

Teaching Notes

The Twilight Saga and the Quileute Indian Tribe: Opportunity or Cultural Exploitation?

By

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Learning Outcomes:

- To explore impact of the media and pop culture
- To consider the ways the media portrays Indian people and the impact this has
- To explore issues of cultural understanding and cultural exploitation
- To consider the factors influencing economic development
- To discuss the ethical issues raised in pop culture in the *Twilight Saga*
- To learn about the Quileute Indian tribe and a significant issue they face
- To consider what *opportunity* and *exploitation* really mean in this situation
- To become familiar with methods of making decisions such as SWOT analysis and developing business plans

Audience: This case is suitable for students in high school or college classes and especially appropriate for classes in Native American studies, history, education, communications, sociology, public relations, business, ethics, and media.

Related Cases: Ralston, “Is your tribal land secure?” is about the Quileute tribe and their quest to make a land settlement with Olympic National Park to secure higher ground for the low lying village which is subject to flooding and at risk with rising oceans.

Related Materials: The 30 minute video *Twilight at Quileute* produced by the Reelz Channel and aired 9/28/09 is an excellent introduction to the Quileute Tribe and culture and their attitude towards the *Twilight* Saga. Produced by ReelzChannel, this video is available on UTUBE and on the Quileute Nation Website. One or more of the *Twilight* films might also be shown.

Suggested Implementation:

This case can be read and discussed in a three hour class. If the case is read outside of class time, the discussion can be done in 60-90 minutes. Doing the case in two hours is optimal if all of the discussion questions and reporting out is used. Dividing the class into small groups of 4-7 people is suggested with each group discussing some or all of the following questions. We suggest that the groups be randomly. The questions can be grouped under a theme, as suggested below, or

simply assigned out randomly to the groups. After the small group discussion each group prepares a poster summarizing their discussion and presents it to the whole class. This is followed by an all class discussion of issues raised by the case.

At the end of discussion, we recommend a short assessment exercise where students write short individual reflection papers on the case about what they learned which is turned in to the instructor. One essay question might be to list the 5 major lessons they took away from the case with another question focusing on personal application of the lessons, such as what they would do if they were a decision maker in a similar situation.

Suggested discussion questions with the class divided into 8 groups with themes:

Group 1 : Economic Development: Assessing the Twilight Opportunity through SWOT

What are the various opportunities Forks and the Quileute could take advantage of as a result of the popularity of the *Twilight* saga? Begin your group discussion by making a list of what has been done and then brain storming all the additional things that could be done. Then evaluate the options using a SWOT framework looking at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats Forks and the Quileute might face. SWOT is an environmental scanning methodology for looking at the internal and external environment as part of a strategic planning process. It helps match the organization of tribe’s resources, values, and capabilities with the environment in which it operates. Do two separate tables summarizing your conclusions for Forks and the Quileute. What does this opportunity mean to the Quileute and the businesses in Forks? Are they similar or different? In what ways? What would you decide to do on the basis of your analysis if you were a decision maker in Forks or Quileute? (This can be done in one group or with two groups with one doing the analysis for Forks and the other group doing the analysis for the Quileute.)

SWOT Analysis of the environment for pursuing popular interest in Twilight

Internal (attributes of the tribe or the town of Forks)	Strengths	Weaknesses
External (attributes of the environment)	Opportunities	Threats

Group 2: Economic Development: Assessing the Opportunity developing a business plan

Prepare a skeleton business plan and a set of recommendations to the Tribal Council about how the Tribe might take advantage of the *Twilight* opportunities while still being respectful of the Tribe’s history and culture. Start by making a list of what they have already done. Now consider what more might be done. What is it you want to do? What is your mission? The business plan should include a list of factors that need further exploration before making any decisions such as the market for your product, the organization and management required, the service or product line, the funding required for start up, the financial estimates that make this viable. Be sure to also

include a rationale for any steps you recommend. Be sure to consider the return on investment using different scenarios and look at the opportunity costs/trade-offs.

Group 3: Tribal Stakeholders look at the Opportunity and Concerns

Divide your group into the following roles: artists, cultural preservation interests, economic development interests (resort, store, restaurant etc), elected tribal officials, and any other groups you think appropriate, and look at the “opportunity” and concerns *Twilight* offers from each of your perspectives to present to the tribal council on what should be done. Are there ways to use this as an opportunity? Why might some not see this as an economic opportunity? What is the economic opportunity and what are the costs?

Group 4: Standing in Others’ Shoes

1. What factors might promote and hinder people in Forks collaborating with the Quileute in promoting *Twilight*? If you were a shop owner in Forks what could you do to involve the Quileute in the *Twilight* opportunities?
2. Do any structures already exist that might provide an arena to discuss collaboration?
3. Looking at this situation from the perspective of the Quileute what might you like to see happen in terms of working with people in Forks and the *Twilight* industry?
4. How do you think decisions get made about promoting *Twilight* opportunities in Forks and on the Quileute Reservation? Do you think different decision making procedures would be better? What would they look like?

Group 5: The influence of pop culture and the media

1. Does pop culture influence teenagers? How does it influence youth?
2. What are the messages teenagers are likely to draw from the *Twilight* Saga?
3. What are stereotypes? Why are they undesirable? How are they perpetuated?
4. What are media images and stereotypes of American Indians?
5. Prepare an argument for and against the assertion that the influence of pop culture in the *Twilight* Saga is of concern and carefully describe the reasons underlying each position.

Group 6: For *Twilight* Readers Only

1. Prepare a character analysis of how Native Americans and Jacob in particular are portrayed in *Twilight* and be prepared to explain your description in detail to people who have not read the books.
2. Are you concerned about the *Twilight* Saga conveying inaccurate stereotypes of the Quileute? If yes, why and what are they? If no, why not?
3. Write a draft letter to Stephenie Meyer and the filmmaker suggesting what changes they might have made in her books to provide a better description of the Quileute.

Group 7: Cultural Exploitation, Cultural Misunderstanding or just Opportunity?

1. Is this an instance of cultural appropriation and/or cultural exploitation and/or opportunity? In what ways and by whom? Make lists of each.
2. Who are the key players in this case and what is their point of view? What's motivating them? Trace the steps taken in this case and explain the evolution of their thinking.

Group 8: Ethical Issues and the Twilight Saga

1. Does this case raise ethical issues? What are the ethical issues raised in this case?
2. Does the fact that the Twilight stories are fictional allow the author the poetic license to mis-represent Quileute culture?
3. When does free enterprise interfere with cultural sensitivity?
4. How do legal issues differ (if they do) from issues of fairness in this case? How are standards of fairness developed and shared? What do you suggest as appropriate standards of fairness in this case?
5. Who should take what steps to ensure that fairness is the standard on the issues raised in this case?

Additional research:

Opportunities for additional research could also be designed around 1) exploring media coverage of *Twilight*, or 2) studying issues related to the portrayal of Native Americans in literature and film, or 3) doing in depth research on the cultural and economic impact of *Twilight*. Students could also research *Twilight* blogs and websites to write a research paper on the issue of what kind of moral messages this series raises.