

Identity Recipes: What makes me a New Mexican?

Overview

What does it mean to be a New Mexican? How do we think about ourselves (and others) in relation to the places we live? This lesson explores these questions through the creation of identity recipes. First, in small groups, students will evaluate and discuss how New Mexico¹ has been imagined or represented in tourist brochures, regional magazines, advertisements, newspapers in different time periods etc. and compare these images with their daily experiences of “locality” or living in a particular New Mexican city, town, village, pueblo or neighborhood. Next, students will create identity recipes. An identity recipe takes the format of traditional recipe, but instead of being a guide for cooking food, it represents who you are and how you think of yourself as a New Mexican. What are the different elements or ingredients that make you a New Mexican? Share your personal identity recipe with your classmates!

Objectives

1. To learn about how people think of themselves and others in relation to the places they live.
2. To reflect upon how New Mexico is imagined in tourist literature, magazines, advertisements, history books, and art and how these images influence how we think about ourselves.
3. Understand how culture is lived in relation to place and space.

Activities

1. Assign students into small discussion groups.
2. Distribute print materials representing New Mexico to each group. Have students examine the images and draw critical comparisons (either in writing or conversation) between these images and their daily life experiences.
3. Have students list different “ingredients” that they feel make them a New Mexican or have shaped their daily lives living in a specific city, town or neighborhood (i.e. one cup green chile; ½ cup of brown sugar; three cups sunshine; a dash of desert sand; bake for 15 years in an adobe *estufa* in Santo Domingo Pueblo).
4. Students can use their artistic talents to individualize their identity recipes any way they like.
5. Students will discuss their identity recipes in small groups or present them to the class (compare and contrast, explain why they chose particular ingredients and their specific amounts).

Materials

This is a 45min. lesson plan. The materials recommended are the following:

1. Media representations of New Mexico such as magazines, tourist brochures, post cards, movies, advertisements, art books, museum literature and newspapers.
2. Media representations of New Mexico can be taken from different historical periods to think about how these images have developed in response to tourism and how they have changed over time.
3. Construction paper, markers, scissors, crayons, writing materials, paints, decorations...be creative!
4. Notebook paper or computer for recording group discussions, listing ingredients, brainstorming and writing up drafts or expanding the assignment into a personal essay.

¹ This lesson can be adapted for students living in different places or for those who have lived in New Mexico for a very short time.

Adaptations and Extensions

An identity recipe is an individualized project. Students can create a collage of images to represent their recipe or use their personal names as acronyms by using each letter to begin their list of ingredients. After the identity recipes are completed they can be posted to a class blog or website or be used to decorate the classroom. They can also be used as pre-writing or brainstorming activity for writing a personal essay. Students should be encouraged to talk about their identity recipes in small groups and then share what they learned about themselves and one another. This lesson can also be done as a web-quest activity where students research how New Mexico is represented in different kinds of media and in different historical periods. Students can evaluate the relationship between the tourist economy and local histories, cultures, and celebrations but also in terms of social inequality and identity politics.

Evaluation

At the end of this lesson students will have an identity recipe to share with their classmates. Students should be able to answer or discuss the following questions to evaluate their understanding of the concepts included in this lesson plan:

1. How does the place in which you live influence you are?
2. Why do people who live in the same place have different identity recipes?
3. How have representations of New Mexico changed over time? What can this tell us about the relationship between people and the places in which they live?

Educational Standards Referenced

Grades 6-8 Language Arts/Literacy In History/ Social Studies

CCSS ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.2, RH.6-8.9

Grades 9-10 Language Arts/Literacy in History/ Social Studies

CCSS ELA-Literacy.RH9-10.1, RH9-10.2, RH9-10.9

Grades 11-12 Language Arts/Literacy in History/ Social Studies

CCSS ELA-Literacy.RH11-12.1, RH11-12.2, RH11-12.7, RH11-12.9

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