

May Day Celebrations

A Thematic Unit exploring May Day
and the structure of flowers



May Day Celebrations Summary

May Day Celebrations is an integrated social studies and science unit focused on the origins and traditions associated with the European holiday of May Day. Students will learn about the Maypole, listen to a story written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, write a journal entry about an historical event, create a Maypole dance, dissect a flower, and make May baskets to give to a friend or relative.

Reading activities center on research and learning through reading. An eight page student reader is included which provides background information about the holiday. Internet research allows them to explore deeper through written articles, images, and video. Science Resource Cards help the students identify parts of a flower as they dissect it, as well as learn its function. Art project directions will walk the students through the creation of a May Day basket with paper flowers as they read it to follow the directions.

The literature and writing activities focus on a short story written by American novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne, which describes in vivid (and old fashioned) language the story of "*The Maypole of Merry Mount*". Students will listen as you read the abridged and simplified story to them, imagining that they are at the celebration. After listening, discussing, and acting out, the students will work in small groups to write a journal entry that retells the story from the point of view of a participant. These writings can be taken through the complete writing process and published as a classroom book to be put together with the original story, if you so desire.

Math activities are about patterning. Maypole dances are designed to weave patterns around the pole using moving dancers. The students will use a model of a Maypole to develop dance steps that will create a woven pattern. They will record their dance in words and diagram in order to reproduce it on the playground during PE.

Flower dissection is the science activity. They will explore the parts of a flower using science resource cards in order to identify the parts and learn the function. The "Fantastic Flora" worksheet will walk them through this assignment.

Finally the students will make paper flowers and a basket to put them in. They can hang the baskets on the doors of friends or relatives or hang them on their own doors.

There is a lot to do. Although the unit is written to take 1 day, it can easily take 2-3 to complete all the lessons. Following you will find an overview of the unit, a list of objectives covered by subject area, materials included in the unit as well as items you will need to provide, and an annotated list of suggested trade books.

May Day Celebrations

Date _____

Notes



Introduce Today's unit is about May Day. On the white board make a brainstorm list of what the students already know about May Day. Make a list of things they want to learn about it. Explain that today's work will be a special unit so the schedule may be different than usual. Pass out the *Student Reader* and let the students survey them quickly to get an overview of the reading material.

Reading Nonfiction: Have the students read the *Student Reader* to learn a little about the reason for the festival. They may read alone, with partners, in small groups, or as a guided activity. Allow them to underline key ideas and then as a class make an outline to summarize the article.

Research: If you have classroom or computer lab access to the internet allow the students to look up articles, pictures, and videos of May Day celebrations and Maypole dancing. This will help prepare them for later activities. As a whole class or in small groups, allow them to share with each other the information they found.

Vocabulary: The students will make vocabulary flashcards. Each student, or group of students, will highlight new vocabulary words found in the reading materials. Given a stack of 3x5 cards they will write the vocabulary word on the blank side and the pronunciation and definition on the other side. Stress neatness and legibility as other people will play with the cards they create. After the cards are finished have them trade their cards with another group and use the *Merry Month of May game boards* to practice the vocabulary words.

Literature: 4-5 Grades only. Read aloud the short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Maypole of Merry Mount*. Be sure to read it with good expression to make it more comprehensible to the students. It is very descriptive, so model for them how to make pictures in their heads as they listen to you read.

Descriptive Writing: Cut apart the paragraphs of *The Maypole of Merry Mount*. Divide the class into 16 groups, one for each paragraph. The students in each group will work together to make a page to illustrate the story. When each picture is complete they will glue their paragraph on the page, and put the pages together in order to create a class book of the classic story.

Math and PE: Maypole dancing is designed to weave the ribbons together. Different dances create different patterns. Give each team a copy of the *Dancing Patterns* worksheet and have them create a dance. Then go out on the playground, tie some roving on the tetherball poles and try out the dances. Allow each team to share their products with the rest of the class.

Science: The students will dissect a flower to identify its parts. Take the class outside and allow them pick a flower to use. Magnifying lenses would be helpful. Give each student a copy of *Flora Fantastic* and give them time to complete the dissection.

Art: The students will read and follow directions to create construction paper flowers and a basket to hold them. They will give the flowers to a friend or relative.



Objectives covered by subject area:

Language Arts, Reading

Vocabulary, Fluency, Word Analysis

- Identify new vocabulary
- Use context to define new vocabulary
- Use a dictionary or glossary to find meanings of words
- Write definitions of words
- Use new vocabulary in sentences
- Use reference materials to answer questions

Reading Comprehension

- Use informational texts to learn new information
- Use appropriate strategies to read for different purposes
- Read to follow directions and produce an product
- Make and confirm predictions
- Use prior knowledge to understand new concepts
- Relate new learning to old

Literary Analysis

- Connect an experience of a literary figure with their own personal experience
- Take on the character of a literary figure and speak from that point of view
- Identify how an historical situation affected the behavior of fictional characters
- Identify and interpret descriptive writing

Language Arts, Writing

Writing Strategies

- Select a focus
- Select an organizational structure for a fictional journal entry
- Write from a character's point of view
- Relate personal experiences to those of historical figures to create a piece of fiction
- Paraphrase language and experiences from a literary work



Language Conventions

- Develop questions to investigate
- Revise a fictional draft of a journal entry
- Edit a rough draft

Penmanship

- Write legibly and in correct format
- Space letters, words, and sentences correctly
- Prepare materials for other students to use

Language Arts: Listening and Speaking

- Listen attentively and retain information
- Ask questions to aid in understanding
- Work with a group to produce a product
- Use personal experiences to explain information
- Imagine circumstances and experiences of an historical event

Math

- Analyze a problem and develop a solution using patterns
- Break a problem into relevant parts
- Separate relevant information from irrelevant
- Express a series of movements as a written pattern
- Translate a two dimensional weaving task into one involving three dimensions
- Read a diagram of dance movements

Social Studies

- Use maps to answer questions, find locations, and discuss physical conditions of an area
- Explore traditions of May Day
- Explain traditions brought from one country to another
- Identify conditions that lead to the establishment of holidays within a culture
- Discuss the effects of beliefs upon the actions of people
- Describe how and why traditions change over time
- Identify historical points of view
- Explain cause and effect in historical events

Science

- Describe the process of pollination
- Follow a set of written directions to complete a scientific investigation
- State the parts of a flower and how they are used in the reproductive cycle
- Classify parts of a flower by function or type

Art and Music

- Use physical movement to complete a task
- Discuss the role of dance in ancient and modern celebrations
- Create a Maypole dance that will result in streamers woven around a pole
- Recreate natural items through paper construction

Physical Education

- Work together with a group to perform a Maypole dance
- Work cooperatively to create something new



May Day Celebrations: Materials

These items are included in this unit:

Student Booklet, May Day Celebrations

"The Maypole of Merry Mount," by Nathaniel Hawthorne, abridged and simplified

"Dancing Patterns" worksheet

"Fantastic Flora" worksheet

"Basket of Flowers" art project worksheet

Science Resource Cards, Parts of a Flower

Science Photo Cards, Parts of a Flower

Magnetic Flower Parts (when you run it off on magnetic paper)

"Merry Month of May" game board

You will need to provide these materials:

___ Access to the internet for research activities

___ 3x5 file cards, one package

___ construction paper:

___ 9x12 light green

___ 9x12 various spring colors

___ 1x9 strips in various spring colors

___ 6x12 brown

___ 6x12 dark green

___ construction paper scraps

___ 6x12 various floral colors

___ string

___ roving or yarn in varying colors

___ flowers for dissection (students can pick them from the playground if that is allowed or you can bring some in)

___ hand lens, one per student

___ ladder (for attaching and removing roving to a tetherball pole)

___ copy paper, cover stock, magnetic paper, and/or photo paper for duplicating materials



Books about May Day

No books written for older students were found. Here is an excellent opportunity for classroom publishing!

Barker, Cicely Mary. The Complete Book of Flower Fairies. New York: Warne, 2002. *A beautifully illustrated book of traditional flower fairies with complimentary poems. AR level 2.8; .5 points.*

Kent, Jeffrey. May Day, Lei Day. Honolulu: Bess Press, 2008. *This dual sided nonfiction book compares England's May Day events with Hawaii's Lei Day. There is much more information about Lei Day than May Day. Written for children ages 4-8.*

Kroll, Stephen. Queen of the May. New York: Holiday House, 1993. *A Cinderella story, Sylvie experiences magic and woodland animals as she turns into the May Queen. Writing is weak and characters are not developed well.*

Mora, Pat. Rainbow Tulip. New York: Puffin, 2003. *Stella enjoys school, but her parents don't speak English and she sometimes feels embarrassed by her family. She thinks she made a mistake in her May Day dress, but when she performs flawlessly in the Maypole dance, things turn out fine. AR level 2.8; .5 points.*

Silverman, Erica. On the Morn of Mayfest. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998. *May Day celebrations are described in the style of "The House that Jack Built." This is a board book written for children ages 4-8.*

Websites About May Day

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/mayday.htm>

http://www.ldssplash.com/traditions/may_day_traditions/mayday.htm

<http://www.theholidayspot.com/mayday/index.htm>

<http://www.maydaynewhaven.org/>

Maypole Dancing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maWKG30arDs&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6uMataa5PQ&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eMg3cjYuiM&feature=related>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2_NpHUiIdc&feature=related

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dILvkcTtiEY&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eMg3cjYuiM&feature=related>

Morris Dancing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7ytMspgJ5A>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2_NpHUiIdc&feature=related

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dILvkcTtiEY&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eMg3cjYuiM&feature=related>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dILvkcTtiEY&feature=related>

Websites About Lei Day

<http://www.honolulu.gov/parks/programs/leiday/>

http://gohawaii.about.com/cs/festivals/a/lei_day_hawaii.htm

<http://www.leiday.net/>



May Day Preparation

Dear Volunteer,

In a couple of weeks we will be using a thematic unit to learn more about the origins and traditions of May Day festivals through a thematic teaching unit. The students will be very busy as they research and study the holiday, and the flowers it celebrates. Thank you for helping us prepare the materials we will be using during the day. Here is a list of what we need and how to prepare it. There is a lot to do, so we'll need a lot of prep work!

Thanks again for your help!

Materials:

- ___ Student Reader "May Day Celebrations": run on copy paper, double sided, collated and stapled, 1 per student
- ___ 3x5 file cards, blank on one side, lined on the other; 30-50
- ___ "Merry Month of May" game board: run on cover stock, trim inside margin, tape together on back, laminate, 5-8 copies (1 per 4 students)
- ___ "*The Maypole of Merry Mount*" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, run on copy paper, single sided, 1 copy
- ___ Construction paper:
 - ___ 9x12 light green, 17 sheets
 - ___ 9x12 various spring colors, 1 per student
 - ___ 1x9 strips in various spring colors, 9 per student
 - ___ 6x12 brown, 17 sheets
 - ___ 6x12 dark green, 17 sheets + 1 per student
 - ___ construction paper scraps
 - ___ 6x12 various floral colors, 4 per student
- ___ "Dancing Patterns" worksheet, run on copy paper, 1 per 3 students
- ___ 18-24 inches of string or yarn, 8-10 per 3 students
- ___ 12 feet of varied color roving, 1 per student
- ___ 1 foot of roving, 3
- ___ ladder
- ___ "Parts of a Flower" Science Resource cards: run on cover stock, laminate, cut apart, 5-8 copies (1 per 4 students)
- ___ hand lens; 1/student or as many as you can get
- ___ "Fantastic Flora" worksheet: run double sided on copy paper, 1 per student

