

#### **American History Lesson 2 Overview**

**Main Ideas:** Symbols, Folklore and oral histories of the Oneida Indian Nation

**Grade level:** Fourth Grade

#### **Learning Objective:**

The goal is to introduce students to the idea that multiple sources may be used to gain deeper understanding of a topic. Students will practice analyzing visual information obtained from an image and connect those observations to text from a different source describing the same topic.

**Duration:** 45 minutes

#### **Set Up:**

- Display **Object Image** on screen or hand out copies of the image.
- Print out copies of **Close Looking Questions for Students** to record short answers
- After students complete recording their observations about image, display or print and hand out copies of **Background Information** text.

#### **Attachments:**

- **Image of Object for Enlargement**
- **Teacher Instructions**
- **Close Looking Questions for Students**
- **Background Information**

#### Teacher Instructions:

##### Part 1:

1. Print out a copy of the teacher instructions for reference during this exercise.
2. Hand out copies of image or project image onto a screen.
3. Instruct the students to discuss the picture in small groups.
4. Hand out and instruct the students to answer Image Observation Questions for Students
5. For this part, the students should work only from the image. Remind students the only wrong answer is “I don’t know”.
6. Instruct the students to take notes and collect visual information from the painting.
7. Come back together as a class and share answers to each question. This portion is not about finding the “right” answer, but to help students thoroughly examine the image.

##### Part 2:

8. Hand out and instruct students to read the background text about the artwork and the Oneida Stone.
9. Ask the following questions about the text to confirm understanding.
  - What did the Oneida Stone symbolize to their people?
  - Why did the Oneida Indians relocate or move so often?
  - What does the name Oneida mean in their native language?
10. Go back to the image, ask the students how the informational text changes or expands their original understanding of the image.

#### Background Information

##### About the Artwork:

Title: Oneida Stone, Utica Cemetery

Artist: Seth Eastman

Created before 1855

Watercolor, ink and graphite, on light cream, medium weight, wove paper

Overall: 9 11/16 x 12 7/8in. (24.6 x 32.7cm)

Object number: 2004.5

This watercolor served as the source for one of the engraved images published in Henry Schoolcraft's monumental, six volume History and Statistical Information Respecting the History, Condition, and Prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States (1853-56). The Oneida Stone is a large, geologically erratic igneous (syenite) boulder from which the Oneidas took their name. The "People of the Stone" consider this rock a sacred tribal symbol of prosperity and success. Eastman's watercolor depicts the stone on a raised mound of earth after it was removed in the fall of 1849 from ancestral Oneida tribal lands in central New York State to Utica's newly established Forest Hill Cemetery. At that time there were only about two hundred Oneidas living on a very small parcel of territory. The stone remained at Forest Hill until 1974 when it was returned to its owners. It sits today beside the Oneida Nation's territorial council house near Oneida, NY.

Dr. Paul D. Schweizer, MWPAI Director Emeritus

#### Background Information: The Story of the Oneida Stone

The Oneida people are one of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy or the Iroquois Nations. The six nations are the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca and the Tuscarora. This stone is an important symbol for the Oneida people. In their native language, Oneida means "People of the Standing Stone."

In the 15th century, before European settlers came to North America, the Oneidas lived in what is now Central New York. They lived in a village of bark-covered houses and every ten to fifty years, they would pick up and move their village a few miles away to a new location. Their villages can be traced continuously for four centuries to Madison County, NY: “from just south of Canastota (Nicholas Pond) to south of the present city of Oneida (Primes Hill).”<sup>1</sup>

The Oneidas relocated when firewood became scarce, when they had used up the nutrients in the soil and when their homes began to deteriorate.

According to legend or folklore, a large stone or boulder would appear and lead the Oneida people to the next location for their main village<sup>2</sup>. Another version of the folklore states that if the stone appears standing on end in the fork of a tree, the Oneida will be invincible in battle. The stone was regarded as a sacred object having a spiritual or holy purpose.

Folklore is a form of story passed down in a cultural group by oral storytelling, picture writing, or ceremony. The oral tradition surrounding the Oneida Stone may or may not be completely accurate, as the stories can change when different people pass it along and add their own interpretation.

Even though the scene of the Oneida Indians in the painting may not have actually happened in real life, the stone is still a symbol for their existence and strength as a nation. The stone, whether it was taken with the village as they moved, or appeared every time they reached their new location, provided the Oneidas with a sense of comfort and belonging.

The stone remained at Forest Hill Cemetery until 1974 when it was returned and sits today beside the Oneida Nation's territorial council house near Oneida, NY. They would always have the Oneida Stone there to represent them: The People of the Standing Stone.

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Wayne Wonderly and Hope Emily Allen. *Oneida Iroquois Folklore, Myth, and History* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 25. “Each principal village may have had a stone because more than one was described (Beauchamp 1922, 57)”

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oneidaindiannation.com/people-of-the-standing-stone/>

**Close Looking Questions for Students:**

1. Describe the setting of this picture.
2. Who are these people?
3. What do you think is happening?
4. Where is this event taking place?
5. When did this happen?
6. Describe the two figures, how are they dressed; what are they doing?
7. What is in the very center of the image? What does it look like?
8. Is the object in the center important to the people looking at it? Why do you say that?
9. What is the title of the image?