

PRE-LESSON

#5 – Cultural Identity

This 10-minute “**bell-ringer**” activity will help prepare your students for their joint field trip to the Utah Museum of Fine Arts and Natural History Museum of Utah.

You can do one activity each day the week before your field trip or do them all at one time!



NATURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM OF UTAH
Rio Tinto Center | University of Utah

When talking about identity, we might use words that describe our culture, heritage, race, or ethnicity.

Have you ever heard any of these words? Mexican, Latina/o, Mestizo, Chicano/a, Hispanic, Maya, Indian, Indigenous, and Native. These are words that people might use to describe their identity. Maybe you have used some of these words to describe yourself?

Each of these words has a complicated meaning and history. At times, they have been embraced by some and criticized by others. For some people they have been a source of pride and for others hurtful.

What words do you like to use to describe your own culture, heritage, race, or ethnicity?

Here is a quote from the *Maya: Hidden Worlds Revealed* exhibition:

“Our ability to be Mayas is not limited to any one place or time. It is not forever rooted in the past. It can be our identity and our strength wherever we are.”

“Nuestra habilidad de ser mayas no se limita a un solo lugar o momento. No está arraigada para siempre en el pasado. Puede ser nuestra identidad nuestra fuerza dondequiera que estemos.”

– Victor Montejo, Maya anthropologist

What do you think the author means? Discuss with a partner.



As a class, we will be listening to two stories of people reflecting on their own cultural identities. As I read each story aloud, think about the words they use to describe themselves and the feelings they express.

Ruby Chacon

<http://rubychacon.com/bio.html>



Ruby Chacón is an artist, writer, community organizer, and co-founder of Mestizo Institute of Culture and Art (MICA), and she is a storyteller. She tells the story of her people who were here centuries before the Mormon pioneers—a time when the American West was part of Mexico. She feels this story is too often left out of history books.

“I come from a Mexican/Chicano family who migrated from New Mexico to Utah in search of work starting with my great grandparents. I have a mixed heritage: Tewa Pueblo, Apache and Basque/Spanish, however, growing up I thought we were immigrants from Mexico. It wasn’t until I graduated from college when I went to ask my grandpa Cosme Chacón about our family history that I discovered the border crossed us.”

Ruby Chacon is a storyteller. Why do you think it is important to tell stories that have been left out of history books?

David Lindes

<http://www.davidlindes.net/>



David Lindes is a writer, singer-songwriter, and producer. Born in Guatemala City, he immigrated to the United States at age 9 and spent his adolescence in the agricultural communities of California's Central Coast. He later graduated in Latin American Studies from Brigham Young University. He lives in Salt Lake City with his wife and four kids.

“My name is David Lindes. I’m from my father’s soul-searching journey to Nicaragua, from my mother’s leap of faith across so many borders to San Francisco. I can speak two languages. I know how to thrive in two worlds, and how to swim in two cultures. But I have no clue how to be home.”

“When I boarded a US-bound plane in Guatemala City, I made a transaction I’m still struggling to understand, one that divided me forever.”

David Lindes said he knows how to “thrive in two worlds,” but also feels “divided.” What do you think he is saying?

WRAP UP!

Discuss the following questions with a partner:

- How do these two people describe their connection to their homeland?
- Can you think of a time when someone shared their cultural identity with you? What did they say? What did they share?

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