

Lesson 1: People of the Shining Mountains

Summary Lesson 1: People of the Shining Mountains

The Utes are the oldest continuous residents of Colorado. Their origins are not known with certainty. Many scientists assert that their ancestors were among the Asians who crossed the Bering Straits, while others disagree sharply with this theory. American Indian people have their own creation stories. The language of the Utes is part of the Numic branch of the Ute-Aztecan language family. As nomadic people of the Great Basin, they ranged over most of present-day Colorado and parts of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico. The small Southern Ute Reservation and Ute Mountain Ute reservation are the only two reservations in Colorado today. This lesson introduces the Ute people and their history and traditional cultures.

Addressing the Curriculum Standards

1. Students will recognize that the Utes are the oldest continuous residents of Colorado. (DPS History Standard 1)
2. Students will locate the traditional Ute lands on a map. (DPS Geography Standard 1)
3. Students will locate the present Ute Mountain Ute Reservation and the Southern Ute Reservation on a map. (DPS Geography Standard 1)
4. Students will demonstrate their understanding of how the bands of Ute people and their early nomadic life was an adaptation to the environment of the Great Basin and mountains of Colorado. (DPS Geography Standard 2)

Specific Content Knowledge

1. The Utes are the oldest continuous residents of Colorado.
2. They live in the Great Basin cultural area.
3. Creation stories tell of the beginning of the Ute People. However, scientists believe there may never be enough evidence to know for certain the origin of the Utes. However, it is likely Ute ancestors were among the Asians who crossed the Bering Straits and slowly wandered south, following the animals to a warmer climate. Some of the ancestors of the Utes could have been Mayans and Aztecs of Mexico, or the Fremont people who inhabited northeastern Colorado. The Southern Ute believe they first came to Colorado from the north and the west, and perhaps the coming of the Utes was the reason for the Ancestral Puebloans to move from their homes in the cliffs.
4. There are two Ute Reservations in Colorado - the Southern Ute Reservation is located entirely in Colorado and the Ute Mountain Ute Reservation is located in Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico.

5. Both tribes speak the Ute language, which is part of the Numic branch of the Ute-Aztecan language family.
6. The Utes were called “Yutas” by the Spanish. They call themselves “Nuche”, meaning “The People.”
7. Their original lands were enormous; they regularly ranged over most of present-day Colorado and parts of Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico.
8. The Utes have never been a unified tribe; they have seven “bands” that generally lived in different locations primarily for economic reasons.
9. Two bands, the Mouache and the Capote, are now called the Southern Utes. One band, the Weeminuches, are now called the Ute Mountain Utes.
10. Before they obtained horses from the Spanish, they were a nomadic people. Staying in one place would mean starvation. Survival was uncertain.
11. The bands rarely came in contact with each other. They did come together in the Spring for the annual Bear Dance.
12. The Utes are often called “People of the Shining Mountains” or the “Blue Sky People.”

Resources/Materials

Books

Dutton, D. & Humphries, C. (1999). A rendezvous with Colorado history. Boise, ID: Sterling Tie.

Maps

Map of traditional Ute lands (Marsh, 1982, p. 20)

Teachers’ Resources

Teachers are encouraged to watch the following video before teaching this section of the curriculum.

Anderson, P. (Producer). Ute legacy.

Wheeler, C. (Director). (1993). Ute: The Utes must go!. Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Video. (How The West Was Lost). (50 minutes)

Websites

Because there are virtually no acceptable books about the history and culture of the Utes for children, teachers must become informed through the video, tribal Internet sites, or their own reading. Perhaps the best and most easily accessed information for both teachers and students is provided on the tribes’ websites. This information is culturally accurate and forms the basis of much of this section of the curriculum.

Ute Mountain Ute <http://www.utemountainute.com/>
<http://www.utemtnute/bluesky/sky3.html>
<http://stars-cwc.cwc.cc.wy.us>

Southern Ute <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>

Hughes, D. J. (1987). American Indians in Colorado (2nd ed.) Boulder, CO: Pruett.

Jefferson, J. & Delaney, R. W. & Thompson, G. C. (1973). The Southern Utes: A tribal history (2nd. pr.). Ignacio, CO: Southern Ute Tribe.

Marsh, C. (1991). People of the Shining Mountains: The Utes of Colorado. Boulder, CO: Pruett.

Pettit, J. (1990). Utes: The mountain people. Boulder, CO: Johnson.

Instructional Strategies

Direct instruction, reading, illustrating written stories

Student Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. identify the Utes as the oldest continuous residents of Colorado.
2. locate on a map the traditional lands of the Ute and the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Reservations.
3. recognize the following names for the Ute; Yutas, Nuche, Ute, and People of the Shining Mountains
4. recognize Ute creation stories as their unique beliefs about their origins.

Student Activities

Teachers may want to introduce the study of the Ute by playing some traditional Ute music. A cassette is provided in the kit; the first three songs are Bear Dance songs. The Bear Dance is an important traditional spring dance that has endured from long ago until today. All Ute bands participated in the Bear Dance which is still celebrated now.

1. Explain that the Utes are the oldest continuous residents of Colorado. Using a large map (a small map is provided in the kit), indicate their traditional lands and today's reservations (Southern Ute Reservation and Ute Mountain Ute Reservation). The Ute Mountain Ute Reservation is located in Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico.

The third reservation is located in Utah. The three bands of the Northern Utes, the Tabeguache or Uncompahgre lived in the valleys of the Gunnison and Uncompahgre Rivers in Colorado, the Grand River Utes or Parianuche lived along

that river in Colorado and Utah, and the Yamparicas or White River band inhabited the Yampa River Valley and adjacent land. These Northern Utes were forced to leave Colorado and move to the Uintah-Ouray Reservation in Utah following the Meeker Incident.

2. Provide students with small maps and have each student draw the traditional lands of the Ute. Save these maps; they will be used to trace the changes made later by treaty and by force.
3. Indicate that this large traditional area is located in the Great Basin cultural area. On a physical map, it is clear that the plateaus and mountains are different from the Plains. Discuss the different environments within this area and the difficulty of obtaining food on a regular basis. Explain the meaning of “nomadic” and the need for families to keep moving in order to hunt and gather enough food to survive. Later, when the Utes acquired horses from the Spanish, they were able to travel faster and further and getting food wasn’t so difficult.
4. Write the following names on the board or on a chart.
 - Yutas - Name given by the Spanish.
 - Nuche - Name they call themselves, meaning “The People.”
 - Ute - Name used now
 - People of the Shining Mountains - Name given to them by other tribes
5. Explain that scientists believe there may never be enough evidence to know for certain the origin of the Utes. However, many assert that Ute ancestors were among the Asians who crossed the Bering Straits and slowly wandered south, following the animals to a warmer climate. Some of the ancestors of the Utes could have been Mayans and Aztecs of Mexico, or the Fremont people who inhabited northeastern Colorado. The Southern Ute believe they first came to Colorado from the north and the west, and perhaps the coming of the Utes was the reason for the Ancestral Puebloans to move from their homes in the cliffs.
6. Indian people tell their own stories of how they came to be; these are called creation stories. Distribute the three versions of Ute creation stories; they are written at differing reading levels. Because this is an oral tradition, stories may vary from band to band and from storyteller to storyteller. Students could read the stories could be read silently, then aloud. Or, form small groups could be formed to read or reread and illustrate the stories.

7. Ask students to give possible reasons that stories were so important in before writing was used. Discuss also when might stories be told. Explain that stories were told in the winter and at night; they both entertained and taught tribal traditions and values as well as ways to hunt and gather food and survive in harsh environments.
8. Explain that although the early Utes lived in family groups, they would come out of the mountains before winter came and camp together during the cold months. This was the time for stories, dances, celebrations, and ceremonies. The Bear Dance is an important spring dance that is still celebrated today.

Vocabulary

Nomads people who have no permanent home but move from place to place along a traditional path to gather food (plants, roots, berries) and hunt game (animals, birds, fish) -- the specific area in which they travel is "home" to them.

Student Assessment/Performance Task

Engage students in a discussion about the Utes and summarize the major points in this lesson by developing sentences or phrases in the following acrostic. Put the letters of the word **NUCHE** on the board in a vertical line. The following are examples; students should complete their own sentences or phrases. Instead of a whole class activity, teachers might want to pair students to complete this task. The letters **NUCHE** could be found in positions other than the first letter of the sentence; this will make it easier to focus on the ideas, instead of the letters.

Nuche means "The People."

Utes have 7 bands.

Colorado's oldest residents are the Utes.

Hunted and gathered food in the Great Basin and the Mountains

Enjoy the Bear Dance each spring.

A Ute Mountain Ute Legend

A long time ago there was big water. This water covered the world. When this happened there were no more people, only two birds: the eagle and the pigeon. They flew high over the water.

It took a long time for the water to dry up on the earth. The eagle asked the pigeon to fly to the world. He was told to bring back some sticks. This the pigeon did.

The eagle and the pigeon began breaking the sticks into smaller pieces.

The eagle, who had the power, told the pigeon to drop the sticks all over the world and when they landed, they would become Indians. Each group would be a tribe.

So this is the story of how Indian tribes came to be. SOURCE: www.utemountainute.com

A Southern Ute Legend: Wolf and Coyote

One day the wolf saw the coyote carrying a bag with him, so he started out after the coyote and asked him what he had in the bag he was carrying. But the coyote didn't want to show him what he had in the bag and he started running from the wolf, so the wolf chased him around and around. Finally he caught him, then he told the coyote to take out the things he had in the bag. When he did take them out, they were all little people. He took out quite a few of them, and finally the coyote closed the bag really fast, and left very few in the bag. The old man who told this story said that this was the few amount of people that are left here, as the Southern Ute people are now. He said if the wolf hadn't done this to the coyote there wouldn't have been so few Indians left here; there would have been more people today. After all this had been done, the coyote told the wolf, "Now go and make your arrows. Now there is going to be a war." SOURCE: The Southern Utes: A Tribal History, 1973.

Sky

Hundreds of years ago, long after the cliff dwellers left their canyon top and cliff dwellings, Native people came from the south into the vast area we call Colorado, Utah, and New Mexico. These people, now known as Utes, lived here long before the Spanish explorers arrived with the large expeditions and herds of horses. The Ute families, bands, and encampments were spread out across this large area. Their customs were very similar and all spoke the same language even though they didn't often see each other.

The Utes believed that the mountains were put there by Manitou. He was the Great Spirit who lived all alone in the center of the sky. He grew lonesome and wanted to create something new so he made a hole in the sky and swept all the stones and dirt from the sky's floor through the hole.

Manitou looked down and saw the great mountains he had made from the dirt and rocks. Some of the dirt became the rolling plains that stretched as far as he could see. He was so pleased with his landscape that he poured down snow and rain to make the earth more beautiful. Manitou created the trees, flowers and finally the Ute Indians to live in this new world.

The Utes believe that Manitou had also made all of the animals as well as the birds. It is said he made the birds by taking handfuls of leaves and throwing them in the air. Then the leaves became birds and flew away.

But the worst thing of all happened. The animals soon began to fight and kill each other and that made Manitou mad, so he created the strongest animal to rule over all the others to see that they lived in peace. This was the grizzly bear, the king of all beasts. SOURCE: www.utemountainute.com