

Alicia: My Story

Lesson Plan for Chapter 9

“Bella”

TITLE: Disease as an Agent of Destruction

RATIONALE:

This lesson will be used to teach students about the use of disease as a force of destruction. Students will learn how disease was used in the attempt to eradicate people well before the Holocaust. They will be able to make connections between the use of small pox to murder the Native Americans and the use of typhus/typhoid in the ghettos during the Holocaust. This lesson is meant to show students that while using diseases as a part of warfare has become increasingly popular in modern history, it has been used as an agent of destruction for many years prior.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVE(S):

The student will be able to:

- Discuss how Nazis used disease as a weapon against the victims of the Holocaust as well as make the connection back to previous lessons on the Native Americans and how those who came to the New World from Europe affected their lives.
- Form an opinion on the uses of disease as a weapon of mass murder.
- Explain the different ways in which disease has been used to annihilate groups of people throughout history.

NEXT GENERATION SUNSHINE STATE STANDARD(S):

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD(S):

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES:

- A copy of the article on smallpox blankets from the Cherokee Documentation Center
- A copy of *Alicia: My Story*.
- Candy, something like Hershey’s Kisses, for the Introduction (hook).

PREPARATIONS:

- Students will need to have read (up through) chapter 9 of *Alicia: My Story* prior to this class.
- The teacher should read both the smallpox blankets article and chapter 9 of *Alicia: My Story*.
- The teacher will create a bell work question using *Alicia: My Story*. The question should have some connection to chapter 9, the chapter in which typhus and typhoid were discussed.
- The teacher should be familiar with the 60% mortality rate of typhus.

- Place one piece of candy on ten students' desks, to represent someone infected with typhus.

LESSON:

Introduction

This will be the teacher's hook or attention getter to show the students how disease can be used to cause an epidemic to kill large groups of people.

1. Remain silent as students walk in, except for instructing the students to complete the bell work question. Give students 5 minutes to complete the bell work.
2. Walk around the room to see which students ate their candy; ideally, all 10 students who came in to candy on their desk will have eaten it.
3. After 5-minute allotment for bell work, ask those students who ate the candy left on their desks to stand at the front of the room.
4. Have six of those students step forward and explain that the mortality rate of typhus is 60% and that the six students asked to step forward are now dead.
5. The other four students then give a piece of candy to two other people; those four who've then "contracted" typhus will then give it to another student until the entire class has been infected.
6. Of the remaining students, tell them that 60% of the class left after the first group will die from typhus.
7. Move into a short lecture on the uses of disease as a weapon of war.

Procedures

1. Hand out a copy of the Cherokee Documentation Center's article on smallpox blankets.
2. Give students 10 minutes to read the article and have them mark any points they find interesting.
3. After students finish reading, place them in small groups of 3 or 4. In these groups, students will take 10 minutes to discuss what the article is talking about and how it relates to chapter 9 of *Alicia: My Story*.
4. After about 15 minutes, bring the groups back together and do a 10-minute review what the groups discussed.

Closure

In the final 10 minutes of the class, instruct students to write a one-page response to this prompt:

"Imagine you found an undiscovered land inhabited by a primitive people. Your superiors feel that the natives are too barbaric to try to convert to their ideas and beliefs. They send down orders to you telling you that you are to give the natives food infected with salmonella. You know you should follow orders and you fear the repercussions if you refuse. But you can't help but wonder if your orders are right. So, do you follow your orders? Why or why not?"

Assessment

When the bell rings, have students hand in their papers.

- Students who do not hand in anything will automatically receive a "0".
- Students who simply say whether or not they will follow their orders will receive a "1".
- Students who explain why they would follow orders or not they will receive a "2".

- Finally, students who give an explanation for their decision as well as utilize information from the readings then they will receive an extra point and earn a score of “3”.

Extensions / Modifications for Differentiated Instruction

- This lesson could also be used along with a science lesson specifically on different types of diseases.
- Students could also connect this lesson with a class on ethics.
- An English class could even benefit from this lesson with the readings and the one-page narrative that students are to complete after the readings and group discussions.
- Some ELL students may not understand what typhus &/or smallpox is/are so the teacher might want to do a quick review on those for the ELL students.
- For the Special Education students, the teacher might move at a slower pace in order to accommodate those with a learning disability.

RESOURCES:

Appleman-Jurman, A. (1990). *Alicia: My story*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

“Smallpox Blankets”. (n.d.). In *Cherokee Heritage Documentation Center*. Retrieved from http://cherokeeregistry.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=407&Itemid=617

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Cherokee Heritage

Documentation Center

HISTORY

- Home
- The Cherokee
- Early Cherokee contact 1673
- Visit London 1730
- **Smallpox blankets**
- Trail of Tears
- Texas Cherokee
- Churches and Slavery
- Resolution of 1838
- Ridge letter to mother
- Camp Gruber
- British articles of Friendship - Mbytoy
- Stand Watie - list of soldiers
- Memorial letter
- John G. Burnett - Trail of Tears
- Asian DNA
- Treaties

Smallpox blankets

In 1738, a major disaster struck the Cherokee when their towns were swept by an epidemic of smallpox. The Cherokee Chief Oconostota, accused the British of deliberately planting smallpox germs in the trade goods, they had shipped to the Cherokees.

The desire of Whites to occupy Indian lands, and the rivalry between French and English for control of the fur trade conducted through Indians, led to the French and Indian War of 1763. In the summer of 1763, attacks by Native Americans against colonists on the western frontier seriously challenged British military control. Lord Jeffery Amherst (who commanded the British military forces stationed in North America during this time), discussed with his troops the advantages of hunting down Indians with dogs, versus infecting them with smallpox.



In a letter to Colonel Henry Bouquet dated July 7, 1763, Amherst writes "Could it not be contrived to send the Small Pox among those disaffected tribes of Indians?" In a later letter to Bouquet Amherst repeats the idea: "You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets, as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race."

Bouquet wrote back, "I will try to inoculate [them] with some blankets that may fall in their hands, and take care not to get the disease myself." There is evidence that the Captain at Fort Pitt (outside Pittsburgh, PA— then the western frontier) did give two infected blankets and one infected handkerchief to Indians in June of 1763. This action happened before Amherst mentioned the idea in his correspondence.

It proved particularly effective because the Ohio tribes had little immunity having missed the 1757-58 epidemic among the French allies contracted during the capture of Fort William Henry (New York). The Shawnee were fighting the Cherokee in Tennessee at the time, and they carried the disease to them, and then the Shawnee living with the Creek Confederacy. From there it spread to the Chickasaw and Choctaw, and finally the entire southeast. Before it had run its course, the epidemic had killed thousands, including British colonists.

There is an often repeated story that the Cherokee were given blankets infected with smallpox from a hospital in Tennessee during the Cherokee removal (Trail of Tears). We have found no historical basis for this story. Though thousands died during the removal west, there is no evidence of a major smallpox outbreak along the trail. In fact, the Cherokee population had been greatly reduced by several epidemics in the previous hundred years.

It is possible that the Trail of Tears story of smallpox blankets was adapted from writings of Ward Churchill, an ethnic studies professor at the University of Colorado. Churchill fabricated a story in which the commander of Fort Clark North Dakota ordered a boatload of blankets shipped from a military smallpox infirmary in St. Louis. These were supposedly distributed to the Mandan Indians causing the very real high plains epidemic of 1837, the year before the Cherokee removal.

In reality the disease Churchill referred to was carried by a number of sick passengers on board the steamboat "St. Peter's" as it delivered supplies along the Missouri river. William Fulkerson, an Indian agent onboard, and Francis Chardon, a fur trader, both tell a story about an Indian sneaking aboard the steamboat and stealing an infested blanket from a sick passenger. Chardon relates that he attempted to retrieve the infested blanket by offering to exchange it for a new one. Upon William Fulkerson's return from the steamboat trip, he warned that: "the small pox has broke out in this country and is sweeping all before it—unless it be checked in its mad career I would not be surprised if it wiped the Mandan and Rickaree [Arikara] Tribes of Indians clean from the face of the earth."