

Unit 7, Lesson 1: Looking One's Best

Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Peoples of the Nations and the World

Topic: Elements of Culture

MCCR Grade 4

MCCR Standards: SS.6.1, SS.6.5

Objective:

Students will:

- Compare and describe the elements of culture including shelter, recreation, education, oral traditions, art, music, and language of Native American societies.

Essential Questions:

How do people today view aesthetics vs. how did people of the past view them?

Is it important to look good?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

This lesson directs students to examine how adornment is used for presenting beauty and status of the wearer to the observer. Students will compare and contrast the types of adornment people wear today to that worn by Woodland Indians. They will also observe how the Woodland Indians used the materials available in their environment to make their adornments.

Teacher Background:

No visual evidence exists of the Woodland Indians living in Maryland 500 years ago. However, there does exist a collection of paintings of the Coastal Algonquian Indians living in the area that is now North Carolina. These watercolors by John White were later made into engravings by Theodor de Bry. They are one of the few collections of images that exist of Woodland Indians from any region. The paintings are very valuable to our study of Woodland Indians in this area.

The Coastal Algonquian Indians in North Carolina lived in a very similar environment and spoke a similar language to the Woodland Indians in Maryland. This is further substantiated by similarities between these paintings and the written record of several early colonists in Maryland including: Father Andrew White, a Jesuit missionary on the first voyage to Maryland, George Alsop and William Strachey. In addition, Jesuit missionaries and colonial settlers recorded information about the Iroquoian tribes that inhabited Pennsylvania, New York, and Canada. Archaeological investigations in Maryland and neighboring areas up and down the eastern seaboard have provided information that supplements and helps interpret the few records from the 17th century.

Many of these primary sources describe various adornments worn by members of Woodland Indian society. The motivations for each group's individual choices of adornment were remarkably similar and in fact to ours today. All native decorations had to be made or gathered from the woodland environment. Chiefs and religious leaders wore decorations befitting their station. They wore beads made of shell, called roanoke or peake depending on what type of shell was used to make them. The value of these items was determined largely by the skill and effort necessary to produce them

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and availability of the shell. Often Native Americans wore adornments which identified them as members of a tribe or a clan within the tribe. Also, some decorations were used symbolically as part of spiritual ceremonies or as preparation for an attack on another tribe.

Men often painted their faces with paint made by grinding certain minerals or plant roots and mixing the powders with grease or oil.

Tattooing was practiced among many Native American groups. Amongst the Coastal Algonquian groups the women were more often tattooed than the men. These tattoos were made by puncturing the skin with a sharp pointed object and then filling the holes with powders made from plants, minerals or charcoal.

Animal parts of all sorts from claws to feathers were very popular decorations, worn by adult members of Woodland Indian society. Furs, complete with heads, paws and tails, were worn by the men.

Some adornments may have simply been for practical reasons, for instance, in many tribes, the Woodland Indian men shaved the hair from one side of their heads to keep it from getting caught when shooting a bow and arrow.

Lesson Procedure:

1. Begin lesson with a discussion of modern-day adornment.
 - a. **How** do people decorate themselves in our society today? (*Possible answers may include jewelry, hair styles, clothing, piercing, tattoos, etc.*)
 - b. **Why** do we decorate ourselves? What makes these adornments so important to us? Help students to develop a list of possible reasons that may include the following. List may be posted or recorded on the board.
 - i. To look better, more attractive
 - ii. To fit in with a group, or to identify ourselves as members of a larger group (*"because my friends do"*)
 - iii. To identify ourselves as part of a family or tradition (*a family heirloom*)
 - iv. For ceremonial purposes (*wedding ring*)
 - v. Religious affiliations (*cross or star of David*)
 - vi. As a status symbol (*expensive jewelry, watches*)
 - vii. To make ourselves stand out, to distinguish ourselves as special or unique
 - viii. Practical reasons (*putting up one's hair to keep it out of the way*)
2. Divide class into small groups and provide each group with one of the visual or written examples of primary sources provided in the trunk (see materials list). Ask each group of students to determine the answers to the following questions:
 - a. How have the people in the descriptions or paintings decorated themselves?
 - b. How were the decorations made?
 - c. What sorts of materials were used?
 - d. Where/how were the materials obtained?
 - e. What kind of skills might be necessary to make them?
 - f. Why are they being worn?

