



IN HISTORY: IMMIGRATION AND ETHNIC HERITAGE

Lessons

Holiday Celebrations

Overview/Description

Many of the festivals and community events we celebrate were brought to America by our families or our ancestors from other countries. Understanding and sharing in these celebrations is an important way to establish closer ties among people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This is an opportunity for students to identify and celebrate Indiana's diverse cultural heritage as a positive and enriching legacy of immigration. Equally important, it is also an opportunity to improve student research skills.

Grade Level

Elementary (grades 2 and 3)

Academic Standards for the Social Studies

- Indiana Standards (as of Jan. 2010):
 - Grade 2, History, Standard 1, Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (2.1.6 and 2.1.7)
 - Grade 3, History, Standard 1, Chronological Thinking, Historical Comprehension, Research (3.1.6)

- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies): I Culture; III People, Places, and Environments; IV Individual Development and Identity; and IX Global Connections

Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Celebrations, cultural events, ethnic celebrations, and cultural diversity

Learning/Instructional Objectives

Students will help plan celebrations around a thematic unit such as "Winter Festivals." There are several winter festivals that are celebrated in our state by different ethnic groups.

Time Required

One class period per week for several weeks

Materials Required

- Internet Access
- Pen and paper
- Blank calendar sheets

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- *Celebration! (Children Just Like Me)* by Anabel Kindersley (DK Children, 1st American edition, or Dorling Kindersley Publishers, Ltd., 1997) or an alternate reading selection

Background/Historical Context

A “Winter Festivals” theme should include all, or as many as possible, of the following celebrations. Other winter festivals that are celebrated in your community may be added or substituted as desired:

- Diwali—a Hindu festival celebrated in late October/November
- Hanukka—a Jewish celebration in mid to late December
- Las Posadas—a Mexican festival celebrated in late December
- Kwanza—an African American festival celebrated in late December
- Christmas—a Christian celebration in late December
- Chinese New Year—a Chinese festival celebrated in January/February

For more information, refer to the “INTRODUCTION: Ethnic History in America and Indiana” essay by John Bodnar from *Peopling Indiana: The Ethnic Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1996). The “Introduction” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site provides a free download of this essay in PDF format.

Teacher’s Instructional Plan

Introduction

As an introduction to this lesson on immigration and cultural heritage, consider using *Celebrations!* by Anabel Kindersley for a class read aloud or use a book talk to introduce student choice reading selections. Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History:

Immigration and Ethnic Heritage Web site for sample “Student Choice Reading Lists.” Check with your school or local library for other selection options.

ACTIVITY

- Do an Internet search for the exact date each holiday or festival is celebrated. Plan your classroom celebrations as close to the actual date as possible. If you have members of your community who celebrate a specific day, invite someone to come to the classroom and share their traditions and history with the class.
- Divide the students into groups.
- Each group will be responsible for the planning of their assigned celebration. Ideally, these celebrations will be student led with help from the teacher and/or parents as needed. The planned activities should include:
 - a game
 - an art activity
 - a story
 - food

Evaluation and Assessment

Consider using a rubric or checklist for evaluating student work.

Additional Resources

Refer to the “Resources” section of the Indiana Historical Society’s “IN History: Immigration and Ethnic Heritage” Web site for lists of educator and student resources on immigration and ethnic history.