

Family Traditions

Target Grade: 3

Standards of Learning

Social Science 3.12

English 3.1, 3.2, 3.9 and 3.11

Overview

Students choose a family tradition to explore through writing and illustration, and then compare their tradition to others around the world.

Objectives

- Students will learn that families have different traditions, and may celebrate the same cultural events in different ways.
- They will identify traditions that are part of the Japanese tea ceremony.
- They will reflect on a tradition observed in their own families.

Essential Question(s):

What is a tradition?

Do all families practice the same traditions?

Management

- 2-3 hours (over 2-3 sessions)
- Home and classroom activity
- Individual work

Materials:

- Poster board for each student
- Crayons, markers and pencils
- Picture book resources explaining traditions from different cultures, for example:
 - Throw Your Tooth on the Roof: Tooth Traditions from Around the World* by Selby Beeler
 - Cuadros de familia / Family Pictures* by Carmen Lomas Garza
 - Too Many Tamales!* by Gary Soto
 - Tree of Cranes* by Allen Say
 - Henry's First-Moon Birthday* by Lenore Look
 - Aunt Flossie's Hats (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard

Preparation:

Photocopy the Family Tradition Interview sheet (AP #4) for each student.

Activity:

1. Discuss the meaning of *tradition*: a belief or custom that is passed from one generation to the next. Use a widely shared custom, for example, having turkey dinner on Thanksgiving, to talk about how traditions are the same and different. What else do families serve with the turkey? What goes in the stuffing? What are the side dishes? How does where your family comes from, or what your family believes, influence the way you practice a tradition?

2. If your students have had Tea in a Box presenters come to class, help them recall some of the traditional practices and utensils that are part of the Japanese tea ceremony.
3. Read a picture book story (see suggestions above) that describes another cultural family tradition, for example, a Mexican American family's tradition of making tamales together on New Year's Eve.
4. Give students the Family Tradition Interview sheet to complete at home. Explain that each student will talk to another family member about a favorite family tradition. The tradition may be practiced by everyone in the family, or it may be something special the student does with a certain member of the family.
5. Back in class, have students refer to their interview sheet as they write one or more paragraphs about their family tradition. Provide time for students to create a show board about their family tradition, including their paragraphs and drawings to illustrate their writing. Photographs may also be included.
6. Have students present their show boards, orally describing their family tradition. Their oral presentations should elaborate on their written descriptions and include more information from their family interview.
7. Encourage students to ask questions about their classmates' family traditions. You might invite parents and grandparents to be part of the audience during these presentations.
8. Ask students to discuss how their family traditions are alike and different from those of their classmates.

Assessment

Students should write one or more paragraphs about their family's special tradition. They should convey additional information in their oral presentations and answers to classmates' questions.

Variations:

- Have students focus on a special family food tradition, including a description of the occasion for which the food is prepared (even if it's just for Sunday breakfast), who prepares it and how, special utensils or ingredients used, other rituals connected with the food custom, and a recipe.
- Older students can research a tradition from another culture and create a show board or other presentation for classmates.
- Have students reflect on whether your school or class practices any traditions. Do you celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday in a special way? Do you have an end-of-the-year picnic? Together, come up with a new tradition to pass on to rising students from the next level down.
- Provide students with an opportunity to participate in a tradition they would not ordinarily experience. For example, invite a guest from the community to demonstrate a cultural celebration in your classroom.