



SACRED STRIDES

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DURATION 12 min

Southeastern Utah's canyons are the ancestral home of several Native American tribes. So when the Trump administration slashed the area protected by the designation of Bears Ears National Monument, it wasn't just a blow to public lands — it was an affront to the tribes' sacred history. In March 2018, runners from the Hopi, Navajo, Ute and Ute Mountain Ute tribes ran relay-style on four routes that eventually converged near the rock spine of Comb Ridge. The run was not only a show of support for Bears Ears, but a way to reconnect to the land and heal their relationships with each other.



Standards

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR READING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 / Key Ideas and Details

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7 / Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10 / Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1/Text Types and Purposes

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4 / Production and Distribution of Writing

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5 / Production and Distribution of Writing

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR SPEAKING & LISTENING

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1/Comprehension and Collaboration

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5 / Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Tags native culture, Bears Ears, public land

Key Vocabulary sacred, preservation, sacrifice, unity

Filmmaker Interview



ANNA CALLAGHAN

Why did you become a filmmaker and how did you get started?

I started working as the in-house producer for a small production company in New Mexico in 2015 and got the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, from traditional commercials for big brands to documentary-style shorts. My background is in journalism, so I've always sought out stories to tell, and when I got the chance to learn how to tell stories visually through film, I jumped at it.

When you made the film, did you have a specific audience in mind?

Yes, we made the film for *Outside* magazine, which meant our audience was

both pretty broad and that there were no brand dollars at play. We didn't have a client to please, we simply were allowed to let the story play out however it did. If you were to reduce the film to narrow verticals, they'd be "running" and "culture" which are two topics *Outside* covers regularly. That said, when we first heard about this prayer run it was obvious that the tribes' deep history and relationship to the land was a super important perspective that hadn't been getting the coverage it deserved. We hoped their

Is there an action you hope people are inspired to take after seeing this film?

To listen to others, to consider others, and to think critically about everything that's going on with public lands in America.

What's the next big adventure or film project on the horizon for you?

I've been working on some short projects with Protect Our Winters and have a few other things cooking that will hopefully materialize soon.

"If you have a compelling story, don't take no for an answer. Keep trying, go make it yourself, do the best job you can and get it out there."

story and message would reach as big and wide of an audience as possible.

When editing the film, was there anything you wished you could have included in the final cut?

We shot this film for about seven days, so there is plenty of material on the cutting room floor. There were many meaningful moments and exchanges that we captured, and it all felt special and compelling, but we stayed focus on our story line and picked the pieces that best supported it.

What are some of the challenges you encountered while making this film?

This prayer run was deeply personal for the participants, and we really didn't want to interfere with their experience by being there and did our best to be there for important moments but also try to stay out of the way as much as we could.

What is one piece of advice you can give students that you wish someone had shared with you?

If you have a compelling story, don't take no for an answer. Don't be pushy or entitled about it, but keep trying, go make it yourself, do the best job you can, and get it out there. It might take a while, but everything will eventually fall into place if you approach projects with heart and work hard to tell a story.

Pre-Screening Activities

Depending on the amount of time available or the student population you support, here are four options for pre-screening activities. Regardless of which ones you choose, it is recommended that you complete at least Activity 1 to help students understand where Bears Ears is physically located and what it looks like.

Activity 1

For this activity, you will be showing students where Bears Ears is located on a map and pictures of what Bears Ears looks like, so they can familiarize themselves with the area.

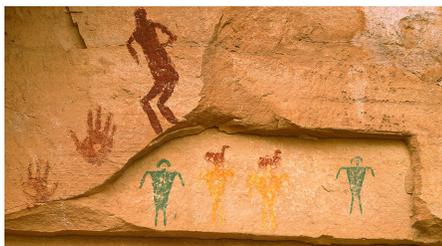
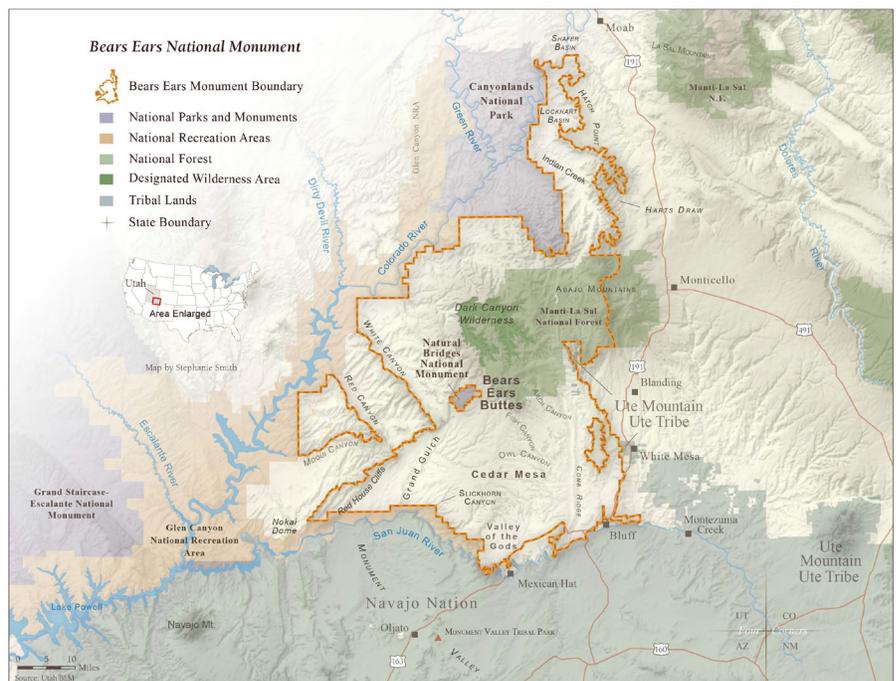
Link to the map of Bears Ears to the right, which you may want to cross-reference on a map of the United States: https://bearscoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/uw_BearsEars_Proclamation_8.5x11.pdf

Link to the “Remarkable Places” in Bears Ears, which has pictures of sights in Bears Ears like the ones below:

<https://bearscoalition.org/explore-remarkable-places-in-bears-ears/>

Link of a 1-minute, 30-second clip from CBS Sunday Morning News, which shows what Bears Ears looks like:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/nature-bears-ears-national-monument/>



Cedar Mesa, Photo: Bruce Hucko



San Juan River, Photo: Tim Peterson



Chimney Rocks, Photo: Josh Ewing

Activity 2

The word **sacred** can be an abstract term, which is a key concept to understanding the motivation of the runners in the movie, *Sacred Strides*. To help activate prior knowledge and strengthen vocabulary, you can complete the following activity as a whole class, small group or individually.

Give each student a sheet of paper and have them fold it into quarters. Have the students write the word **sacred** in the middle and label each box as **synonym**, **antonym**, **examples** and **non-examples**. If completing as a whole class draw a box on the board with four quadrants and write the word 'sacred' in the middle.

Example:

synonyms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• precious• religious• rituals• gods/ goddesses	antonyms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• unholy• unsacred• unprotected• ungodly• non-religious
examples <ul style="list-style-type: none">• churches• synagogues• national parks	non-examples <p>*Answers for this will vary depending upon the student population. Complete this box last, after students are more familiar with the word sacred</p>

Have the students complete synonyms, antonyms, and examples boxes prior to the non-examples as those will differ depending on the students you support. Since almost all of the antonyms start with the prefix un-, you could complete a quick mini-lesson on the meaning of the negative prefix un- and that it means “not.”

Example: If the word is unholy, and the prefix means “not” what do you think the word unholy means?

When finished with the quadrants, pair students to use the word sacred in a complete sentence. Pass out index cards and have the students use the word in a complete sentence, checking for COPS (see right).

Once done with their sentence and checking for grammar, have students share with the class. Once they have shared their sentence, have the class give a thumbs-up or thumbs-down as to whether or not the sentence is grammatically correct.

The pair sits down after they have shared their sentence and the class has agreed that their sentence is grammatically correct.

Checking for COPS

Capitalization

Organization

Punctuation

Spelling

Activity 3

Depending upon the level of support your students will need, you may pick and choose which parts would benefit the students you support. For the students who need the highest level of support, it is recommended to complete all parts.

Using [Newsela.com](https://www.newsela.com) (you create a free login using your school's Google Drive account or personal account), search for the following article:

- ***Nonprofit encourages young Native Americans to embrace running***

If you are not already familiar with Newsela, you can adjust the Lexile score according to the students you support, which is easy to differentiate for the whole class (i.e. you can print the same article with different reading levels, but it doesn't alter the meaning of the article). Since you will be interacting with the text multiple times, it is best for each student to have a physical copy of the article.

The article is about Wings of America, the organization that put on the run for Bears Ears, which the documentary is about.

PART ONE

Read through the article once as a whole group (this will only work if everyone is using the same Lexile Score), with the teacher's copy either projected or using a document-camera.

PART TWO

After reading the article, choose students to read the sections out loud. With the copy of the article projected, **circle the key terms** and **underline the claims** as a group.

There is no correct way to do this. The objective is to get students to interact with the text more than once and therefore deepen comprehension.

Example (taken from 1130 Lexile Score):

Dustin Martin runs, gliding over the sand, seemingly without sinking at all, as if he and the earth made a deal long ago.

Most runners would find it difficult to run on the sinking, winding path, made narrow by desert brush.

Martin, a Navajo from Gallup, New Mexico, is executive director of Wings of America, a nonprofit based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. It encourages Native American youth to embrace running as a cultural tradition and as a personal hobby. It also works to fight negative stereotypes associated with their community.

PART THREE

Divide the class into three to four groups or assign each student a section of the article (depending on the Lexile Score chosen, there are three to four sections of the article). The students can either work in small groups or individually to write a one or two sentence summary of each section. When done, they share their summary with the class. It is a bigger challenge for students to write a one sentence summary of the section.

Activity 4

The article “800 Miles with Bears Ears Prayer Runners” from *Outside Magazine* tells the story of the documentary, *Sacred Strides*. Feel free to either use a digital copy or physical copy of the article. It is easier for students to mark up the text if they have a physical copy. If they do have a physical copy, have the students number the paragraphs, so they can reference later on. You can access the article here: <https://www.outsideonline.com/2325341/bears-ears-run-prayer-run-native-american-youth-activists>

After reading the article, bring the students’ attention to the following quotes. In paragraph eight, where the author Anna Callaghan, states **“Prayer runs, which aren’t protests or purely awareness-raising events, are a more personal way to honor and interact with these places.”** In paragraph nine, Callaghan elaborates further, stating **“We took a nonpolitical stance, but a major intention behind this was bringing our people together to work together, to raise our voices about what’s going on in Bears Ears,”** says Brian Monongye, one of the run’s organizers and the liaison for the Hopi Tribe.

Write the following question on the board:

“Do you feel as though the mission of the prayer run was effective in raising awareness about Bears Ears and helping to protect it?”

Have students either agree or disagree with the question and designate parts of the room for the students to stand.

Example: If you agree that the prayer run was effective in raising awareness, stand by the blackboard. If you feel as though it was not effective, stand by the bulletin board.

Ask them to find pieces of evidence in the article to argue their opinion to each other. **Examples are given in the table (right) to help guide student thinking.**

Once students have collected more evidence, have them argue their point, using the sentence stem, **“I believe that the prayer run was an effective way to raise awareness about Bears Ears because ...”** Encourage students to cite evidence from the text. It is okay for students to move to another side once hearing the opinions of their classmates. On the board, write down students’ names under agree or disagree, to revisit after watching the documentary, *Sacred Strides*.

Agree	Disagree	Could be argued both ways
<p>“These weren’t racers—they were prayer runners. And this group represented a largely untapped generation of voices and activists, many of whom are young, in the current fight over public lands.” – Paragraph 2</p> <p>A little more than a year earlier, in December 2016, President Obama designated 1.35 million acres to protect this land as a national monument—a move that was almost entirely due to an unlikely alliance between five of the above tribes, who had put aside a long history of animosity to form the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition. – Paragraph 3</p>	<p>“Bears Ears is one of the most talked-about public lands under threat, though the conversation often glosses over how sacred it is to many Native Americans. Prayer runs, which aren’t protests or purely awareness-raising events, are a more personal way to honor and interact with these places.” – Paragraph 8</p> <p>“The future of the monument will play out in court. Various tribal groups filed three separate lawsuits against the Trump administration in late 2017, all of which question presidential authority under the Antiquities Act.” – Paragraph 9</p>	<p>“My whole life I’ve heard people talk about why we’re so different or why we can’t come together. One of the main purposes of this run was unity.” – Paragraph 6</p> <p>“According to Monongye, this puts the tribes in the position of having to demonstrate their claim to the land and prove to Western society that this is their homeland and that they have a long history and connection to it. “Nobody is going anywhere, so we’ve got to learn to live peacefully among each other,” Monongye says. “And it really begins with the young people to break those barriers down.” – Paragraph 10</p>

Discussion Guide

GENERAL/OPEN PROMPTS

1. Why is it important to preserve natural lands?
2. Why is it important to preserve Bears Ears?

EXPLORING SELF

1. What does sacred mean? What is something that is sacred to you?
2. What would you do to protect something sacred in your town and/or neighborhood? How could you raise awareness?
3. In the documentary, Dustin Martin, states “running in prayer, it becomes like breathing. You’re not thinking about what you’re doing or that you need it, but it’s just happening, and it is great when other people are involved with it, because they are breathing with you.” (4:30-5:06). Can you think of an activity that you do that you enjoy so much, it becomes like breathing? Why do you think that happens?
4. In the documentary, it is stated “You get nowhere in life by yourself” in reference to the multiple tribes working together to complete the run. Can you think of a time in your life when you needed the help of others?

EXPLORING THE WORLD

1. In the documentary, Jasmine Felipe, one of the runners, states “That’s just what I want. The respect of land, the respect of each other, the respect of culture and beliefs, and the respect of sacred sites because they’re not going to be here forever and once you lose that identity, once you lose your culture, your sense of spirituality, I don’t see the point of living, I don’t see the point of purpose.” Can you think of ways that we could uphold this philosophy worldwide? Is it possible to respect everyone’s point of view in the world?

EXPLORING FILMMAKING

1. The first 2 minutes and 30 seconds of the documentary juxtaposes the images of the vast landscape of Bears Ears and clips of the news with politicians/commentators. What do you think the purpose of this juxtaposition was? Do you think it was an effective way to enhance the meaning of the documentary?

EXPLORING SOCIAL ISSUES

1. In the documentary, Dustin Martin states that the purpose of Sacred Strides for Healing was to come together and to help bring unity among the tribes through the landscape and the best way to understand the landscape was to run it. Can you think of another way to communicate the importance of unity to protecting Bears Ears?
2. Dustin Martin states that along the run, they encountered some friction from locals in Utah regarding their run. He goes further stating that they (Sacred Runners) want to avoid confrontation. Do you think that avoiding confrontation was an effective or ineffective way to help preserve Bears Ears?

SENSE OF WONDER

1. What would happen if this land is developed?
2. Dustin states, “nothing is really sacred, unless your willing to fight for it.” What would you be willing to fight to protect?

Activities

Activity 1

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper
2. Pencils or pens

For this activity, students will be writing a paragraph about the purpose and effectiveness of the prayer runners in *Sacred Strides*. They will combine what they learned from the pre-screening activities and information from the film to write the paragraph.

On the board, write the following prompt:

“What was the purpose of the prayer runners in *Sacred Strides*, and was it effective? Give three reasons to support your thinking.”

Depending upon the level of scaffolding the students you support need, it could be helpful to complete the topic and conclusion sentence as well as bulleting the supporting details and pieces of evidence.

Have the students generate the three ideas on their own or as a group.

Another option to help support student thinking, is to list the three supporting details and then re-watch the documentary looking for pieces of evidence that support each supporting detail. Here’s a link to the film: <https://www.outsideonline.com/2333331/sacred-strides>

Example to guide student thinking:

TOPIC SENTENCE: The purpose of the prayer runners in the documentary, *Sacred Strides*, was to educate people about Bears Ears, to bring unity among tribes, and to help protect a sacred site.

SUPPORTING DETAIL 1: educate about Bears Ears

EVIDENCE 1: Bears Ears is the ancestral home of several Native American tribes.

SUPPORTING DETAIL 2: bring unity among the tribes

EVIDENCE 2: “You get nowhere in life by yourself” (8:34 in documentary)

SUPPORTING DETAIL 3: help protect a sacred site

EVIDENCE 3: Shrink from 1.35 million acres to just over 200,000.

CONCLUSION SENTENCE: *Sacred Strides* was an effective documentary that educated people about Bears Ears, brought tribes together, and helped protect a sacred site.

Activity 1 (cont.)

You do not have to use this paragraph organizer, but here is a template:

Prompt: **What was the purpose of the prayer runners in *Sacred Strides*? Was it effective? Give three reasons to support your thinking.**

Topic Sentence (use words from the prompt) _____

Supporting Detail 1 (use transition word) _____

Elaborate (evidence, examples, quote, explanation) _____

Supporting Detail 2 (use transition word) _____

Elaborate (evidence, examples, quote, explanation) _____

Supporting Detail 3 (use transition word) _____

Elaborate (evidence, examples, quote, explanation) _____

Conclusion Sentence (restate topic sentence and include three supports) _____

Transition Words Bank

first	next	after	in fact
second	after that	for example	as a result
third	finally	additionally	clearly
then	to begin with	in another case	above all

Activity 2

MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. 8 ½ x 11 sheet of paper
2. Pencils or pens
3. Markers or colored pencils

After watching the documentary, pair students off to discuss what is sacred to them. In order to complete this activity, make sure the students have a strong understanding of what the word sacred means (see activity two in the pre-screening activities).

On the board, write the following questions:

“What is something sacred to you? Why is it sacred?”

**An example for something sacred could be a pet, videogame, family, house, a favorite place, etc.*

Pair students off, making one **Partner A** and the other **Partner B**. **Partner A** will go first.

1. **Partner A** talks uninterrupted for 30 seconds as **Partner B** listens.
2. When the 30 seconds is up, **Partner B** repeats back what **Partner A** said (ex: “What I heard you say is...”).
3. **Partner A** then gives **Partner B** a thumbs-up or thumbs-down based upon their listening skills.
4. **Partner B** talks uninterrupted for 30 seconds as **Partner A** listens.
5. When the 30 seconds is up, **Partner A** repeats back what **Partner B** said.
6. **Partner B** then gives **Partner A** a thumbs-up or thumbs-down based upon their listening skills.

When students are done, pass out sheets of paper, markers, craft supplies, etc. and have them illustrate three things that are important to them about what is sacred to them.

Example: If I were to choose my dog as a sacred thing, I would illustrate it using a picture of him snuggling, a picture of him playing in the river and a picture of him smiling.

Another fun way to complete this task is to have each student think about a place that is sacred to them. They can create a small box that illustrates why the place is important, almost like a diorama.

Example: If I were to choose Telluride, Colorado as a sacred place, the box I created would be filled with Aspen leaves, a small amount of water from the San Miguel River and rocks from the mountain.

RECOMMENDED EXTENTIONS

There are several great op-eds online from Native voices arguing the preservation of Bears Ears and other Native Lands. Here are the links to some of them:

- *Bears Ears is Here to Stay*, by Angelo Baca, for the New York Times (December 2017):
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/08/opinion/bears-ears-monument.html>
- *Protecting indigenous lands protects the environment. Trump and Bolsonaro threaten both*, by Deb Haaland and Joenia Wapichana, for the Washington Post (March 2018):
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/18/protecting-indigenous-lands-protects-environment-trump-bolsonaro-threaten-both/>
- Commentary: A chance to restore the balance of Bears Ears, by Bears Ears Intertribal Coalition, for the Salt Lake Tribune (March 2019):
<https://www.sltrib.com/opinion/commentary/2019/03/10/commentary-chance-restore/>

After students have read 2–3 op-eds, encourage them to write their own op-ed as an assignment. Utah Dine Bikeyah, which translates to “people’s sacred lands” in the Navajo language is a nonprofit with a mission toward healing of people and the Earth by supporting indigenous communities in protecting their culturally significant ancestral lands. It has a great guide for writing letters to the editor about the preservation of Bears Ears, including important facts and buzzwords to use, as well as newspapers to submit to in the Four Corners region and Utah. Regardless of where your classroom is located, it is great practice to have students write an opinion letter. Here is the link to their website with directions: <http://utahdinebikeyah.org/letters-to-the-editor/>

Using the links above, ask the students to reflect on their learning to determine whether or not their opinion has changed about the preservation of Bears Ears. Feel free to use the paragraph outline (below) to help guide student thinking. This can be used either as a writing activity, or completed orally with partners (dependent upon time).

After reading the text, my view of the preservation of Bears Ears [has/has not] changed for the following reasons: first _____ and second _____
[Insert author] [insert verb] that (ex: Angelo Baca states that...) _____
This [affirms/challenges] my belief that _____
The most significant question the text raises for me is _____
Overall, this text taught me _____

REFERENCES

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