

Activities to Pre-teach Vocabulary in the Native American History Case Study

The following vocabulary activities are based on words used in the Native American History case study. There are two vocabulary activities: (1) words that can be broken down into affixes, and (2) words that lend themselves to imagery.

Multisyllabic Words with Enduring Use

Activity Outcome

Students recognize word parts within multisyllabic words to quicken their comprehension of these enduring words in relation to Native American history and the histories of other marginalized groups.

Instructions for Activity

1. Distribute the vocabulary sheet to students.
2. Words used in this activity that appear in the case study: ratification, assimilation, coercive, dehumanizing, preservation, colonization, restitution, oppression, and suppression. Teachers may want to reduce the number of words or select specific words their students would need to learn before reading the case study.
3. Explain that the following words are used within the Native American History case study as well as frequently used to discuss the experiences of other groups of humans who have been outcast or marginalized throughout history. The selected words have multiple syllables and affixes that can be altered to change the use of the word. The task will be to break down the word to recognize parts we already know and then to play with the word parts to create new forms of the word.
4. Model the first word by thinking aloud through the steps to break down the word parts. Explain that “ation,” “tion” and “sion” all mean “act or state of doing something [verb]” and that many of the other words have this suffix. This is a resource to help a teacher prepare for this lesson: <https://www.etymonline.com/>. Teachers may want to allow students to use this website or a dictionary to look up the meaning of affixes.
5. Prompt students to work with a partner to break down the remaining words on their vocabulary sheet. As they break down the words, they will create word banks of prefixes, roots, and suffixes in a table.
6. Next, using the generated word bank of affixes, ask students to create new words from the parts. Then, select one new word or a word already on their list to write a sentence that shows context.

7. Prompt students to stand up, quickly put their hand up, and find a new partner to exchange their sentences (*Stand up, Hand up, Pair up* Kagan Cooperative Learning Structure).
8. As a lesson wrap up, ask students questions about how this process will help them reading in general when they encounter multisyllabic words (process) and how these words specifically will help them when thinking about the experiences of oppressed groups (content).
 - How does recognizing word parts in multisyllabic words help us when we are reading?
 - When you look across the meaning of these particular words, what types of experiences do you imagine some groups of people have had? What are examples you know about?

Resources for Activity

- Completed vocabulary sheet (draft for teacher)
- Blank vocabulary sheet (for students)

Completed Teacher Draft with Embedded Instructions

Learn-by-Watching

1. ratification

I ask myself, “what parts of this word do I already know or recognize?” Then, “I notice ‘ratify’ at the beginning. I know that ‘to ratify’ something means to make something official and often requires a signature or a vote. ‘To ratify’ is an action, so this means it is a verb.” Draw a line under ‘ratifi’.

1. ratification

“I also see ‘ation’ on the end.” Draw an L to break off the ‘ation.’ State that the ‘c’ is an extra letter to join the root to the suffix. *Note that the idea with this exercise is not intended to be a precise grammar lesson, but rather an exercise to notice familiar parts of words to aid comprehension when reading.* “The ‘ation’ is a common suffix and means ‘act or state of doing something,’ so this tells me that ratification means the act of making something official. When ‘ation’ is added to a verb, like ‘ratify,’ it turns the word into a noun.”

1. ratific ation

ratif- (ratify) make official; **ation-** act or state of

definition: the act of making something official

part of speech: noun

“Now, I’ll add these word parts to the affixes table at the bottom.” Next, prompt students to work with a partner to mimic the process you modeled in the Learn-by-Practicing section.

Learn-by-Practicing

2. as simil ation

ab(as)- to; **simil-** similar; **tion-** act or state of
definition: the act of making something similar or alike
part of speech: noun

3. coerc ive

coerce- to control; **ive-** pertaining to (its function is to turn a verb into an adjective)
definition: having power to control someone
part of speech: adjective

4. de human izing

de- take away; **human-** person; **izing-** doing the noun (its function is to turn a noun into a verb)
definition: take away human qualities
part of speech: verb

5. Pre serve ation

pre- before; **serve-** guard or save; **ation-** act or state of
definition: the act of guarding or saving something
part of speech: noun

6. coloniz ation

colonize- to settle with a group of people; **tion-** act or state of
definition: the act of colonizing or state of being a colony (group of people)
part of speech: noun

7. re stitu tion

re- again; **stit-** (statuere) to setup; **tion-** act of state of
definition: the act of setting up again or restoring something
part of speech: noun

8. op pres sion

op(ob)- against; **pres-** pressure; **sion-**act or state of
definition: the act of pressing down against someone

part of speech: noun

9. suppression:

sup- press down/hold down; **pres-** pressure; **sion-** act or state of

definition: the act of pressing or holding something down

part of speech: noun

Learn-by-Sharing

Task: Select one of the words above or use the word parts from the table below to create a new word. Then, write a sentence that includes context to show its meaning. Share your word and sentence with a new partner.

Prefixes	Roots	Suffixes
de-	ratify	-tion
ad- (as-)	simil-	-sion
re-	human	-izing
pre-	coerce	-ive
ob- (op-)	serve	
sup-	colony	
	restitute	
	press	

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Native American History Case Study

Vocabulary Sheet

Learn-by-Watching

1. ratification
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

Learn-by-Practicing

2. assimilation
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

3. coercive
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

4. dehumanizing
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

5. preservation
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

6. colonization
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

7. restitution
 - word part meanings:
 - definition:
 - part of speech:

8. oppression

- word part meanings:
- definition:
- part of speech:

9. suppression

- word part meanings:
- definition:
- part of speech:

Learn-by-Sharing

Task: Select one of the words above or use the word parts from the table below to create a new word. Then, write a sentence that includes context to show its meaning. Share your word and sentence with a new partner.

Word selected or created: _____

Sentence: _____

Prefixes	Roots	Suffixes

Word Associations with Imagery

Activity Outcome

Students imagine a vocabulary word that connects to Native American History in their minds and expand their awareness of synonyms or associated words for the selected vocabulary words.

Instructions for Activity

1. Distribute or display the vocabulary words and their meaning.
2. Discuss the meaning of each word.
3. Distribute or display the pictures for categories of words. Prompt students to connect the new vocabulary and two synonyms for the word to the pictures.

Resources for Activity

- Vocabulary words used in the case study and their definitions
- Pictures with several words to associate (images from Vecteezy.com)

Words and Definitions

Atrocities: extremely wicked or cruel acts

Nomadic: living a life with wandering or movement across land

Derogatory: a show of extreme disrespect for another person

Suffrage: right to vote

Word Bank for Associating Words to a Picture

atrocities	wandering	brutal
vote	nomadic	genocide
suffrage	abusive	transient
insulting	ballot	derogatory



Words and Their Meaning in Context

Words Included in the Vocabulary Activities		
Word	Meaning	Case Study Context
assimilation	the act of making something similar or alike	"While some non-American Indian run newspapers such as the Washington Herald reported on atrocities committed against American Indians, more typical coverage in US newspapers pushed the narrative that European colonizers were "helping" American Indians through assimilation into European culture and traditions."
atrocities	extremely wicked or cruel acts	"Americans committed constant atrocities against American Indians, such as the Wounded Knee Massacre."
coercive	having power to control someone	"From the 1870s to the 1960s, fueled by the incorrect belief that American Indians needed to be civilized by coercive education, nearly 300 boarding schools, many government-run, operated around the country."

The Native American History case study vocabulary activities were developed by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning Partners for the PBS NewsHour Classroom's Journalism in Action website. This partnership is supported by the Library of Congress's Teaching with Primary Sources Partner Program. August 14, 2025

colonization	the act of colonizing or state of being a colony (group of people)	“Alaska Natives have been fighting for the preservation of their land, their health, and their resources since colonization of their land began in the 1700s.”
dehumanizing	take away human qualities	“The article refers to Indian women using a term that many Native people regard as a dehumanizing slur.”
derogatory	a show of extreme disrespect for another person	“In 2021, Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, declared the word derogatory and ordered more than 650 natural sites renamed.”
nomadic	living a life with wondering or movement across land	“Native Americans have lived in the Western Hemisphere for 15,000-20,000 years and have developed many different societies, from nomadic hunting groups to highly-planned city-states, from the Aztecs to the Osage.”
oppression	the act of pressing down against someone	“As the civil rights movements of the 20th century advanced, protest by American Indians became a vital part of the re-examination of oppression in U.S. history.”
preservation	the act of guarding or saving something	“Alaska Natives have been fighting for the preservation of their land, their health, and their resources since colonization of their land began in the 1700s.”
ratification	the act of making something official	“After the ratification of the Constitution, settler-colonists continued to displace and murder American Indians to expand the territories of the United States westward.”

restitution	the act of setting up again or restoring something	“Inspired by civil rights activists and the anti-war movement of the 1960s, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was launched in 1968 to fight back against racism and poverty in Native American communities and to demand restitution for treaty rights long violated by the United States government.”
suffrage	right to vote	“She discussed women like Zitkála-Šá (Red Bird) whose powerful, poetic voice helped many understand why women’s suffrage was so critical to democracy as well as several modern-day Native women activists who continue the fight for civil rights.”
suppression	the act of pressing or holding something down	“ICT (formerly Indian Country Today) has a team of reporters who report on key issues facing American Indian communities ranging from the lack of health care during COVID on the Navajo Nation to issues like the suppression of the American Indian vote.”

Other Potential Challenging Words Used in this Case Study

Word	Meaning	Case Study Context
condescending	showing a superior attitude toward others	A question on the Chief Joseph Leads Nez Perce Magnifier Activity: Examine the adjectives used to describe Chief Joseph. Identify which ones you consider positive. Do you find any that are negative? Are there some that might be considered demeaning or condescending ?
demeaning	damaging the character, status, or reputation of something	
mythologizing	to create myths or stories about something	“Most American journalists showed heavy bias in favor of “westward expansion” and settler-colonialism by

		writing stories mythologizing cavalrymen like General Custer and the Indian Wars."
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