



# Ethnic Studies Lesson 2F: Native American Contributions to WWII

**TOPIC:**

NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY

**GRADE LEVELS:**

11-12

**TIME:**

1½ HOURS

## California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

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**Themes:**

1. Identity
2. History and Movement

**Values and Principles:**

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.
3. Center and place high value on the precolonial ancestral knowledge, narratives, and communal experiences of Native People/s and people of color and groups that are typically marginalized in society.

## California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

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**English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):****Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)**

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging (RI.11-12.5).

**Writing—(W.11-12)**

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence (W.11-12.1).

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience (W.11-12.5).

***Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):***

**History-Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

Analyze the significant events, including military campaigns and battles, of World War II and their impact on American Indian communities, particularly the contributions of the Navajo or Diné People (History-Social Science Content Standard 11.7).

**Lesson Purpose**

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Students will be able to evaluate the concept of “warrior” and the contribution of American Indians—especially the Navajo or Diné People—to World War II.

**Essential Questions**

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*How did the Diné People use their language to help in World War II? How did they respond to this request after language removal during the Indian boarding school period?*

*What does the term warrior mean? Why do Native American youth continue to serve in the military in high numbers?*

*How has life changed for American Indians in the United States over the last 350 years?*

**Materials**

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[Military Times \(November 15, 2019\), A “Warrior Tradition”: Why Native Americans continue fighting for the same government that tried to wipe them out](#)

[PBS: Native Americans and Stereotypes: The Warrior Tradition \(18 minutes, 29 seconds\)](#)

[KWL Chart](#)

[Worksheet](#)

[National Museum of the American Indian](#)

**Vocabulary**

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Pacific war	demographic	veteran
Diné People	warrior	culture

**Lesson Steps**

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***Step 1:***

- Depending on the amount of time available for your lesson, you may have had students read *Code Talker* by Joseph Bruchac, done a read-aloud of *Navajo Code Talkers* by Nathan Aaseng, or watched the longer version of the PBS documentary [The Warrior Tradition](#). All of these were mentioned in the first lesson of the Native American unit and could have been conducted during the previous few Native American lessons.
- Ask students what they already know about Native American service during World War II or about the Code Talkers. As a class, have students watch [PBS: Native Americans and Stereotypes: The Warrior](#)

[Tradition](#) (18 minutes, 29 seconds). Show students this unit’s Worksheet. Form students into five groups. Students will view the following two resources in order to complete the answers on their group’s copy of the worksheet.

- [Military Times \(November 15, 2019\), A “Warrior Tradition”: Why Native Americans continue fighting for the same government that tried to wipe them out](#)
- [National Museum of the American Indian](#)

**Step 2:**

- When students have completed their research, post large poster paper around the room with one of the worksheet questions on each of the five charts. Have students write their groups answers on each of the five charts. Have students walk through the posters and put their questions on sticky notes on each poster. As a class, have students listen to the teacher call out the responses and questions to the group.

**Step 3:**

- As a class, ask students this unit’s questions, “How did the Diné People use their language to help in World War II? How did they respond to this request after language removal during the Indian Boarding School period? What does the term ‘warrior’ mean? Why do Native American youth continue to serve in the military in high numbers?” and this unit’s question, “How has life changed for American Indians in the United States over the last 350 years? Add questions and answers to this unit’s KWL chart.

## Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

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If students read *Code Talker: A Novel about the Navajo Marines of World War Two*, by Joseph Bruchac, as suggested in lesson 2A, have students write their reflection on the book.

If time permits and for homework, print a copy of [“Semper Fidelis: Code Talkers”](#) and have students select a page to create black-out poetry. Explain the Congressional Medal before students begin to circle words that reflect their understanding of the Code Talkers. Students can black out all other words and decorate the page to honor the recipients. Encourage students to see if their words can create a poem. See these tutorials on blackout poetry [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). Have students read their poems out loud and post in the classroom. Consider reading these original poems about the [Code Talkers: Navajo Code Talkers | Poem](#) and [Navajo Code Talkers](#).

## Additional Readings and Resources

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Aaseng, Nathan. *Navajo Code Talkers*, foreword by Roy W. Hawthorne (Diné). Walker, 1992.

[American Indians in Children’s Literature—Review of Code Talker literature](#)

Bruchac, Joseph (Abenaki). *Code Talker: A Novel about the Navajo Marines of World War Two*. Dial, 2005.

[How to Blackout Poetry | Arapahoe Libraries](#)

[Jevc, Adam. “Semper Fideles: Code Talkers.” \*Prologue\* 33, no. 4 \(Winter 2001\).](#)

[Navajo Code Talkers | Poem](#) and [Navajo Code Talkers](#)

[PBS: The Warrior Tradition \(54 minutes, 51 seconds\)](#)

[What Is Blackout Poetry? Examples and Inspiration | Writers.com](#)

**NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES:** America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

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Answer the following questions, after watching the video and visiting these websites: [Military Times, A 'Warrior Tradition,'](#) [The National Museum of the American Indian,](#) [Why We Serve.](#)

1. What were some of the reasons that Native Americans joined the military in World War I and World War II?
2. What do you believe being a warrior means? What do you believe Native Americans might think being a warrior means? Are the words *soldier* and *warrior* interchangeable?
3. Describe how the Navajo—Diné People—used their language to help in World War II. How was this kept secret?
4. Why was the use of their language during World War II important for a sense of pride to the Diné People?
5. Why do you think that Native Americans continued to enlist in the military in higher percentage numbers than other groups in the United States?

### Ethnic Studies 2A: KWL Chart

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**KNOW**

**WONDER**

**LEARNED**

<p><i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i></p>	<p><i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i></p>	<p><i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i></p>