SAMPLE ACTIVITY (NEEDING IMPROVEMENTS)

20th-century warfare: Unique contributions of American Indians

Overview
Students will learn about the role of native code talkers in World War I through the Vietnam War. Using copies of a Navajo Code dictionary, students will create a coded message to a partner in the class. Messages will be decoded and read in class by the receiver. To wrap up, students will write an essay explaining the American Indians’ dedication to military service, the significance of the Navajo Code as a weapon of war, and the lack of recognition of American Indians after World War II.

Course/Grade
8th grade social studies

Materials
- Pencil/pen and paper
- Video: Navajo Code Talkers
- Copies of Navajo Code Talkers’ Dictionary from the Naval Historical Center website
- Copies of veteran interviews and quotations; these can be found through the National Museum of the American Indian’s online feature called Native Words, Native Warriors

Duration
60 minutes

Procedure
1. Students will be given copies of American Indian veteran interviews and quotations to read.

2. Next explain to students that they will be watching a video that will relate the story of the Navajo Code Talkers in intimate detail. Students will need to take notes while watching. The teacher will pause the video at key components to explain the significance of information.

3. The teacher will distribute copies of Navajo Code dictionary. The students will create coded messages to a partner in the class. Messages will be decoded and read in class by the receiver. This activity will help students appreciate the simple, yet complex, nature of the code.

4. The teacher will lead a culminating discussion about the history of the code talkers, the effects of the Navajo Code on the Second World War, and the absence of recognition for the code talkers once the war was over.

Provide sample questions to pose that promote higher order thinking.

Ideally, materials will be easily accessible. (No information is given about where/how to access Navajo Code Talkers, which is not ideal as it is only available for use if a teacher purchases it.)

When mentioning websites, always write in the site and/or hyperlink to sites. If particular resources are needed, such as veteran interviews, provide specific hyperlinks for specific interviews.

No instructions are given as to which interviews & quotations teachers should utilize, nor what students should do for this warm up other than read them.

The lesson should offer particular discussion questions for students to consider when watching. The activity should note which points to stop the video to discuss which questions.

No parameters are provided for their messages. Activities should always tie back to learning goals, so having them create a message noting something they have learned about the Navajo would be better.