

National Native American Hall of Fame  
2018 Inductee

**JOHN HERRINGTON**  
**CHICKASAW NATION**



**SCIENCE**  
**FIRST NATIVE AMERICAN ASTRONAUT**

1 - 2 50-minute class periods

## **SELECTED COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

### **CCSS Literacy SL 10-1**

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### **CCSS Literacy SL 10-1d**

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1**

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

### **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3**

Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

## **GOALS FOR UNDERSTANDING**

### **Students will understand**

- John Herrington made history as the first Native American astronaut to go into space

- Despite John Herrington’s background of frequent moves, he endeavored to persevere as a pilot
- Captain John Herrington is a member of the Chickasaw Nation
- John Herrington overcame many odds to become the first Native American astronaut

## **ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

What career achievements made John Herrington a legendary astronaut?

How did John Herrington honor his Chickasaw nation and all Native American nations when he traveled into space?

What types of challenges and obstacles did Captain Herrington overcome on his path to becoming the first Native American in space?

What can we learn from John Herrington’s attitude and life achievements that can influence our own lives?

## **ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE**

### **Suggested Formative Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

Active listening through note taking

Small group discussion

Class discussion

### **Culminating Performance Assessment of Learning Outcomes**

- Students will finish their own small group K/W/H/L charts
- Participate in a small group discussion
- Answer the essential questions when reporting out as a group to the class

## ENTRY QUESTIONS

Who is Captain John Herrington?

Why is John Herrington noteworthy enough to be in the National Native American Hall of Fame?

Of which Native American Nation is Captain Herrington a member?

## MATERIALS

Computer and internet access for the following videos is required. Additional written materials for printing is at the end of this lesson.

5-minute video of Captain Herrington speaking at Vancouver Community College  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZfR\\_solkC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZfR_solkC4)

8-minute video of Captain John Herrington speaking about his career  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=3&v=k651SZom6Ow&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=k651SZom6Ow&feature=emb_logo)

60-minute video of Captain Herrington giving a presentation and interview  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=34&v=LkDJu68c9Kk&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=34&v=LkDJu68c9Kk&feature=emb_logo)

115-minute video The Trail of Tears: Cherokee Legacy by Rich-Heape Films, Inc.  
<https://www.amazon.com/Trail-Tears-Cherokee-Legacy-Rich-Heape/dp/B01GWCL5CG>

## LEARNING MODALITIES

Audio/Visual: Students will watch videos of John Herrington to hear him describe his life growing up and how he became an outstanding student in order to achieve his dreams. These videos will provide students with the background to appreciate Captain Herrington's journey to becoming not just an astronaut, but an inspirational and visionary leader.

Writing/Recording: Students will take notes while observing the films, identifying key concepts, sentences or statements that John makes during his interview. These notes will be used to complete the K/W/H/L chart in the small groups.

## OVERT INSTRUCTION

- 1) The instructor will begin the lesson by creating a “K/W/H/L” Chart, which stands roughly for “What they Know/What they Want to Know/How to Research this topic/What they Learned” chart on the white board for the students to contribute their voices in a classroom exercise.
- 2) The instructor will ask the class to read the short biography of Captain John Herrington and follow that up with a brief discussion to begin the class K/W/H/L chart. Using the information in the bio, the students will help the instructor begin completing the chart.
- 3) The teacher will divide the class into groups of 4, with each person reading the longer biography article individually. Some of the words may be unfamiliar to students and searching for definitions may be a necessary part of this process.
- 4) After the reading, students will then watch the first two videos of Captain Herrington to hear his words and learn about his amazing life.
- 5) Following the video, students will spend 20 minutes answering the following questions in their small groups. Every team member will contribute, with one person recording the information on a separate sheet. This information can also be utilized for the group K/W/H/L chart.

### Questions

- a. How did John Herrington’s childhood help prepare him for the resilience he needed to become an astronaut?
  - b. John Herrington is the first Native American astronaut. What is an astronaut and how long has America had them?
  - c. During his career as an astronaut, how did John represent his Chickasaw community?
- 6) Following the small group discussions, each group will report out on their answers, and the answers will be included into the K/W/H/L chart.
  - 7) The instructor will open up the discussion to include any final thoughts, questions or insights about Captain John Herrington and his legacy.

**This concludes the first 50 minutes of the Lesson**

### **Extension Exercises**

- 1) Students who wish to continue their research on Captain John Herrington can watch the 60-minute video of his talk and interview and then write an essay that focuses on the following questions: How did John Herrington set a higher standard for Native American pilots? What type of qualities did John Herrington possess in order to achieve such a high level of excellence as a pilot and astronaut? What achievements and statements from John impressed you or impacted you the most?

### **CRITICAL FRAMING**

Instructors can provide context to John Herrington's life story by describing the historical circumstances that John inherited. As a member of a tribal nation that had to endure the Trail of Tears, John Herrington's heritage was one of resilience and honor. Considered to be one of the 5 Civilized Tribes, the Chickasaw were a resilient and strong nation, adopting much of western society, structuring their communities much like their white neighbors. Sadly, they were forcibly removed from their historical homelands and relocated to Oklahoma Indian Country, where the resources were scarce, and the nation sunk into poverty. John's family inherited this historic trauma, so the odds were stacked against John being successful, considering the horrific dispossession his ancestors experienced.

### **DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION FOR ADVANCED AND EMERGING LEARNERS**

John Herrington's story is universally compelling to all age levels and learning abilities. Utilizing both the written descriptions and the videos of him speaking allows for a multi-sensory approach for students to assimilate the information.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

NASA astronaut and Navy Commander, John Herrington was born in Wetumka, Oklahoma. A member of the Chickasaw tribe, John and his family moved around a great deal when he was a child. By the time he was a senior in high school John had moved fourteen times and had lived in Colorado, Wyoming and Texas. After an unsuccessful attempt at college, John worked on a survey team in the mountains of Colorado. There he found that he had an aptitude for math and for solving real-life problems. He returned to college at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and received his degree in Applied Math in 1983.

Having always wanted to be a pilot, Herrington joined the Navy and received his commission from Aviation Officer Candidate School in March of 1984 and was designated a Naval Aviator in 1985. He has logged over 3,300 flight hours in over 30 different types of aircraft. In 1995 Herrington received a master's degree in aeronautical engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School.

NASA selected Herrington in 1996 as an astronaut and he reported to the Johnson Space Center in August of that year. He has served as a member of the Astronaut Support Personnel team responsible for Shuttle launch preparations and post-landing operations. Herrington was a member of the sixteenth Shuttle mission to visit the International Space Station (November 23-December 7, 2002). He was the first Native American to walk in space. Herrington honored his Native American heritage during that walk by carrying six eagle feathers, a braid of sweet grass, two arrowheads and the Chickasaw nation's flag.

Commander Herrington is a life member of the Association of Naval Aviation, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs Alumni Association, a Sequoyah Fellow and a member of the American Indian Science and Engineering Society.