\_\_\_, another school. His/her students would love to hear your stories. How could we be in their classroom to tell the stories? (Most students will probably answer field trip.) You are right. We could travel to their classroom. Or why don't we just call them on the phone and tell the stories. But they would probably rather see you telling the story, wouldn't they? I have an idea. Do any of you know what a web camera is? I have a web camera on my computer. When someone anywhere else in the world also has a web camera, we can talk to each other—and see each other! On \_\_\_\_\_, we are going to use our web camera to be in Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_'s room to tell your stories to his/her students. Would you like to do that? I am going to put you with a partner so you can practice telling your stories.

**Activity:** While the students practice, take digital photos of them and print them either at a photo developers, on a color laser, or on a black and white printer. The students can then glue the pictures into their journals or on the back.

**Follow-up:** When the students are ready, put on your show for the students at the other school. Make sure well before this date that you have both made a practice run with your web cameras and are comfortable using them. You may also want to ask a local technology person to be on standby in your classrooms the day of the performance to ensure that nothing goes wrong. You may also want to invite parents to the performance and ask another adult to videotape the performances. You could also videotape the performances during the rehearsals.

### **Assessment**

1. Completed journals with finished stories: 1/3 of grade
2. Completed story bags: 1/3 of grade
3. Participated in the story performance: 1/3 of grade

### **Community Connections**

1. Have students perform stories at a local nursing home or senior center.
2. Have students perform stories on the local news.
3. Invite an oral storyteller to class.
4. Have students visit a local museum or site devoted to Native American culture.

### **Cross-Curricular Extensions**

**Music:** Further explore Native American music and instruments.

**Geography:** Use a map to locate where the different tribes lived. Remind students which tribes told the stories they read.

**Math:** Students will use a ruler to measure the distances between the different tribes. The teacher will convert the inches/centimeters to miles. Students will compare the numbers to decide which tribes they have studied are the closest and farthest from each other.

**Science:** Discuss the habitat/environment in the stories they read and wrote.

**Art/Crafts/Performance:** Either bind written stories in a collection or make copies of the videotaped performances and share with other second grade classrooms in your district.

### **About the Author**

#### **Donna Shafer**

Donna Shafer just embarked on her newest adventure, teaching English to seniors and juniors at the new Massanutten Regional Governor's School for Integrated Science and Technology in Mt. Jackson. Donna also has a degree in history, which frequently creeps into her classroom discussions. In November 2004 she visited Japan for three weeks through the Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund. With her daughter Ashley she has also visited the UK, Paris, Italy and Greece. While in Rome this summer she visited the room next to the Spanish Steps where John Keats died. Donna also tries to incorporate technology into her lessons on a daily basis. In May 2003 she was awarded a grant to learn the craft of digital storytelling, a project her students always enjoy. She hopes that she teaches her students as much as they teach her every day.

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