

Teaching About the Black Olmecs

Using National , State and Chicago
Academic Frameworks to teach and
write about Blacks in Ancient History

Critical Thinking Skills

- Promote a lifetime of learning
- CT questions encourage students to analyze, compare and make independent judgments about the past, present and future.
- Main Idea Question: How did the Olmecs build their pyramids?
- Critical Thinking Question: How do Olmec artifacts provide evidence the religious ideas of this ancient American people?

Goals for World History from National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools

- Emphasize major civilizations
- Review transition from hunter-gatherer to Agriculture
- Describe salient characteristics of classical civilization
- Make understood the uniqueness of each culture
- Acknowledge the links between ancient civilizations
- Understand the growth of bureaucracy and codification of laws

Standards in Historical Thinking

- I. Chronological thinking-Distinguish past and present; identify historical narrative
- II. Historical Comprehension- Identify central historical questions
- III. Make Historical Analysis and Interpretation of document or narrative
- IV. Demonstrate Research Capabilities- Formulate questions; Obtain historical data; Identify issues/ problems

Study of the Past is important and provides a

- Sense of personal identity
- Sense of national identity
- Sense of personal identity
- Relevant to understanding contemporary society

Amos Wilson, The Falsification of African Consciousness.

- History maintains white supremacy
- Every Course in school stimulates the study of ancient white/European History
- **Study history because**
- Provides concrete reality
- Ensures survival of Afro-Am people
- Gives a sense of wholeness
- Connection between History and Economic Power
- Knowledge of History situates a people

Engaged Learning Activities

- Doing vs. Absorbing Information
- Allow multiple ways to demonstrate competence
- Reading to Writing Process
- Read Aloud
- Organize communities of learning (COL)

Four Predicted Afrocentric Ancient History Paradigms

- If Blacks founded civilization in Egypt and West Asia they may have influenced the rise of American civilization
- Archaeological data will support the founding of early civilizations by Blacks
- Blacks probably invented much technology
- Blacks founded other Asian/European Civilizations

Teaching Strategies

- Read selected chapter in history text relating to the Olmecs
- Use lecture to provide overview
- Use regular Social Science Text for background on Meso-American geography

STRUCTURED CURRICULUM LESSON PLAN

Day:

Subject: Social
Science

Grade Level: 6

Correlations (SG,CAS,CFS): 16A4

ITBS/TAP:

People who have shaped
history

IGAP:

Understand/analyze
events,trends,personalities,
and movements shaping
history

Unit Focus/Foci

River Valley Civilization/ Ancient America

Instructional Focus/Foci

Reconstructing Patterns of Historical Succession and
Duration: Multicultural Exercise “Blacks in Ancient
America

Materials

Blackline Master: “Blacks in Ancient America”
background selection for teachers relating to the
existence of Blacks in ancient America.

E d u c a t i o n a l S t r a t e g i e s / I n s t r u c t i o n a l P r o c e d u r e s

Review concepts introduced during previous lessons by inviting students to briefly share and discuss completed homework assignments.

O v e r v i e w

In 1200 B C a new civilization fully blown appeared in Mexico. This new civilization characterized by gigantic stone heads depicting African rulers introduced architecture, long-distance trade and numerous religious ideas to many later American civilizations. The Olmec worked many fine artifacts in jade and other material, which are inscribed with writing which tells us much about their civilization and polity.

T e a c h

Have students review the chapter in their textbook discussing the Olmec civilization. Have students complete the reading and then use the black-line Master "Blacks in ancient America".

Students will understand that the first civilization of America was the Olmec civilization. They should learn that the Olmec people came from Africa by boat around 1300 B C .

Explain to the students that the Olmecs invented the first writing, architecture and religious ideas of the Meso-Americans. They should also learn that the name of the Olmecs was: Shi (Shee).

Integration with Core Subject(s)

LA: Compare and contrast themes and relationships present in a variety of historical periods

Connection(s)

Enrichment:

Visit the library and find out more information about African/Blacks in ancient Mexico and South America.

Student Evaluation

- Make up Questions for Homepage
- Write research Reports
- Make Oral Reports
- Make Graphic Organizer of Key Points
- Use Jig Saw Method-each member of the group learn material to teach entire group
- Use homepage to write stories

Conclusion

- Olmec built earliest substructure pyramids at Mayan sites
- Olmec and Maya lived in bilingual community
- Mayans adopted Olmec writing changed many signs to reflect their own cultural identity
- Maya attracted to Olmec centers to acquire Olmec luxury items and agricultural techniques introduced to Mexico by the Olmecs
- Mayans probably taught Olmec writing at educational centers in Mexico i.e., Comalcalco