



Subject	Social Studies – Grades 6-8
Topic	Uncovering Cognitive Biases: Exploring the Impact on New World Explorers
Materials	Handouts describing interactions between European explorers and Native Americans
Standards	
Objective	<p>By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define the Overconfidence Bias and In-group Bias ● Identify examples of these biases in the interactions between European explorers and Native American cultures during the Age of Exploration ● Analyze the consequences of these biases on historical events
Warm Up (5 minutes)	<p>Begin the lesson by defining for your students the term "cognitive bias"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A cognitive bias is a type of mental shortcut or mistake in thinking that causes people to make poor judgments or decisions. ● It's like having a blind spot or a set of glasses that distorts how you see things. Even though you think you're being completely rational and objective, your brain can play tricks on you without you realizing it. <p>Provide examples of biases they may have encountered in their own lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overconfidence Bias: This causes people to overestimate their abilities, knowledge, or chances of being correct about something. Like someone who has just started taking guitar lessons thinking they are already an amazing guitarist. In reality, they are still just a beginner with a lot to learn. ● In-group Bias: This causes people to view members of their group (based on things like school, team, race, gender, etc.) in a more positive light than outsiders, without good reason. If you play sports you might think kids in band are not very athletic. Similarly, if you're in band you might think athletes lack talent in the arts. The in-group bias is when you favor people who are part of your group more than those who are not part of your group.
Short Lecture (5 minutes)	<p>Explain how cognitive biases such as overconfidence and in-group bias may have influenced the interactions between European explorers and Native American cultures during this period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overconfidence Bias: European explorers during the Age of Exploration often exhibited overconfidence in their abilities, technology, and superiority over the indigenous peoples they encountered. This overconfidence led them to

	<p>underestimate the challenges and complexities of exploring unknown territories and interacting with unfamiliar cultures. For example, explorers may have ventured into uncharted territory without adequately preparing for the risks involved, assuming their superior navigation skills and advanced weaponry would guarantee success. Additionally, overconfidence may have led explorers to disregard warnings or advice from indigenous peoples, dismissing their knowledge and expertise as inferior. As a result, explorers may have made reckless decisions or engaged in aggressive actions that exacerbated tensions and conflicts with Native American cultures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-Group Bias: European explorers viewed themselves and their fellow Europeans as superior to the indigenous peoples they encountered in the New World. This bias fueled a sense of cultural superiority and entitlement, leading explorers to perceive Native American cultures as primitive or inferior. Explorers may have discounted the rich traditions, knowledge systems, and social structures of Native American societies, instead viewing them through a European-centric lens. In-group bias also contributed to a lack of empathy and understanding towards Native American peoples, as explorers prioritized their interests and goals over the well-being and sovereignty of indigenous communities. This bias ultimately facilitated the exploitation, colonization, and displacement of Native American cultures by European powers.
<p>Group Activity (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Analyzing Historical Interactions</p> <p>Divide students into small groups and distribute handouts with scenarios depicting interactions between European explorers and Native American cultures.</p> <p>Ask students to provide an example of how overconfidence bias may have influenced the way European explorers perceived and treated indigenous peoples they encountered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did their overconfidence in their superiority shape their attitudes and actions? ● How did the explorers' belief that they were culturally superior to the natives influence how they treated them? <p>After 7 minutes, have each group present their analysis to the class. Facilitate a discussion about the consequences of these biases on historical events and relationships between European colonizers and Native American peoples.</p>
<p>Assessment (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Reflection and Discussion</p> <p>Lead a class discussion about the impact of cognitive biases on historical events and interactions.</p> <p>Ask students to reflect on how recognizing and understanding cognitive biases can help prevent similar biases from influencing their attitudes and actions in the present.</p>
<p>Closure (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Summarize the key concepts covered in the lesson and emphasize the importance of recognizing and mitigating cognitive biases in both historical and contemporary contexts. Encourage students to apply these critical thinking skills in their studies and daily lives.</p>

