

The Planting Song

An Additional Activity to a Broader Unit on Native American Culture

Grades: 3-5

Length: 3 20-minute sessions

Materials:

- “The Planting Song” poem from the Osage Indian culture (below)
- a variety of simple musical instruments (optional)
- MOVenture CD # 24 as soft accompaniment in background

National Content Standards

Social Studies: *1 - Culture; 2 - Time, Continuity and Change*

Dance: *1 – Performing; 2 - Choreographing; 7 - Interdisciplinary Connections*

Language Arts: *1 - Reading a Wide Range of Print and Non-Print Texts; 9 - Diversity*

Insert Figure #57

Objectives - The students will:

- interpret a Native American poem through dance and music
- describe what a ‘theme’ is
- develop and memorize a movement sequence
- work in small groups to create an ending to a dance

Introduction

“One way we can enjoy another culture is by studying its forms of expression. Cultures reflect themselves through their arts and crafts, such as weavings, sculpture, poetry, dance, music, and costumes. In our next activity, we are going to listen to a poem by the American Osage Indians, and then interpret the poem through movement and shape. This poem, ‘The Planting Song’, is about something particular. It has a ‘theme’, a single idea that was important to the poet. As I read the poem, can tell what the ‘theme’ is? In other words, what is the poem telling us about?”

The Moving Adventure

1. Session 1: Read “The Planting Song” to the students:

THE PLANTING SONG	Line
I have made a footprint, a sacred one	1
I have made a footprint; through it the blades push upward.	2
I have made a footprint, through it the blades radiate	3
I have made a footprint; over it the blades float in the wind.	4
I have made a footprint; over it the ears lean toward one another.	5
I have made a footprint; over it I pluck the ears.	6
I have made a footprint; over it I bend the stalk to pluck the ears.	7
I have made a footprint; over it the blossoms lie gray.	8
I have made a footprint; smoke arises from my house.	9
I have made a footprint; there is cheer in my house.	10
I have made a footprint; I live in the light of day.	11

2. Promote discussion to determine the theme of respect and reverence for growing corn, a staple food.

3. The Planting Song Dance: Separate students into small groups of 5 or 6. Each group should find their own space in the room and stand next to each other in a cluster. The poem's structure helps give the dance a beautiful simplicity and rhythm. Each time the repetitive phrase "I have made a footprint" is spoken, **a sound is made just after the word 'footprint'**, as if the sound represented the semicolon. The rest of the sentence on each line is individually interpreted. The following description is one example of how to interpret the poem through dance, but certainly the students can be allowed to develop their own ideas for solo, partner, or small group work. Practice each line numerous times, then connect to the choreography before it.

Session 2 or Session 3 can break up learning the poem into smaller increments, i.e, learn half the poem, then the other half, then practice for Share through Performance. [Tools – TR, EM]

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| Line 1 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "a sacred one." |
| Sound: all children stomp one foot in unison. | | cross hands over chest, head lowers |
| Line 2 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "through it the blades push upward." |
| Sound: all stomp | clasp hands together and push them upward slowly until fully extended | |
| Line 3 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "through it the blades radiate." |
| Same as above | release hands overhead so arms are separate and vertical (many blades) | |
| Line 4 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "over it the blades float in the wind." |
| Same | | move arms in gently overhead |
| Line 5 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "over it the ears lean toward one another." |
| Same | each group points its overhead arms and hands toward another group by bending their bodies | |
| Line 6 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "over it I pluck the ears." |
| Same | students straighten bodies from leaning and then sharply clench fingers into fists at different times | |
| Line 7 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "over it I bend the stalk to pluck the ears." |
| Same | bodies bend in any direction and arms pull in sharply toward the body at different times. | |
| Line 8 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "over it the blossoms lie gray." |
| Same | | all students gently melt to the floor |
| Line 9 - "I have made a footprint" | pause | "smoke arises from my house." |
| Same | students rise, interpreting qualities of smoke through their bodies | |

“The Planting Song”, *Walk Quietly the Beautiful Trail*, C. Merton Babcock, Editor. Hallmark Cards, Inc., Kansas City, MO, 1973