

CONTESTING HISTORY IN PUBLIC SPACES: VOICES FROM AFRICA AND BEYOND

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Grades: 10-12

Subject: World Cultures & International Politics

FOCUS

The unit highlights key issues associated with disputed artworks and memorials in the US and around the world. Students will have the opportunity to examine social, cultural, and historical dimensions of the debate with consideration of strategies for dealing with these issues. Students will weigh the impact of these contested histories on community identities and conclude the unit with a solutions-based dialogue on how the international community might come together to create more inclusive spaces.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF UNIT

- Students will be able to analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race and ethnicity. Students will apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.
- Students will be able to analyze the ways power constructs the social identities of race, and ethnicity.
- Students will evaluate ideologies present in language that construct relations of power between groups/countries, colonizers/formerly colonized.
- Students will examine how European economic and cultural influence dramatically increased through explorations, conquests and colonization
- Students will analyze African perspectives with consideration for resistance and contestation.

OHIO STANDARDS ADDRESSED

World History:

- The consequences of imperialism were viewed differently by the colonizers and the colonized.

Contemporary World Issues

- Individuals can identify, assess and evaluate world events, engage in deliberative civil debate and influence public processes to address global issues.
- Effective civic participation involves identifying problems or dilemmas, proposing appropriate solutions, formulating action plans, and assessing the positive and negative results of actions taken.
- Individuals can participate through non-governmental organizations to help address humanitarian needs.

BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

To successfully complete this curriculum students will need baseline knowledge of

- European Imperialism
- Media Literacy Skills: Comparing Point of View
- The structure of the United Nations
- Functioning of the United Nations and methods of debate and resolution writing

UNIT STORYLINE

LESSON TITLE/NUMBER	WHAT HAPPENS IN THIS LESSON?
I. Introductory Activities: Whose History? Whose Choice?	• Class discussion on examples of “contested history” in the US and around the world • Analyze materials to introduce the themes of power dynamics, social identities, and marginalized perspectives.
II. Choice Board	• Choice Board Completion • Research and project creation
III. Extension Activities: Understanding Art Repatriation	• “Three Corners” activity in response to various real-life scenarios connecting to cultural theft • Analyze Chimamanda Adichie’s speech to the Humboldt Forum
IV. Culminating Activity/Assessment	• Conduct a Model United Nations-style UNESCO debate on the repatriation of artifacts



VOCABULARY

Cultural heritage: physical artifacts (buildings, books, paintings), intangibles (songs, stories, beliefs) and natural items (animals, plants, places) that have been passed down through generations and are believed by a group or society to be important to their culture.

Repatriation: the return of something or someone to its/their own country

Restitution: to return something to its original owner, or to pay an original owner back for something taken from them.

Privilege: A special right or immunity granted to only a single individual.

Subordination: Placement in a lower rank or hierarchy

Ideology: A system of ideas or ideals

Race as a social construction: Race as a human-invented classification system. It was invented as a way to define physical differences between people, but has more often been used as a tool for oppression and violence.

Social Identity: People's self-categorization based on social surroundings and group memberships.



LESSON 1: Introduction & Foundational Knowledge

GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- What is contested history?
- How is cultural identity tied to these artifacts and spaces?
- How have the perspectives of marginalized groups been ignored in this debate through the years?
- How do ideologies and language construct power?

Time Period (approximate): One 90-minute class period

Instructional Procedures:

These activities will introduce the topic and provide foundational knowledge for the choice board.

1. **Introduce the lesson with a clip from [Black Panther](#) (0-1:14) and discuss the situation and meaning.**
 - a. What is happening in the clip?
 - b. What point of view is expressed by the museum curator? What is the perspective of the visitor?
 - c. How do you think the museum pieces reached that space? What is the point of contention?
2. **Whole class discussion about the concept of contested history in public spaces. [Show images](#) and discuss the significance of the Benin Bronzes and colonial statues in Africa.**
 - a. Students will complete a [“See, Think, Wonder”](#) Jamboard as a class while we work through the images and video clips. Students should add at least two sticky notes to each column on the board. The teacher will pause periodically to allow students to add to the board.

- b. The Teacher will ask open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking to introduce the themes of power dynamics, social identities, and marginalized perspectives.
 - i. What is power? How have colonial powers exercised their authority in tangible and intangible ways throughout history?
 - ii. What does it mean to be marginalized? How do you see the concept of marginalization in these scenarios?
 - iii. How are historical monuments and cultural artifacts tied to social identity?
- c. Provide context on contested spaces and their historical significance in the slides. This discussion will serve as a foundation for the activities on the choice board.

3. View Media Clips on Contested Monuments and art repatriation

- a. [Mexico Removes Columbus Statue Before Annual Protest](#)
- b. [The British Museum is Full of Stolen Artifacts](#)
- c. [Shadow on the Land. PBS](#)
- d. [This timeline shows that Confederate Monuments are about Racial Conflict](#)
- e. Questions
 - i. Why are these monuments contested?
 - ii. What strategies do people use to challenge the meanings of these monuments?
 - iii. How do histories of race and racism impact this issue?
 - iv. What choices by the filmmaker (e.g. facts, images, script) reflect their biases?
 - v. What is the message behind the artwork described in “Shadow on the Land?” How do you feel about this as a solution to the conflict over the Captain Cook statue?
 - vi. How have changes in political perspectives and power changed people’s perspectives?

4. Whole-Class Discussion

The Instructor will ask students to generate examples of each category of cultural heritage that they believe is important to the United States, and to their state.

- a. What are some examples of (physical, intangible, natural) items that are important to American cultural identity? Are those items viewed in the same way by all citizens of the United States?

- b. What are some examples of (physical, intangible, natural) items that are important to (Ohioan) cultural identity?"
- c. Examine these two sources covering the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina State House. What similarities do you notice about the pieces? What differences can be noted between the accounts? How are Bree Newsome's actions characterized differently in each piece? How does the language and use of information in the piece persuade the reader?
 - i. [Fox News Headline](#)
 - ii. [Democracy Now Interview](#)
- d. Is there a universally agreed upon "American Cultural Identity?" Why or why not?

Formative Assessment:

The class will discuss the collaborative ["See, Think, Wonder"](#) Jamboard to reinforce concepts and clear up misconceptions.



LESSON 2: Contested History Choice Board

GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- What is art repatriation and what are the remedies?
- How do cultural lenses and history impact point of view?

Time Period: 2 weeks (Five 90 minute Periods)

Instructional Procedures:

Teacher Notes: Students will select three activities from the choice board to further explore the content and apply their knowledge.

1. Provide Student Directions:

- a. Review all of the options on this [CHOICE BOARD](#)
- b. Select three of the activities to complete over two weeks.
- c. One of the three must be an introductory activity from the top row
- d. Be prepared to share one of your products with the class. You may begin your research with [these resources](#)

2. Choice Board Conclusion:

- a. Students will present the product of their choice to the class. They should be prepared to connect the project back to the unit standard.
- b. The teacher will make a display of artifacts presented to display in the classroom.



LESSON 3: Extension Activities

GUIDING QUESTION(S):

- What are the ethical considerations associated with ownership of cultural artifacts?

Time Period: One 90-minute class period

Instructional Procedures:

1. Complete a “Three Corners” activity using the scenarios in slides 1-11 in [this Powerpoint](#) and discuss how students would react in each of these scenarios.
 - a. Students physically move to three different areas of the classroom based on their response to the questions on the slide.
2. Read excerpts from [Chimamanda Adichie’s lecture to the Humboldt forum](#). Discuss the following:
 - a. What is an Ikenga? What is Adichie’s purpose in telling the story of the elderly man fleeing his home? What does the Ikenga represent to him? Beyond tangible or monetary loss, what else is lost when artifacts are held outside of their home countries? What is the impact of this loss?
 - b. Why is Adichie shocked by the curriculum in Belgian schools? What is “the story” that Europe tells itself about colonialism according to Adichie? How does this connect to the repatriation of artifacts?
 - c. Adichie says “*if we acknowledge that present-day Europe is shaped by the Renaissance of 600 years ago and the Enlightenment of 300 years ago, then we surely cannot say that what happened in Africa 100 years ago no longer matters... We cannot pick and choose which histories and points of view still matter because to do this would be an ugly exercise of brute power.*” How does she use this argument to disprove the European “story of colonialism?”

- d. Adichie urges nations to “fully own” all of the stories of their past, even those that they are not proud of and would rather forget. How does this connect to the study of contested histories?
- e. What argument is Adichie making when she quotes Viktor Hickameno regarding returning his “wrapper?” How does Europe’s story of itself conflict with their actions regarding African artifacts?



ASSESSMENT

Culminating Activity: Model UN UNESCO Debate (Two 90 minute Class Periods)

Students will apply their knowledge of issues associated with contested histories in a Model UN style debate on the issue of restitution of cultural property.

- Pairs of students will each be assigned a different country to represent in a Model UN style debate.
- Students will be familiar with the debate procedures and expectations as they have participated in this style of debate numerous times.
- Students will have prior knowledge of the structure of the UN Security Council and recommended reforms.
- Students will use this [background guide](#) to gain an understanding of the issue. They will respond to the following questions:
 - How do we define cultural ownership in the 21st century? Are the lines clear cut, given that cultures do not always line up with the current boundaries of nation-states?
 - Who decides the right to ownership? Aside from tangible loss, what else is lost when people's cultural artifacts are held away from their place of origin?
 - How can all nations support the developing world in preserving cultural heritage?
 - How and where can art best be appreciated?
 - What kinds of policies and procedures can be put in place to ensure proper provenance and ethical placement of artifacts?

The debate will culminate with a resolution that is written and agreed upon by a majority of the class. This written document will recommend solutions to reduce conflict over this issue.

Assessment Rubric:

Approaching Standard		Meets or Exceeds Standards
	Stayed in role at all times	
	Substantive participation at least three times in the debate (min)	
	Followed speaking protocol	
	Consistently listened to others during the debate	
	Suggestions employ relevant strategies for handling disputes with consideration for historically marginalized voices and colonial power dynamics	
	Participation in Resolution writing	
	Inclusion of unit vocabulary, key ideas and real-life examples in writing and speaking. (Examples: race, power, repatriation, contested history, restitution etc.)	



DIFFERENTIATION FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Reading Levels: Provide articles or texts at different reading levels, and allow students to choose the one that suits them best.

Scaffolded Graphic Organizers: Provide graphic organizers for students who may need additional support in organizing their thoughts.

Collaborative Pairings: Pair students with varying abilities, allowing them to learn from and support one another.

Flexible Due Dates: Offer flexibility in due dates, providing extended time for students who may need it.

Opportunities for Revision: Students will have one opportunity to revise submissions that do not meet standards.

Choice of Medium: Allow students to choose how they want to present their work (e.g., written, visual, oral) to cater to different strengths and preferences



MATERIALS

Lesson 1:

- [Black Panther](#) (0-1:14) Clip
- [Contested History Slides](#) and discuss the significance of the Benin Bronzes and colonial statues in Africa.
- [“See, Think, Wonder”](#) Jamboard as a class while we work through the images and video clips. Students should add at least two sticky notes to it.
- Video Clips:
 - [Mexico Removes Columbus Statue Before Annual Protest](#)
 - [The British Museum is Full of Stolen Artifacts](#)
 - [Shadow on the Land. PBS](#)
 - [This timeline shows that Confederate Monuments are about Racial Conflict](#)

Lesson 2:

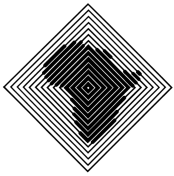
- Project [CHOICE BOARD](#)
- [Student Research Materials](#)

Lesson 3:

- [Fictional Scenarios Powerpoint](#) for “3 Corners” Activity
- [Chimimanda Adichie’s lecture to the Humboldt forum](#) (text) or [Video Lecture](#)

Lesson 4

- [UNESCO Background Guide and Sources](#)



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