

## Lesson Plan: Navajo Treaty of 1868

By Rhonda Gutierrez

Note: This plan is divided into age groups of elementary, junior and senior high school with age appropriate activities. Modifications are suggested throughout. These lessons can be used or modified as needed to meet individual classroom needs. Standards and Common Core are included at the end for intended use. This is best used after covering The Long Walk.

### Essential Questions:

1. How do people who disagree come to consensus?
2. What challenges exist when working with peoples who have different beliefs, languages and values?
3. Why do some peace treaties work while others fail?

### Objectives: Students will learn about –

1. What the purpose is of a peace treaty
2. How do different people with different agendas come together to create peace
3. The challenges that different values, beliefs and languages create in creating peace
4. Why peace failed until 1868 and
5. If the articles of the treaty were honored and if those articles created long lasting issues both positive and negative for the Navajo.

### Elementary Lessons:

Start with the concept of peace and how peace treaty is about coming to a place of understanding and agreement. This can be adapted to be used as a classroom management tool as well as a lesson to introduce treaty making and appropriate for elementary. The idea in this case is to use this activity to introduce the conflict between the Navajo and the US Government in creating and establishing a treaty in a way that elementary students can make meaning of. The entire treaty is provided for reference.

Ask if students have ever heard the term, “peace treaty” before. As a class, define what a peace treaty is. If needed offer this definition: *An agreement to come to peace and end conflict.*

Share that today your class will be creating a peace treaty together to help manage conflict and support friendship. This can be done between two students or two groups of students. Introduce the Peace Treaty worksheet and read through it together: (These are only suggestions and can be changed in any way that reflects classroom culture)

I, (we) agree to:

1. First calm myself and grow peace inside, and wait until emotions are calm to have a discussion with the classmate(s) I feel tension with.
2. Not say or do anything that will grow anger in myself or others.
3. Set up a time with the help of my teacher to meet with the classmate(s) through writing

### Materials

Typed copy of the Navajo Treaty 1868 and photos of the original treaty. A list of treaties between the Navajo Nation and the US from 1846-1868. Treaty with summary for teacher resource  
Worksheets  
Summarizing the articles of the Navajo Treaty of 1868,  
Negotiating the Treaty 1868,  
Crossword Puzzle for Treaty

### Grade Levels

Peace Treaty elementary  
Most appropriate for junior high and high school. Modifications for younger students will be necessary  
Vocabulary  
Peace Treaty  
Navajo  
Headman  
Negotiation  
Translation/Translators  
Articles  
Sovereignty



them a peace note (go over what the peace note says in the handout).

4. Look at what I may have done to contribute to the situation before I meet with my classmate(s) and apologize before we meet.

I, (we) agree to:

1. Respect my classmate's feelings.
2. Understand that even if I didn't mean to hurt my classmate, my actions may still have hurt them.
3. Wait until we both have calmed down so we can talk about what happened.
4. Write a note back to my classmate to let them know I will meet with them.
5. Reflect on how I hurt my classmate and what I can do to make things right. Have students make any changes they feel necessary to the peace treaty.

Write out the treaty on chart paper and have each student sign the peace treaty.

### Vocabulary

Peace Treaty - A written agreement between two states or sovereigns, to come to peace and end conflict.

Navajo – Tribe of American Indian who were living in what is now the four corners and at the time was organized in family groups. They are matrilineal society meaning that kinship is based on the mother's side.

Headman - the chief or leader of a community or tribe. In the case of the Navajo, the concept of a chief to rule over the entire tribe was unknown to them. In order for a rule to be carried out, every adult had to agree to the rule before it was instituted. Headman functioned more as one who brought an idea to the group or band to be discussed.

Negotiation – a discussion aimed at reaching an agreement.

Translation/Translators – the process of interpreting word(s) from one language to another language and a translator is the one who is interpreting the language and is fluent in both languages.

Articles – individual parts of the agreement usually written in paragraph form and list the stipulations or agreed to points relating to the topic of the paragraph.

Sovereignty – a self-governing state that is free from external control of another state/government.

### For older students, begin at this point. Modify for younger students.

The treaty activities are appropriate for use after covering the long walk and internment. It is important to explain that neither side spoke the other side's language and to work together required two interpreters: Jesus Arviso who was of Mexican descent and raised by the Navajo and could speak Navajo and Spanish and James Sutherland who could speak Spanish and English. If the government official presented an idea, it was then interpreted from English to Spanish and then from Spanish to Navajo and then the Navajo leaders would respond and the Navajo was translated into Spanish and then from Spanish into English.

Telephone: A fun way to introduce the difficulty of negotiating a treaty with different languages could be a game of telephone and have the students get in a large circle. Tell the first student the first line from the treaty ("Articles of a treaty and agreement made and entered into at Fort Sumner...") and have each student whisper what they think they heard to each other. The last person says what he/she thought he/she heard.

### Navajo vs US Government

The following activity can be done in groups from start to end or as a class discussion with group activities.

Start with listing or eliciting the problems/issues for each side for the Navajo interned at Fort Sumner. Possible answers: *The Navajo wanted to go to their homeland and not to Oklahoma, wanted the return of captives, be left to live as they have always done and to be left to raise families, sheep, and crops without interference and without western settlers. The Government wanted the Navajo to be on a reservation, stop raiding, provide for westward travel and safety of the settlers moving west which included the expansion of the railroad and the prevailing idea of the time was acculturation – acceptance of western ideas, lifestyles and religion.*

Based upon the age group and the depth the Long Walk was covered, depends upon the number of issues and problems identified. Then have the students divide into two groups – one group to negotiate for the Navajo and the other for the Government. Use the following worksheets to direct discussion on how to clarify and present each side. After each group presents their side, have the groups reconvene to discuss what the other side presented and see if there are any points that are “common ground” or areas that they cannot meet. Then have the groups work towards meeting each other’s demands by meeting and then going back to their group to discuss the new conditions/demands.

This activity can end without coming to an agreement or can be extended with each group going back and forth until an agreement is made. If so, write out the agreements that the students came up with and have the students compare their treaty with the actual treaty.

### Negotiating the Navajo Treaty 1868

What side: Navajo \_\_\_\_ Government \_\_\_\_  
Student's names

Now list the problems and issues that your side has that you want to get remedied by the other side:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Of the problems listed above, discuss why this problem/situation is so bad for your side and why you want it remedied.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



## Negotiating the Navajo Treaty 1868

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Now going back over your list, rank in importance to your side.

Now that your group has heard from the other group, is there anything that you agree on immediately?

Is there anything that you can almost agree upon?

Are there areas of no agreement? Which areas?

What are the ideas that are most important to your group to be resolved?

After negotiating, did your side have to give up something? Did the other side?

What did both sides agree to?

### Crossword Puzzle

For junior high students. The puzzle is made from the treaty and does require copies of the treaty to complete.

### Working with the Actual Treaty

Using the Common Core idea of RACE – restate, answer, cite and explain, the following activity leads students from the basic of summarizing the articles to expanding understanding in order to critically discuss the articles. This activity is designed for junior high through senior high school students. Provide the entire treaty or can divide out the articles of the treaty so that each group gets one article. They are to complete the worksheet “Summarizing the articles of the Navajo Treaty of 1868”. After the groups go through their article, they are to report to the entire class their summation. There is an extending activity to have the students research/determine if either side honored or broke the article.

### Working with treaties made between the Navajo Nation and the US Government between 1846-1868

This activity is an extension of study by examining past treaties up to the 1868 treaty to see why peace failed by studying the attempts at peace.

Between the years 1848 (After the Mexican- American War) to 1863 and internment at Fort Sumner, the government tried to establish peace with the Navajo. However several problems existed that made lasting peace problematic. Culture – Navajo didn’t have head leaders and didn’t have a central government. Individuality was a cultural norm. Leadership wasn’t one leader making decisions for many, but a set of bands that made decisions for the good of their individual groups and that required every person within the band agreeing to something. It was a foreign idea to have one person speaking for the many. US on the other hand negotiated as though they were speaking to a leader who could carry out the agreed to articles within the treaty. When one band signed the treaty, they agreed, but that didn’t extend to other bands who didn’t sign the treaty and the US government didn’t understand that nor did the Navajo understand that it was expected to extend to others who didn’t negotiate a treaty.

Another problem was the on-going nearly 200 year old disputes between the Navajo, Utes, Pueblos, the Spanish and later Mexican settlers that involved raiding, slavery trade, and selling back captives at slave trading fairs often held in Taos. The peoples were not always at war and seeing each other as enemies, but there was raiding and conflicts on all sides. The third problem that interfered with peace was the beliefs of those negotiating. After the defeat of the Mexican army, the American Government thought peace would be a simple matter. “They (US Government) felt omnipotent after their easy victory over the Mexicans and believing as they did in the effectiveness of legal treaties and the superiority of Western civilization, foresaw no trouble in solving the “Navajo problem.”<sup>1</sup> The prevailing attitude of Manifest Destiny – that westward expansion was inevitable, that the moral right of the Americans to settle those lands – was the larger belief that drove treatment of the indigenous people across America at that time.

This activity uses the handout on the List of Treaties between the Navajo Nation and US Government for the activity. The objective is to get students to compare and contrast, and draw conclusions regarding how the three listed issues resulted in failures of the peace process and then how the internment at Fort Sumner changed the negotiations for peace. Appropriate for older students but can be adapted for upper elementary grades.

## Failed Peace Negotiations 1846-1868

Instructions: Read through the List of Peace Treaties between the Navajo Nation and the United States of America and then answer the questions that follow:

Compare and Contrast: When we are looking at many different documents, it is often useful to see what similarities and differences that exist between those documents. So using the questions below see if you can find all the things about the peace treaties that are similar and what differences you can find.

What are all the things that you found that are similar in the treaties?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What things did you find different in the treaties?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Drawing conclusions: When we look at documents from the past one reason we do so is to try to draw a conclusion – our best educated guess – as to what the people wanted and why the history turned out the way it did. Looking at the treaties, what you have already learned about this time and what were similar and different, let's see if we can draw conclusions about what the different sides wanted.

I think that the Navajo wanted from the government were:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |
| 3. |    |

I think this because of

I think that the Government wanted from the Navajo were:

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 3. |
| 2. | 4. |



I think this because of:



Drawing conclusions: Now based on what you have learned, what conclusion can you draw as to why the treaties failed up to the final 1868 treaty?

Extension: Now test your powers of reasoning: Why do you think that the 1868 treaty led to peace and all other treaties failed? Be sure to give historical proof to your answer.



**Common Core:**

Reading Standard for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

	Key ideas & Details	Craft & Structure	Integration Knowledge & Ideas	Range of Reading & Complexity
Grades 6- 8	1,2	4	7-9	10
Grades 9-10	1-3	4-5	9	10
Grades 11-12	1-3	4-5	9	10

**NM Benchmarks**

**5-8 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico:** explore and explain how people and events have influenced the development of New Mexico up to the present day

**5-8 Benchmark 1-C. World:** compare and contrast major historical eras, events and figures from ancient civilizations to the age of exploration

**5-8 Benchmark 1-B. United States:** analyze and interpret major eras, events and individuals from the periods of exploration and colonization through the civil war and reconstruction in United States history.

**9-12 Benchmark 1-A. New Mexico:** analyze how people and events of New Mexico have influenced United States and world history since statehood: Performance Standards: 1, 2d, 4

**9-12 benchmark 1-D. Skills:** use critical thinking skills to understand and communicate perspectives of individuals, groups and societies from multiple contexts: Performance Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

## Resources

Source for Peace Treaty: Meena Srinivasan, MA, National Board Certified Teacher, is a leader in the fields of Mindful Awareness Practices (MAP) and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). She is the author of *Teach, Breathe, Learn: Mindfulness In and Out of the Classroom* (Parallax Press, 2014) and *SEL Everyday: Integrating Social and Emotional Learning With Instruction in Secondary Classrooms* (Norton, 2019).

Correll, Lee J. *The Navajo Through White Men's Eyes*. 1979, Window Rock, Az, Navajo Heritage Center.

Hager, Dan [http://www.danhagerblog.com/?page\\_id=94](http://www.danhagerblog.com/?page_id=94) 1978; Thesis U. C. Berkeley.