Dr. Delbert Blair: Indigenous America, Mound Builders, and Historical Interpretation

Grades 6 to 12 | Ma’at Standard | Five Day RST

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Date _____ Class _____

Essential Question

How did Dr. Delbert Blair interpret the ancient American past, and how can archaeological evidence and Indigenous histories help us evaluate historical narratives?

NJSLS and CCLS Connections

NJSLS Social Studies: 6.1.8.HistoryUP.3.b; 6.1.8.HistoryCC.3.a; 6.3.8.CivicsPI.4. NJSLS ELA: RI.CR.6.1, RI.CI.6.2, W.AW.6.1, SL.PE.6.1. CCLS: RH.6–8.1, RH.6–8.2, RH.6–8.9, WHST.6–8.1. Grades 9 to 12 extensions: RH.9–10.1, RH.11–12.1 and WHST.9–12.1. Grade 6 pathways are not high school indicators; select the relevant adopted grade expectations.

Interdisciplinary Inquiry

History and ELA examine claims, attribution and Indigenous achievement. Geography locates three distinct earthwork sites. Mathematics interprets a classroom model. Science tests measurement consistency. Reported summaries of Blair’s lectures are not verified transcripts; distinguish his interpretations from archaeological findings.

Day 1 | Source A

Do Now

What makes a historical account credible, and whose voices have often been excluded?

Source A: Blair and the question of historical authority Dr. Delbert Blair was a Chicago-based educator and lecturer whose work combined African-centered historical inquiry with spiritual and metaphysical interpretations. His lectures challenged accounts that placed European knowledge at the center of human history. A student investigating Blair must distinguish three things: the claims Blair actually made, the evidence he cited, and the conclusions supported by independent research. A recorded lecture can establish his words and reasoning, but it does not automatically establish the accuracy of every historical claim. Historical context Nineteenth-century writers sometimes promoted the false idea that North American earthworks were built by a vanished people unrelated to living Native nations. This “Mound Builder myth” denied Indigenous peoples credit for monumental construction. Archaeological investigations and Indigenous histories show that Native societies built these earthworks. Asking who controls a historical narrative is therefore a legitimate part of historical inquiry. Source Analysis and Historical Evidence Source A continued: What counts as evidence? Historical claims may be supported by dated records, excavation reports, material artifacts, oral histories, and testimony from descendant communities. Different sources answer different questions. An original lecture recording establishes what Blair said; an excavation report documents what researchers found at a site. An Indigenous oral history may preserve knowledge of a place, community, or tradition. Comparing these sources is corroboration. Inquiry task Identify one claim about Indigenous history that can be investigated archaeologically. Identify one claim about Blair that requires his original recorded words. Explain why these questions need different sources.

Quick Write

Explain how the Mound Builder myth distorted Indigenous history and why Blair’s challenge to conventional narratives deserves examination.