

Unit 8, Lesson 1: Running from Tree to Tree

Maryland Social Studies Standards and Framework

Standard: Peoples of the Nations and World

Topic: Elements of Culture

Standard: Social Studies Skills and Processes

Topic: Write to learn and communicate social studies understandings

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.
- Connect key ideas prior to knowledge

Essential Questions

What sort of games did the Native Americans play and how do they relate to games we play today?

What skills did these games help develop?

Grade Level:

3rd – 5th

Overview:

This lesson allows the students to experience and reflect upon an everyday activity, playing games. The exercise provides the opportunity to discuss how all children, including Woodland Indians, play games with a greater purpose than to just have fun and entertain themselves. Games provided an opportunity to teach necessary skills and develop their mental ability, physical dexterity, and stamina. Students will also use a Venn diagram to discuss the changes, differences, and similarities of games from the Woodland Period and today.

Teacher Background:

Games are often regarded as existing simply for fun and entertainment. However, for Eastern Woodland Indian children growing up in the Woodland Period, games were serious business. It was the job of every child to learn the skills necessary to become a productive member of society. Children took every opportunity to hone the skills necessary to take their place as a valuable and respected member of the tribe. One way to complete that task was through a myriad of games. Necessary skills included hand-eye coordination, physical stamina and dexterity, and keen observation. All of these skills were particularly vital components of hunting. Physical strength and endurance were also needed to keep up with all of the demanding work involved in gardening, gathering, raising children, and taking care of the village paddle canoes, raise crops, collect food resources and build houses.

Some Woodland Indian games have a direct parallel to games still played by children today. Impromptu foot races were very common, as was a type of follow the leader game sometimes called “crooked path”. Woodland Indian children also played a type of tug-of-war and string games of web weaving similar to modern Cat’s Cradle. Modern lacrosse can be traced back to the Native

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American game of racket ball. Although these games have a connection to modern children's games, they were often more than simple fun and entertainment. Woodland Indian children had an important role to fulfill in society and these games were an important tool in developing the necessary survival skills that would serve them well throughout their lives.

Lesson Procedure:

Before You Begin

1. This lesson is highly flexible; mold it to the interests of your class. Teachers may introduce as many or as few games as are appropriate for their class.
2. Some games must be played outside or in a large, open area such as a gym. Teachers may wish to coordinate with the physical education teacher to see if some games could be introduced as part of a gym class.
3. Indoor games could be set up at a variety of stations around the room. Students can rotate through the stations in small groups so that everyone has the opportunity to try all the games. A number of the games may be played by the whole class, regardless of location.
4. A number of the games introduced here should only be played under teacher supervision. Additional supervisory support may be necessary for some games.
5. The games are classified according to their type and include games that develop hand-eye coordination, observation/reasoning skills, and physical dexterity/stamina.

Introduction

1. Before engaging the class in any of the games, begin the lesson by helping the students understand why they are playing the games today through an introductory discussion.
 - a. What games and sports do we play today in the 21st Century?
 - b. Why do we play these games and sports?
 1. What can some of these games and sports teach us?
 2. What skills can we gain from these games and sports?
 3. Can games and sports help us build healthy bodies?
 - c. Introduce the idea that Woodland Indian children also played games, many times for some of the same reasons. They may have played games to develop skills that would be important to have as adults; to build strong and healthy bodies, and to develop physical and mental dexterity.
 - d. Also introduce the idea that many modern games, such as Cat's Cradle and Lacrosse originated as Native American games and many games such as Tag and Red Rover had Woodland Indian counterparts.

Games that develop physical dexterity or stamina

**Games in this category should be played outside or in the Gym.*

HOP - Woodland Indian children often made their own fun with little or no supplies and for either pure fun or to build speed and strength. A wide variety of racing games were played. Some challenged you to run in a straight line and some around obstacles; here is a simple variation—a race that is hopped rather than run.

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Supplies: No supplies needed

Set up: Teacher need only mark a start and finish line on the ground.

How to play: Runners line up behind the starting line and when the teacher shouts “go” students hop to the finish line as quickly as possible. The winner is the one who reaches the finish line first. Different manners of hopping can be used at the teacher’s discretion: hopping on right foot only, hopping on left foot only, or hopping on both feet held close together. Runners may or may not be asked to hold up their left or right foot while hopping. Older students could also be asked to hop in a repeated pattern, i.e., left foot, right foot, both feet, etc.

KIWA TRAIL - Woodland Indian children would often make a game out of running an obstacle course to determine who could run fastest. The Woodland Indian version might include running around trees and over streams, or other natural impediments. This modern adaptation uses paper markers to represent trees that would have been natural obstacles in the forest. Some schools may have their own obstacle course on a playground or in the gym, that could be used.

Supplies: A set of large cardboard cutouts representing trees (not included in the trunk), start and finish lines marked on the floor using cones or tape.

Set up: The teacher should mark start and finish lines approximately 30 feet apart. The first obstacle should be placed approximately 10 feet away from the starting line. Another five should be placed directly in line with the first approximately four feet apart. The number of obstacles and the spacing between them can be varied. As many lanes as desired can be placed in line with the first. Each lane should be about 8 feet apart from each other.

How to play: Each player lines up behind the starting line in their respective lane. When the teacher shouts “go,” each player must run the obstacle course. The players should run a circle around each obstacle, staying as close to them as possible and always traveling in the same direction. The winner is the one who reaches the finish line first. If desired, the race can be run in both directions with each obstacle being circled twice.

The game can also be run as a relay race with teams of three to six runners. Players can run the race in both directions and pass off to the next runner when they return to the start line. Alternately, half the team can be positioned as each end of the course so each player runs the course in just one direction.

KICK STICK - This game is another variation on a basic race, but in this version, the race is run while kicking a stick. Each racer has a stick and must keep it the entire race, but the stick can only be touched with the racer’s feet. The rounded sticks will bounce around a great deal during the race—following the sticks is part of the fun!

Supplies: Several kick sticks have been provided in the trunk, one is needed for each runner.

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Set up: The teacher must set up a course for the race. The course can be anywhere from 50 to 100 feet in length, depending on the space available. The teacher need only mark a start and finish line.

How to play: Give each runner a stick and ask them to line up at the start line. All sticks must be placed on the ground and cannot be touched by anything but feet during the race.

At “Go,” all runners must kick their stick toward the finish line as quickly as possible. Runners must continue to kick their sticks until they reach the finish line. The first one to the finish is the winner.

Games that develop observational and reasoning skills

PEBBLE PATTERNS - Woodland Indian men needed keen observational skills in order to be effective hunters. Small patterns such as game tracks, game trails, and feeding patterns were important to identify, if one was to have a successful hunt. A small return on the hunt meant less food for the group and reflected very poorly on the hunter. Observational games like this one would have helped develop those skills.

Supplies: Pebbles, pebble pattern chart for the teacher to place the pebbles on, one pebble pattern worksheet for each students

Set up: The teacher should set up the pebble chart where no students can see it before the game starts. Pebbles can be placed in any pattern and any number of pebbles can be used. The teacher may want to begin with a simple pattern and get progressively more challenging as the game goes along. A new pattern has to be chosen for each game and should always be set up outside the player’s view.

How to play: A pattern chart should be distributed to each player. Players must also have a writing implement. Once a pattern is chosen and laid out on the board, keep it covered until the game begins. Uncover the pattern and allow the players to view the board for approximately one to two minutes. When the time is up, cover the board again and ask each student to record the pattern on their chart. Players can simply mark the location of the pebbles, or if the teacher prefers, mark the size and color as well. The person with the pattern closest to the original is the winner.

This game can be easily recreated by the teacher for use on their own by purchasing multi-sized pebbles of various simple colors and creating their own pattern board.

WHAT DO I HOLD? - a guessing game like 20 questions. This game would require not only observational skills, but also some deductive reasoning.

Supplies: Several small objects have been provided in the trunk. Small classroom objects such as erasers or chalk can be easily used. If the teacher is inclined, students can search the outdoors for other small objects, just as the Woodland Indians would have done.

Set up: Collect the items that will be used in the game.

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How to play: One player holds something in their hand while the other asks yes or no questions in an effort to determine what the object is. The object can be anything small enough to conceal in the hand. Any question is permissible, as long as it can be answered by a yes or a no. The winner is the one who guesses correctly.

Games that develop hand-eye coordination

BOWL TOSS - A hand-eye coordination game using a bowl or basket and a set of pebbles or seeds. Pebbles are placed in the bowl and either tossed in the air and caught by one person or tossed between two players. Hand-eye coordination is required to be a successful hunter and these kinds of games helped develop that skill.

A Note to the Teacher – the two player version of this game should be strictly supervised.

Supplies: The wooden bowl or the woven basket, and 2 – 5 hickory nuts

Set up: Have players sit down with the bowl in their lap. If two players are playing, they should be seated across from each other approximately four feet apart. It may be helpful to have a blanket or tablecloth spread out on the floor to make retrieving dropped hickory nuts a bit easier.

How to play: In the one player version, the player sits on the floor with the bowl in both hands. All the nuts should be placed in the bowl.

The player tosses the nuts into the air by holding the bowl up and then jerking it down quickly. The player then attempts to catch as many of the nuts in the bowl as possible without changing his seated position. The player's score is determined by adding up the total of all the nuts that fell in the bowl. Each player can have two or three tosses (whatever is agreed upon at the outset of the contest).

During the two player version, the players each sit with a bowl on the ground approximately four feet apart. One player puts all the nuts in his bowl. With a quick motion, player one attempts to toss the nuts to player two. Player two attempts to catch as many of the nuts as possible without changing his seated position. Only those nuts that are caught in the bowl can be counted toward the team's score. The team's score is the combination of three tosses by each player. The score can be compared to the combined scores of other teams to determine the winner.

WHIRL AND CATCH - A hand-eye coordination game played by tossing sticks in the air and catching them in a variety of ways. Any number of sticks from two to a dozen can be used. When playing for the first time, players should try just a few sticks. As players get more practice, they can try more sticks and more difficult ways to catch them. Good hand-eye coordination is required for this game.

Supplies: Tossing sticks included in the trunk. Players should use a small amount of sticks to begin and increase as they get more experience.

Set up: Simply give the player the appropriate number of sticks and have all the observers stand clear.

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How to play: Give the player the number of sticks they wish to try. There are a number of ways that the game can be played. The easiest is for the player to stand with the sticks placed on the back of an open hand at about waist level. The player tosses the sticks into the air and then attempts to catch them on the open palm of the hand which tossed them. The fingers have to be kept flat or the score does not count. A more challenging way to play involves tossing the sticks from the back or palm of the hand and then catching them on the back of the hand. Still more challenging, the player can toss the sticks and attempt to spin all the way around and then catch the sticks on the back of the hand before they fall.

BONE PIN GAME - This game is similar to the cup and ball game often seen today. The purpose of this game is to help children develop hand to eye coordination necessary to complete many day to day tasks.

Supplies: The Bone Pin Game provided in the traveling trunk.

Set up: Simply allow the student to access the game.

How to play: Students, either standing or sitting, attempt to pierce the deer vertebrae using the bone pin. Students hold the bone pin in their hand and attempt to bring the vertebrae up and around so that the student can catch the vertebrae by sending the pin through the hole in the middle.

PINE CONE HOOP TOSS - This hand-eye coordination game tests players' ability to hit a target; an obvious and direct connection to hunting. The ability to aim and make a connection is a vital part of stalking and hitting prey.

Supplies: Hoop with string for optional hanging, pine cones for tossing

Set up: Place hoop flat on the ground with a throwing line marked on the ground approximately twelve feet away. Alternately, the hoop may be hung from a tree branch or other arm approximately ten feet off the ground with a throwing line marked at about the same distance.

How to play: Once the hoop is placed on the ground, allow players to toss three pine cones each in an effort to get as many pine cones inside the hoop as possible. Players score one point for each pine cone that lands in the hoop but bounces out and three points for each pine cone that remains in the circle. The player with the high score is the winner.

If desired, the hoop can also be hung from a tree branch or other arm. Players should then try to toss the pine cones through the hoop overhand. Players earn one point for each pine cone through the hoop. In both cases, as players become more proficient, the throwing line can be moved back.

Assessment: Assess the students' understanding.

1. Ask the students if any of the Woodland Indian games that they have played today are similar to games that they may play with their friends.

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2. Ask the students what games they may play with their friends could fit into the three categories that were used in the lesson plan.
3. Ask the students to select a Woodland Indian game used to develop Hand-Eye coordination and a game today that develops Hand-Eye coordination, such as a video game or a sport. Then have the students create and fill in a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the various aspects of the two games. Look at aspects such as complexity of the game, supplies needed for the game, the appearance of the game or how physically exerting the game is.

Materials:

See individual games for materials.

Related Resources:

Culin, Stewart. *Games of the North American Indians*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1975

Macfarlan, Allan and Paulette Macfarlin. *Handbook of American Indian Games*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1958*

*This book does contain numerous traditional games; however, some of the terms and names used in this book are stereotypical and should be withheld from use.