

1.7.2 - ‘Iolani Palace- A Symbol of Hawaiian History, Identity, and Community

The Asian American Education Project

Grade Levels	1
Lesson Overview	<p>According to the California History/Social Studies Standards, students in first grade study, “the varied backgrounds of American citizens and learn about the symbols, icons, and songs that reflect our common heritage.” However, most lessons addressing this standard tend to exclude the varied and diverse backgrounds of non-white American citizens, especially Native Hawaiians. For instance, ‘Iolani Palace represents the rich history of the Hawaiian Kingdom and it continues to serve as a symbol of Hawaiian identity; and yet, its significance is rarely taught in schools. It is important to include the perspectives and histories of Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, who struggle to preserve their identity.</p> <p>This lesson addresses the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1.3 Students know and understand the symbols, icons, and traditions of the United States that provide continuity and a sense of community across time.
Lesson Objectives	<p>Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe the history of ‘Iolani Palace ● Explain how ‘Iolani Palace serves as a symbol of Native Hawaiian history and identity

Lesson Implementation:

This lesson can be completed in one instructional session or over a period of one week. Here are options for lesson implementation:

- One instructional session: Complete Activity 2 plus Discussion Questions.
- Two instructional sessions: Complete Activity 2 plus Discussion Questions and one option from Activity 4.
- Three instructional sessions: Complete Activity 2 plus Discussion Questions, one option from Activity 3, and one option from Activity 4.
- One week: Complete Activity 1, Activity 2 plus Discussion Questions, one option from Activity 3, one option from Activity 4, and one extension activity.

‘Iolani Palace Essay:

Today, Hawai‘i is a U.S. state. But, before 1959, it used to be its own kingdom. It had its own rulers. The last five rulers of Hawai‘i lived in ‘Iolani **Palace**.

The Palace is in Honolulu. Honolulu is the capital of Hawai‘i. The Palace was built in 1882 on **sacred** land. Some people believe it was an **ancient** burial site of Hawaiian chiefs.



King Kamehameha III ruled from 1825 to 1854. He bought the lands. He turned the area into the center of royal life. The Palace was simple. But it was still the grandest house in town. Its purpose was to host important people. The rulers slept in their own homes.

Future kings added more rooms to the Palace. They added towers. They added a private library. They added bedrooms. They were inspired by European rulers. They wanted 'Iolani to look just as grand.

'Iolani Palace was named for King Kamehameha IV. He ruled from 1855 to 1863. His given name was Alexander Liholiho Keawenui 'Iolani. The name refers to 'Io, which means royal hawk.

Queen Lili'uokalani ruled from 1891 to 1893. She was the first Hawaiian queen. She was also the last Hawaiian ruler. The U.S. government wanted Hawaiian lands for its resources. They **overthrew** the Hawaiian **monarchy** in 1893. They held Queen Lili'uokalani under house arrest. 'Iolani Palace became her jail.

'Iolani Palace is special. It has many meanings. It is a **symbol** of Hawaiian history and culture. It is the only official state home of royalty on U.S. soil. It also has features seen nowhere else in the world.

Activists wanted to **restore** the Palace. They wanted to **preserve** it. Today, 'Iolani Palace is a museum and historic landmark. It's also a place where Native Hawaiians come together to **protest**. It symbolizes Hawaiian power. It also symbolizes where Hawaiians lost their kingdom. Activists are still fighting for freedom and independence.

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Vocabulary:

- **Ancient:** of or relating to a time early in history
- **Monarchy:** absolute rule by a single person
- **overthrow:** to cause the downfall of
- **Palace:** the official home of a ruler
- **Preserve:** to keep or save for future generations
- **Protest:** to fight for something
- **Restore:** to return to its original state

- **Sacred:** holy or special
- **Symbol:** a thing that represents or stands for something else

¹ Definitions adapted from Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some differences between Hawai‘i today and Hawai‘i in the past?
2. What is ‘Iolani Palace?
3. Why was ‘Iolani Palace built?
4. Where was ‘Iolani Palace built?
5. What inspired the style and name of ‘Iolani Palace?
6. Who was Queen Lili‘uokalani? What is her connection to ‘Iolani Palace?
7. Why is ‘Iolani Palace special?
8. Why is ‘Iolani Palace a historic landmark? (What does it mean to be a historic landmark?)
9. Why is ‘Iolani Palace a site of protest?
10. How and why is ‘Iolani Palace linked to the community, both in the past and the present?

Activity 1: The Importance of Symbols and Introducing ‘Iolani Palace (Suggested Time: 20 minutes)

Students will be introduced to the concept of symbolism and share their prior knowledge about Hawai‘i.

1. Have students draw a picture of their “home.” Have them label all the things that make their home special to them.
2. Ask students: What does home mean to you?
3. Tell students that symbols are things that stand for something else. Ask them the following questions: What does your home symbolize for you? How does your home represent you?
4. Tell students that symbols can be used to represent big ideas, like American identity. Have students make a list of “American” symbols (i.e., flag, eagle, cheeseburger, baseball, etc.).
5. Show students a picture of the White House. Ask students the following questions:
 - a. What is this?
 - b. Who lives there?
 - c. Why is it important to us?
6. Show students a picture of ‘Iolani Palace. Ask students if they know what this is. Have students compare and contrast ‘Iolani Palace and the White House.
7. Tell students that ‘Iolani Palace is an important place in Hawai‘i. If needed, show students where Hawai‘i is on a map. Have students share their prior knowledge about Hawai‘i (if any). Ask students what they think about when they think about Hawai‘i.
8. Tell students that they are going to learn how and why ‘Iolani Palace is a symbol for Hawaiian history and culture.

Activity 2: Exploring ‘Iolani Palace’s Past and Present (Suggested Time: 40 minutes)

Students will learn about the history of ‘Iolani Palace (for example, when it was built and who lived in it) and the changes the Palace has gone through over time. Students will draw connections to how ‘Iolani Palace

represents Hawai‘i’s past and future.

1. Read the essay aloud to students. Choose one of these options:
 - a. OPTION 1: Create a slide deck with the essay content and add visuals. Read the essay aloud to the students.
 - b. OPTION 2: Write each section on large chart paper. As you read each section aloud, draw visuals in collaboration with the students.
2. Facilitate a discussion (see Discussion Questions) about the essay to ensure comprehension.
3. Have students create a timeline based on the essay. Ask students, “How and why did ‘Iolani Palace change over time?”
4. Guide students on a [virtual tour of ‘Iolani Palace](#). Show students each room and have them take note of the artifacts that they notice in each room.
 - a. Have students draw the object that stood out most to them.
 - b. Have students pair-share with a partner and discuss why this object stood out to them and what they think the purpose is.
 - c. Have students share out with the entire class.
5. OPTIONAL: Have students watch the video (or clips of it) entitled, “[A King’s Noble Vision](#).”
 - a. Ask students, “What else did you learn from this video?”
 - b. Have students add important dates to the timeline created earlier.
6. Facilitate a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - a. “How does ‘Iolani Palace serve as a symbol for Native Hawaiians?”
 - b. “How does ‘Iolani Palace represent Hawai‘i’s past?”
 - c. “How does ‘Iolani Palace represent Hawai‘i’s present?”
 - d. “How does ‘Iolani Palace represent Hawai‘i’s future?”
 - e. “Why is it important to preserve ‘Iolani Palace?”
 - f. “How has your knowledge of Hawai‘i changed after this lesson? In what ways has your perception of Hawai‘i changed because of this lesson?”
7. OPTION: Have students discuss ways that they can be a better tourist if and when they visit Hawai‘i. Have students discuss what it means, in general, to be a responsible tourist or guest.

Activity 3: Inquiry Projects on ‘Iolani Palace (Suggested Time per Option: 30-40 minutes)

This activity offers two options for teachers to use to have students further build their knowledge on ‘Iolani Palace and to understand the power of symbols.

Teachers can choose one or more of the following options:

1. OPTION 1: Have students learn more about the [different rooms/areas that were restored in the palace](#). Have students work in small groups. Have each group learn more about one designated area or artifact of the palace. Have each group make a diorama or model replicating the room or artifact, using items available to them. Have each group write a tag or caption for their creation. Display the dioramas/models around the room and have students do a gallery work and discuss what they learned.

2. OPTION 2: Have students research a palace of another ruler. Have them compare and contrast that palace to 'Iolani Palace. Have students write about why palaces are important symbols.

Activity 4: 'Iolani Palace's impact on Native Hawaiian Communities (Suggested Time per Option: 30 minutes)

This activity offers two options for assessing students' comprehension about 'Iolani Palace and its importance to Native Hawaiians.

Teachers can choose one or more of the following options:

1. OPTION 1: Have students choose an object that serves as a symbol of something important to them. Host a "Show and Tell" activity.
 - a. Have each student present their objects by addressing the following questions: "What is your object? What does your object symbolize? How so?"
 - b. Facilitate a discussion by asking students, "What would happen if someone took your object away from you? How was 'Iolani Palace taken away from Native Hawaiians? How might they have felt about it?"
 - c. Have students write a paragraph answering this question: "Why is 'Iolani Palace important to Hawaiians?"
2. OPTION 2: Show students the [video of the 125th Anniversary of the Overthrow of Hawaii](#). Ask students to summarize what they learned.
 - a. Facilitate a discussion by asking students, "Why did Hawaiians gather together in front of the 'Iolani Palace? How did Hawaiians in the video demonstrate their sense of community?"
 - b. Have students create an art piece (i.e., drawing, painting, collage, etc.) that shows 'Iolani Palace as a place that provides community. Have students write a caption for their art piece that includes the following:
 - i. Description of their art piece
 - ii. At least one way 'Iolani Palace creates community

Extension Activities (Suggested Time per Option: 30-60 minutes)

1. Read aloud the "Q is for Queen Lili'uokalani" page from [A is for Asian American](#) by Virginia Loh-Hagan. Have students summarize what they learned. Have them do more research about the Queen. (Consider showing the PBS American Masters video entitled, "[Queen Lili'uokalani - The First and Last Queen of Hawai'i](#)".)
2. Have students create [a classroom quilt](#) inspired by Queen Lili'uokalani. Make sure students include important symbols. Have them pair-share and discuss the meanings behind the designs.
3. Have students act as virtual tour guides of 'Iolani Palace. Have them use the [virtual tour of 'Iolani Palace](#) and share information about the palace to family members or peers.
4. Have students watch one or more of the [videos](#) about the subjects of the fourteen portraits of Hawaiian monarchs hanging in 'Iolani Palace. Have students draw a picture of the person and write a short biography.

5. Have students learn more about [Hawaiian Kingdom Royal Orders](#)—insignia bestowed by Hawaiian sovereigns. Have students create their own [royal order](#) that they can use to honor themselves or someone they care about. Have students discuss the symbolism behind the royal orders and the designs.
6. Have students write a letter to the [Friends of Iolani Palace](#) thanking them for their work in preserving the Palace. Have students include at least one reason why it's important to preserve the Palace for future generations.

Further Information:

Note: These lessons will enhance the teacher's knowledge. They are not designed for first graders.

The Asian American Education Project lesson entitled, “National Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement”:

<https://asianamericanedu.org/3.3-Native-Hawaiian-Sovereignty-lesson-plan.html>

The Asian American Education Project lesson entitled, “AAPI Women Voices: Identity & Activism in Poetry”:

<https://asianamericanedu.org/aapi-women-voices-identity-activism.html>

The Asian American Education Project lesson entitled, “Asian American Pacific Islander Women Poetic Elements”:

<https://asianamericanedu.org/asian-american-pacific-islander-women-poetic-elements.html>