

Lesson: Totem Puzzle Activity

Relevant Learning outcomes (italics added):

- Grade 6: Relate a *society's artistic expression to its culture*
- Grade 8: Describe how societies *preserve identity, transmit culture, and adapt to change*
- Grade 9: Describe how *different forms of artistic expression reflect the society in which they are produced*
- Grade 6 & 7: Apply *critical thinking skills*—including comparing, classifying, *inferring, imagining, verifying, using analogies, identifying relationships, summarizing, drawing conclusions*—to a range of problems and issues.

Introduction (adapt to fit students, using your own words):

Teacher: "Historians who wish to learn about the human story often find puzzles—bits and pieces that they assemble in order to figure out what part of the story they represent. Let's take a look at what this might look like...."

Body:

Preparation:

Provide students with a visual representation of a disassembled totem. Identify and record one feature you observe (e.g., figure with beak and ears). Ask students for some additional observations. Record students' observations. Identify and record one inference that you think follows from your observation. Explain to students how you formed your inference (e.g., First Nations' thunderbird crest--you have seen similar figures on the Nisga'a website and elsewhere). Invite students to demonstrate understanding by sharing additional inferences and relevant support. Model assembly of the totem. Display the following questions and ask students to use the Nisga'a website and their own ideas to help them answer the questions:

1. To which First Nations' clan does your selected totem belong?
2. What do the figures on the totem mean to that clan?
3. Why might recovering the totem and its stories matter to members of that First Nations' clan?

Application: Invite students to work alone or with a partner, select one of 3 totem puzzles to solve, and find the answers to the 3 questions. Invite students who finish early to try other totem puzzles. Circulate and check for understanding. Guide students as needed.

Closure:

Invite students to share their assembled totem puzzles, clues they used to help them, answers to the questions, and how they figured out the answers. For next session: Ask students to be ready to share their ideas about:

- Why recovering and preserving the totems and their stories might matter to people within a cultural group?
- How this kind of knowledge contributes to the human story?

Evidence of learning outcomes: Accurate totem puzzle, relevant clues, accurate responses to questions #1-2; plausible response to question #3.