



Lesson 1 – Pre-Visit Pop Culture of the Ballpark: Mascots

Objective: Students will be able to:

- Explain the main issues surrounding the use of Native American names, mascots, and logos in professional baseball.
- Work in groups to research and develop an argument from the perspective of a specific interest group affected by the debate question.
- Present their group's viewpoint, clearly identifying and describing its principal argument and providing examples that support the argument.

Time Required: 3-4 class periods

Advance Preparation:

- Select a variety of books and other print sources that have information about Native American mascots (or request such sources from a school librarian).
- Schedule at least one session for your class in your school library.

Materials Needed:

- Pictures of Cleveland Indians' "Chief Wahoo" and the Atlanta Braves logo (easily located using Google Images)
- Internet access for student research
- A variety of books and other sources (see above)
- Index cards

Vocabulary:

- **Logo** - A graphic representation or symbol of a company name, often uniquely designed for ready recognition
- **Mascot** - An animal, person, or thing adopted by a group as its representative symbol and supposed to bring good luck



Potential Sources:

Books:

- ***In the Game: Race, Identity, and Sports in the Twentieth Century*** by Amy Bass
- ***Dancing at Halftime: Sports and the Controversy over American Indian Mascots*** by Carol Spindel
- ***Team Spirits: The Native American Mascots Controversy*** by Richard King, et al.

Journal Articles:

- David Melmer, "Chief Wahoo Hits the Road." *Indian Country Today*. January 1999:A2.
- David E. Wilkins, "Of 'Tigers', 'Redskins,' 'Braves,' Ad Nauseum." *News from Indian Country: The Nation's Native Journal*. May 1997.

Online Articles (all may be found at <http://news.google.com/archivesearch>):

- Justice B. Hill, "Indians' Chief Wahoo a remnant of racism." *NBCSports.com*. May 20, 2009.
- "Braves Success Costs Chief His Tepee." *Gainesville Sun*. July 29, 1982.
- Jamie Turner, "MLB Insider: Wahoo in decline? New spring base latest sign of de-emphasis on old logo." *The Plain Dealer*. April 11, 2009.

Applicable Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9, W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.



Applicable Common Core State Standards (Continued):

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1, SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.6, SL.11-12.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.





Lesson

1. Begin this lesson (and this unit) by introducing the concept of popular culture. Explain that popular culture, or “pop culture”, includes things and individuals that many people like and that many people know about.
2. Ask students, “What are some examples of popular culture?” Prompt students with these categories if necessary: games, books, poetry, music, art, language/slang, TV/movies, food, and sports.
3. Discuss that in the United States, baseball has been part of our popular culture since its inception in the early 1800s. Players, teams, logos, and even team mascots are familiar to millions of people.
4. Explain that in this lesson, students will be looking closely at a logo and a mascot used in Major League Baseball today.
5. Begin a class brainstorming session about mascots and logos in general. What is a mascot? What is a logo? What do they look like? What do they represent? As students offer their suggestions, record them on the board or on a piece of chart paper.
6. Now focus on mascots in particular. Ask students, “Why do sports teams have mascots? What do mascots do during the game? After the game?” Ideas include:
 - A mascot is a fun, energetic symbol of a team
 - Mascots bring the team and the fans together
 - They perform during games, and often appear at community events
 - Mascots might appear at events or represent the team during the off season

Show students the images of Chief Wahoo and the Atlanta Braves logo. You can also show students the “tomahawk” chop—easily obtained from Youtube. Discuss that the use of Native American mascots, names, and logos has often been a source of controversy, especially in professional sports.

7. Ask students why people might be opposed to the use of Native American team names and mascots? Why might people support it?



8. Explain that opponents of Native American team names and mascots argue that they mock and trivialize Native American culture and religion and also cultivate racist attitudes. Those in support of using Native American mascots and images claim that using Native American names and images not only honors American Indians but also promotes Native American culture.

9. Take some index cards — one for each student in the class — and write one interest group (e.g., Native American tribal organizations, baseball team owners, baseball fans, etc.) on each card. Create at least three index cards for each interest group. Then, let students randomly draw an index card and form a small group with others who drew the same interest group cards.



Popular Culture – Level 3



Activity

Day 1

1. Explain that each group will research and develop arguments for a classroom debate on the use of Native American names, logos, and mascots by Major League Baseball teams.
2. Go to the school library during your scheduled time slot. Explain that students will be researching the issue of Native American names and logos from the perspective of their assigned interest group. Each group should identify, at minimum, four quality arguments to support their position. Students may also choose to find images to enhance the arguments.
3. Students should spend the class period conducting research and taking notes. If they need more time, they may continue research outside of class.

Day 2

4. Students should work together within their interest groups to formulate their arguments and prepare a three-minute presentation

Day 3

5. Prepare your classroom for a debate. The classroom should be configured to allow enough space for students in each interest group to present their arguments and images.
6. When it is time to debate, each interest group should give a three-minute presentation that presents the group's viewpoint, clearly identifies and describes its principal argument, and provides examples that support the argument.
7. Once the debate is complete, students may abandon their assigned positions and discuss the issue.



Popular Culture – Level 3

Conclusion:

To conclude this lesson and check for understanding, have all students write an editorial piece that explains their personal views on whether professional baseball should or should not continue the use of Native American names, images, and logos.