Not everyone agrees on what we should teach or on how it should be taught. Often what is considered important to learn depends on where and when we’re living. For example, the speech and letter that follow were written before Native American cultures received much respect from European Americans. Native American leaders have had to argue that their culture, language, history, and way of life are useful knowledge.

SURVEY As a class, make a list of the most important and useful things you’ve learned in school. Vote on the top four and post them in the four corners of your classroom. Then go stand under the one that you consider most important. Why did you choose what you did? Present your reasons to the class.
Meet the Author

A Man of Influence

Chief Canasatego of the Onondaga Tribe was an influential leader in the Iroquois Confederacy, a group of tribes in the upper New York State area. Benjamin Franklin used Canasatego’s ideas in his early plans for colonial union.

Background to the Speech and Letter

A “No Thank You” Speech

In the 1700s, the British and the French were competing for land and resources in North America. English colonists thought that by offering Iroquois boys the chance to attend the university in Virginia, they would convince the Iroquois to support their side. The Iroquois, however, didn’t want to send their sons to the school, for reasons made clear in Chief Canasatego’s 1744 speech.

The Grand Council Fire of American Indians

In 1927, Mayor William Hale Thompson of Chicago raised a protest against school textbooks he believed presented history in a way that was prejudiced in favor of Great Britain. The mayor wanted to revise textbooks to be what he called “100 percent American.” The members of the Grand Council Fire of American Indians—led by its president Scott H. Peters, a Chippewa Indian—wanted to point out that the British were not the only group portrayed inaccurately in textbooks. They wrote a letter asking the mayor to change texts to reflect the perspectives and accomplishments of Native Americans. They wore full ceremonial dress and war paint when presenting the mayor with their letter.

Literary Analysis: Rhetorical Devices

Persuasive writers and speakers often use rhetorical devices such as repetition and parallelism. Repetition is the repeated use of the same word or phrase—usually for emphasis. Parallelism is the repetition of similar words, phrases, sentences, or grammatical structure. It can show that ideas are related or equally important. It can also help stress a phrase or idea.

As you read the texts that follow, look for these devices and what they help emphasize. Reading the speech aloud can help.

Reading Skill: Identify Comparisons and Contrasts

Writers often make their points by comparing and contrasting subjects—that is, noting their similarities and differences. For example, in the texts you’re about to read, the authors contrast what is taught with what they think should be taught. To keep track of their points, summarize the arguments in each selection in a chart like the one begun for “Educating Sons.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Educating Sons&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What Is Taught</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sciences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vocabulary in Context

The following words help the authors express their views. To see how many you know, use them to complete the sentences.

**WORD LIST**
- decline
- esteem
- oratory
- sacred
- savage
- treacherous

1. For the Lakota people, the Black Hills region is a _____ place with deep religious significance.
2. Because of his famous speech “I will fight no more forever,” Chief Joseph is known for his brilliant _____.
3. To call someone a _____ is to say that he is uncivilized.
4. Because the United States broke so many treaties, most Native Americans viewed the government as _____.
5. Many Cherokees chose to _____ offers to buy their land.
6. In most Native cultures, grandparents are held in high _____ and treated with respect.

Complete the activities in your Reader/Writer Notebook.
We know you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in these colleges. And the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We’re convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different nations have different conceptions of things. And you will not, therefore, take it amiss\(^1\) if our ideas of this kind of education happens not to be the same with yours.

We have had some experience of it. Several of our young people were formerly brought up in the colleges of the northern province. They were instructed in all your sciences. But when they came back to us, they were bad runners, ignorant of every means of living in the woods, unable to bear either cold or hunger, knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy, spoke our language imperfectly, and therefore were neither fit for hunters nor warriors nor councilors. They were totally good for nothing.

We are, however, not the less obliged\(^2\) for your kind offer, though we decline accepting. To show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we would take great care in their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them.

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1. *take it amiss*: be offended.
2. *obliged*: grateful or indebted.
What three adjectives best describe the boy in this photograph?
TO THE MAYOR OF CHICAGO:

You tell all white men “America First.” We believe in that. We are the only ones, truly, that are 100 percent. We therefore ask you while you are teaching school children about America First, teach them truth about the First Americans.

We do not know if school histories are pro-British, but we do know that they are unjust to the life of our people—the American Indian. They call all white victories, battles, and all Indian victories, massacres. The battle with Custer has been taught to school children as a fearful massacre on our part. We ask that this, as well as other incidents, be told fairly. If the Custer battle was a massacre, what was Wounded Knee?

History books teach that Indians were murderers—is it murder to fight in self-defense? Indians killed white men because white men took their lands, ruined their hunting grounds, burned their forests, destroyed their buffalo. White men penned our people on reservations, then took away the reservations. White men who rise to protect their property are called patriots—Indians who do the same are called murderers.

White men call Indians treacherous—but no mention is made of broken treaties on the part of the white man. White men say that Indians were always fighting. It was only our lack of skill in white man’s warfare that led to our defeat. An Indian mother prayed that her boy be a great medicine man rather than a great warrior. It is true that we had our own small battles, but in the main we were peace-loving and home-loving.

White men called Indians thieves—and yet we lived in frail skin lodges and needed no locks or iron bars. White men call Indians savages. What is civilization? Its marks are a noble religion and philosophy, original arts, stirring music, rich history and legend. We had these. Then we were not savages, but a civilized race.

We made blankets that were beautiful that the white man with all his machinery has never been able to duplicate. We made baskets that

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1. Custer: George Armstrong Custer (1839–1876), a U.S. cavalry officer who fought Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at Little Bighorn; Custer was killed and his army was wiped out.
2. Wounded Knee: a creek in South Dakota where U.S. troops massacred about 200 Native Americans on December 29, 1890.
3. medicine man: a Native-American holy man and healer.
were beautiful. We wove in beads and colored quills, designs that were not just decorative motifs, but were the outward expression of our very thoughts. We made pottery—pottery that was useful and beautiful as well. Why not make school children acquainted with the beautiful handicrafts in which we were skilled? Put in every school Indian blankets, baskets, pottery.

We sang songs that carried in their melodies all the sounds of nature—the running of waters, the sighing of winds, and the calls of the animals. Teach these to your children that they may come to love nature as we love it.

We had our statesmen—and their oratory has never been equalled. Teach the children some of these speeches of our people, remarkable for their brilliant oratory.

We played games—games that brought good health and sound bodies. Why not put these in your schools? We told stories. Why not teach school children more of the wholesome proverbs and legends of our people? Tell them how we loved all that was beautiful. That we killed game only for food, not for fun. Indians think white men who kill for fun are murderers.

Tell your children of the friendly acts of Indians to the white people who first settled here. Tell them of our leaders and heroes and their deeds. Tell them of Indians such as Black Partridge,4 Shabbona,5 and others who many times saved the people of Chicago at great danger to themselves. Put in your history books the Indian's part in the World War.6 Tell how the Indian fought for a country of which he was not a citizen, for a flag to which he had no claim, and for a people that have treated him unjustly.

The Indian has long been hurt by these unfair books. We ask only that our story be told in fairness. We do not ask you to overlook what we did, but we do ask you to understand it. A true program of America First will give a generous place to the culture and history of the American Indian. We ask this, Chief, to keep sacred the memory of our people.

4. **Black Partridge**: a Potawatomi chief who befriended white settlers.
5. **Shabbona** (shāb’bō-nä): a member of the Ottawa people who befriended white settlers.
6. **World War**: World War I (1914–1918), in which Great Britain, France, the United States, and their allies defeated Germany, Austria-Hungary, and their allies.
Comprehension

1. Recall Why does Chief Canasatego not want to send Iroquois sons to be educated by the colonists?

2. Recall According to the Grand Council Fire of American Indians, how do textbooks refer to “Indian victories”?

Critical Analysis

3. Summarize Underlying Message Chief Canasatego’s speech has an unstated, or underlying, message. Summarize this underlying message.

4. Summarize Comparisons and Contrasts Review the chart you completed as you read “The First Americans.” Summarize the differences between what was being taught to children and what the Grand Council thought should be taught.

5. Analyze Irony Irony occurs when what the speaker says is different from what he or she actually means. Reread lines 16–19 of “Educating Sons.” What is the irony in these closing remarks? Explain your answer.

6. Analyze the Use of Rhetorical Devices Analyze lines 29–52 in “The First Americans” to identify all the instances of parallelism used by the Grand Council Fire. Think about what the use of this rhetorical device helps to emphasize. Also consider the emotions it stirs. What impact might this rhetorical device have had upon those listening to this speech?

7. Draw Conclusions About Values In a Y-chart like the one shown, list three values that Chief Canasatego and the Grand Council each argue are important in their cultures. List the values that are common to both cultures in the stem of the Y. What conclusion can you draw about how Native American values changed over time?

Extension and Challenge

8. Readers’ Circle With a group, decide what each author would say is the most important thing for young people to learn. Support your views with lines from the texts. Then discuss whether these things are still important today.

9. SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION Research the Battle of Little Bighorn or the Battle of Wounded Knee. What does this information add to your understanding of the Grand Council’s argument?

Who decides what’s IMPORTANT?

In Native cultures, the ability to speak eloquently and persuasively is highly esteemed. Having read the selections, would you add this skill to your list of “important and useful things you’ve learned in school”? Why or why not?
Vocabulary in Context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

For each item, choose the word that differs most in meaning from the other words. Refer to a dictionary if you need help.

1. (a) esteem, (b) revere, (c) admire, (d) scorn
2. (a) decline, (b) accept, (c) invite, (d) welcome
3. (a) loyal, (b) treacherous, (c) traitorous, (d) unreliable
4. (a) savage, (b) aristocrat, (c) scholar, (d) intellectual
5. (a) speeches, (b) oratory, (c) proclamations, (d) chitchat
6. (a) holy, (b) sacred, (c) sanctified, (d) profane

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING

- accurate  • bias  • contrast  • convince  • logic

In a discussion with your classmates, contrast two versions of the same event or interaction. Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your explanation.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ANTONYMS AND CONTEXT CLUES

You can often find context clues in the words and phrases that surround an unfamiliar word. Antonyms, or words with opposite meanings, provide one kind of context clue. For example, a passage in “The First Americans” reads: “White men call Indians savages. . . . We had [religion, philosophy, arts, music, history, and legend]. Then we were not savages, but a civilized race.” The words not and but signal that savages is an antonym for civilized race.

PRACTICE In each sentence, identify an antonym for each boldfaced word. Then define the boldfaced word.

1. Although I am ignorant of many things, I am very knowledgeable about cats.
2. I should feel obliged to her for the invitation, but I’m actually feeling ungrateful.
3. He was certainly not a patriot; in fact, he was a traitor to his country.
4. Please stop eating unhealthy food; eat something wholesome for a change!
5. My parents overlooked my untidy bedroom but punished me for lying.