

NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

6-8

Subject

Social Studies

Lesson Title

Te Ata Fisher: The Award-winning Chickasaw Storyteller

Activity Description: Mary Francis Thompson (18895-1995), also known as Te Ata Fisher, was an award-winning Chickasaw actress who was well-known for cultural storytelling and performance. As a member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, her life tells an adventurous story of performances from summer camps to royal audiences. Her career accomplishments were built on her vast collection of Native American stories and songs that she shared in her traveling performances. In this activity complete an information scavenger hunt and be inspired as you learn about Te Ata's storytelling.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi access (recommended)
- Paper and pen/penci
- ["Te Ata" biographical entry](#) by the Oklahoma Historical Society
- [Mary "Te Ata" Thompson Fisher: 1895 - 1995](#) entry from the Chickasaw Hall of Fame
- ["Te Ata Inspirational Storyteller" video](#) from Chickasaw TV

STEPS

Te Ata Fisher is considered an asset to Native American people because of her national fame as a cultural storyteller and her collection of stories and songs. Her life is very adventurous and fascinating. This activity is like a scavenger hunt in which you read or listen to several sources to fill in the missing information below to learn more about the life of Te Ata Fisher. It will be helpful if you read all of the questions first before beginning your information hunt.

Information Sources:

- Read this short life [history of "Te Ata \(1895-1995\)"](#) from the Oklahoma Historical Society.
- Read this biography entry ["Mary "Te Ata" Thompson Fisher: 1895 - 1995"](#) from the Chickasaw Hall of Fame.
- Watch this brief video clip about ["Te Ata Inspirational Storyteller"](#) video from Chickasaw TV.

Scavenger Hunt Questions:

1. The name "Te Ata" means _____.
2. Te Ata Fisher attended college first at _____.
3. Te Ata met her husband named _____ in the city of _____.
4. Besides acting, Te Ata also accomplished other things such as (1) _____, (2) _____ and (3) _____.
5. Te Ata received several awards and honors including (1) _____, (2) _____ and (3) _____.
6. Te Ata traveled across the US and to other countries to perform. She performed for famous people such as (1) _____, and (2) _____.
7. Te Ata is considered an asset (or value) to Native Americans because _____.
8. Te Ata did things differently than most Native women in her time period because she _____.

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HELPFUL TIPS

Parents and caregivers: The life of Te Ata Fisher is a great inspiration for the entire family. Her life teaches us that the stories of the ancestors and elders are to be remembered, valued, and shared. Te Ata also recorded some of these stories. If you have younger children in your family, tell them about Te Ata Fisher and watch this video on [YouTube to hear one of her tales *Baby Rattlesnake*](#) which became a children's book.

To support your child's information scavenger hunt activity, the full-length movie *Te Ata*, produced by the Chickasaw Nation, is also available to rent or buy. This movie is not only educational but can also inspire young people to see the value in storytelling as a critical method to sustain their heritage and community. Here are two ways to access the movie:

- Visit the official [Te Ata movie website](#)
- Rent or buy the movie [digitally from Amazon.com](#)

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Families and educators: Te Ata Fisher's life and career spanned across a time in which digital film and recording capabilities were either non-existent or limited. While there are few accessible primary sources remaining, the *Pampa Daily News* archive has this newspaper clipping from 1976 ["Stories Become Art for Te Ata"](#) which would complement any lesson about Te Ata

For classroom learning, Chickasaw TV, the producers of the *Te Ata* movie, also provide [this curriculum called "Bearer of the Morning: Te Ata"](#) for the classroom to complement the movie.

Activity Resources:

- "Te Ata" entry from the *Oklahoma Historical Society* <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=TE001>
- Mary "Te Ata" Thompson Fisher: 1895 - 1995 entry from the *Chickasaw Hall of Fame* <https://hof.chickasaw.net/Members/1990/Te-Ata-Fisher.aspx>
- "Te Ata Inspirational Storyteller" video from *Chickasaw TV* <https://www.chickasaw.tv/playlists/trending/videos/te-ata-inspirational-storyteller>

Additional Resources:

- "Maria Tortilla's Storytime: *Baby Rattlesnake* told by Te Ata" YouTube by Maria Cisneros Toth <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kb9QppdGH-Y>
- The official *Te Ata* movie website <http://www.teatamovie.com/>
- *Te Ata* movie available digitally from Amazon.com https://www.amazon.com/Te-Ata-Qorianka-Kilcher/dp/B076FGGX2S/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=te+ata&qid=1551363600&s=gateway&sr=8-1
- "Stories Become Art for Te Ata" (1976) *Pampa Daily News* <https://www.newspapers.com/clip/19422636/stories-become-art-for-te-ata/>
- "Bearer of the Morning: Te Ata" movie curriculum by Chickasaw TV https://chickasaw.net/getattachment/Our-Nation/History/Chickasaw-Nation-Curriculum/Bearer-of-the-Morning/TeAta_Curriculum_Secondary_StudentEdition.pdf.aspx