

Celebrating Cultural and Family Traditions

Ready!

- This unit could take from 15 to 60 minutes depending on how much information you cover and the amount of discussion you draw out. For tips on encouraging good discussions, see “Drawing the Best out of Your Students” on the www.arfamilies.org/family_life/educators.
- This lesson is intended for students K-6. Use more in depth discussion for older ages.
- Read through the applications and customize them to your personality, objectives, and the audience that you will be instructing.

Grab!

- Materials: 7” White paper plates, popsicle sticks, markers, tape, stapler, hole punch, scissors, Multicultural hand puppets (if you have them), Map of the United States (also optional)
- Take a copy of the handout for each participant.
- Duplicate enough copies of the pattern from the activity for each student.
- If you plan to evaluate the session, take a copy of the evaluation form for each participant.

Go!

What are some things you celebrate in your family?

[Discuss and listen carefully. You may wish to share some of your own celebrations.]

Do you think that every family celebrates the same way? Why or why not?

[Discuss and listen carefully. You may wish to share some of your own celebrations.]

Today we are going to talk about the family traditions of another culture. Culture is the way a certain group of people believe, worship, play, eat, and dress. Not everyone lives the same. Do you think that American Indians have a different culture than you? Why or why not?

[Discuss briefly. Consider each answer carefully.]

The Northwest Indian culture thrived in what we know as Washington, Oregon and northern California. Many small tribes such as the Makah, the Chinook and the Tillamook lived in this area.

[You may use the map to show the participants where this area is located on the United States map.]

Most homes were made of wood. The villages pointed toward the water, whether it was a river, a quiet bay, or the ocean. The homes were quite large. They were built for more than one family. There is evidence of houses that were over 1,000 feet long – big enough for the whole village. Why, do you think, more than one family lived together?

[Discuss briefly. Answers may include: security, wise use of resources, etc.]

Outside of each home was a totem pole. A totem pole was a tall, carved log painted and decorated. The totem pole told a story of the history of the family. You could tell a family's importance by looking at their totem pole. If your family had a totem pole, what do you think would be on it?

[Discuss and share your own ideas.]

Another way a family showed its importance was to have a potlatch. A potlatch was a “party” given by important members of the village. But instead of the guests bringing gifts to the family, the family gave gifts to the guests. Sometimes the family would give away almost everything they owned. The potlatch was a way of showing off their wealth and importance. Would you like to have a potlatch at your home?

[Pause for response.]

Why or why not?

[Pause for response.]

How would it make you feel?

[Pause for response and discussion.]

When a child was old enough, the time had come to learn the history of the family. The mother and grandmother would tell the child the history of their family over and over. This was a very long story telling of the good deeds, important events, and honors of the family. This was a very important thing for the children to remember and pass on to their children some day. Why would they want to pass on stories?

[Suggest that students go home and ask their parents to share family stories with them.]

The Makah were a tribe of Northwest Indians. They lived in what is now the state of Washington. They were great whale hunters. This was very

dangerous because the whale might turn and cause the canoe they were fishing in to tip over or break. The harpooner would throw his harpoon into the side of the whale. A rope was tied to the end and all the men held on tightly. Eventually the whale would tire and stop fighting. When the whale was brought to the village there was much celebrating! How do you think they celebrated?

[Discussion – You may suggest that every part of the whale was used. The skin and meat were eaten, the blubber, or fat, was used for oil, and the tendons were used to make rope.]

Remember when I said that the family would pass down stories to the younger children? Many times the storytellers of the Northwest tribe would use masks to tell their stories. The masks were made of wood and painted with different designs. The mask carvers would often get their ideas from the wild animals around them. In this way the people would live in harmony with nature. In honor of that tradition we are going to make our own story telling masks today.

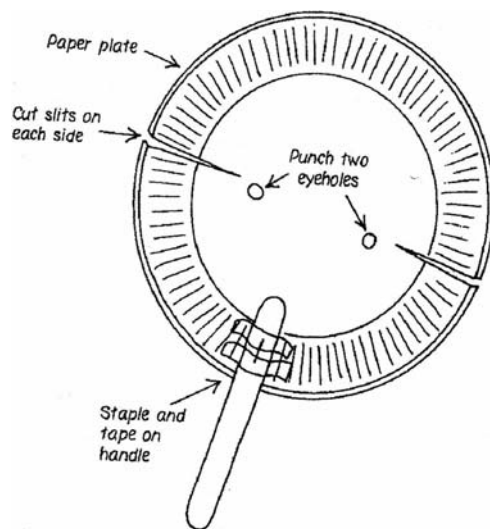
[Show a finished product if you have one in advance. Clearly go over directions. Assign helpers. Distribute materials. Maintain order in the classroom. Do activity. After activity, thank everyone for coming.]

Original work by Lucy Williams

Celebrating Cultural and Family Traditions Mask Activity

Directions:

1. Cut two slits (about 2") on each side of the paper plate directly across from one another.
2. Punch two eyeholes.
3. Staple and/or tape the Popsicle stick to the inside of the plate at the bottom.
4. Turn the plate over and decorate the plate bottom with markers. Make an animal face.
5. Overlap the slits and staple closed.



Bear



Wolf



Bird

Celebrating Cultural and Family Traditions

Please answer the following questions in order to help us know whether this session was helpful to you.

1. This workshop gave me specific ideas that will be helpful to me.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

2. I think this session will help me be a better family member.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

3. I am glad I attended this workshop.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Comments or suggestions: