

The Jicarilla Apache and Native Plants

Unit # 1 Lesson # 3 Fourth Grade

Lesson Overview:

In this Lesson, the Jicarilla Apache relationship to plants is highlighted through a Tribal legacy of basket weaving, plant medicine, natural remedies and longstanding food sources. Jicarilla Apache National Park Ranger Jaiden Garcia leads students on a tour of plant resources at the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, a sacred site for the Jicarilla. Students will also learn from Jicarilla Apache Master Basket Weaver Rowena Mora, who shares her relationship and honor of plant life through traditions of basket weaving.

Inquiry Questions:

1. In what ways does the video and story of Rowena Mora demonstrate the closeness of the relationship between the weaver, the grasses and Mother Earth?
2. How does the natural environment affect the lifestyle and practices of the Jicarilla people?
3. How does human activity affect the environment?
4. What is the impact of using natural resources to create artistry?
5. What plant life is important to the Jicarilla people, and why?

Colorado Academic Standards:

CO State History Standard 1: GLE #1 -EO.b. - Identify cause-and-effect relationships using primary sources to understand the history of Colorado's development.

CO State History Standard 2: GLE #1.a. Use geographic tools to research and answer questions about Colorado geography.

CO State Geography Standard 3:1.a. Identify examples of the productive resources and explain how they are used to produce goods and services. For example: Land, labor, and capital.

Materials:

- Video Lesson: Plant Medicine of the Jicarilla Apache
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NliUMj6bHgc>
- Video Lesson: Rowena Mora: Master Basket Weaver of the Jicarilla Apache Nation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3gA_Qyh30U
- Optional: Plant specimens including sage, rabbit brush, piñon pine, and yucca
- Materials to weave a simple basket, with instructions available from many sources for basket making including a lesson on the Scholastic website.

Source Materials:

- First source interviews and transcripts from the Jicarilla Apache Nation

Background Knowledge/Contextual Paragraph for Teachers:

If viable, a field trip to the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is a great opportunity for teachers and students to learn together as a thinking community. Youth can be encouraged to take a journal with them to write about the activities and learnings, as well as personal observations.

If a field trip is not a possibility, focus the lesson on the natural materials that the Jicarilla Apache find in their environment and how they use them. Identify plants with students and discuss how materials vary by artist due to what is available in their local environment. An observatory plant or nature walk outdoors can support this learning environment.

Building Background Knowledge for the Student:

When the Jicarilla Apache traveled through the Great Sand Dunes, they demonstrated honor and integrity in conservation of resources so that they could sustain life. They learned how to use native plants for medicinal uses.

These uses are still active today, carried down through generational knowledge.

Instructional Procedures and Strategies:

Activity Option # 1.

View Video Lessons “Plant Medicine of the Jicarilla Apache” and “Rowena Mora: Master Basket Weaver of the Jicarilla Apache Nation” with students.

If able to utilize plant specimens such as sage, rabbit brush, piñon pine, and yucca, students can pass around to support real-time learning.

Make a wall hanging that identifies the plants that they learned about in the video by researching and sharing the uses of each plant. Have students draw each plant or create a specimen display and write an accompanying two-sentence statement about each plant.

Activity Option # 2.

Have students cut strips of construction colored paper and weave an over-and-under placemat. Once finished, they can be laminated for use in the classroom or at home.

Activity Option # 3.

Invite youth to research basket making and traditional arts and to report out to their class. If possible, identify a local artisan to make a classroom visit.

Activity Option #4.

Work with the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve to plan a field trip for your academic environment. Use accompanying video resources as a tool to prepare students for the trip they are about to take. Reflect on what students love about nature and the place they call home, and what makes the natural environment where they live unique. Watch the videos associated with this lesson and talk about how the desert of what is now Colorado has sustained human life for many thousands of years.

Upon returning to the classroom, reflection activities can include a geological timeline of the valley and the Great Sand Dunes or a comparison essay linking ancient Jicarilla plant practices to contemporary everyday life and customs.

Critical Content:

Critical Thinking and Analysis:

Ask questions to develop further understanding about the geography and development of Colorado through an evolution of natural resource use. Use the questions in the beginning of the lesson and build the conversation as the lesson continues.

Ask questions about how Jicarilla Apache people used Native plants to help them both survive and thrive.

Key Skills:

Listening, Critical thinking.

Critical Language (vocabulary in English):

Poultice, ceremonial, medicinal, conservation

Formative Assessment Options:

Listen as students participate in discussions guided by the Critical Content. Teachers lead discussions to share, reflect, and ask Inquiry Questions to develop further understanding about the geography and development of Colorado (Critical Thinking and Analysis). Ask youth to write a paragraph responding to one of the questions at the beginning of the lesson.