

Saman Dance of Indonesia

Overview

Students will spend this lesson learning about Indonesia, the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, and a specific cultural dance in Indonesia. They will learn that dance is a way to preserve and celebrate Muslim religious expression in the communities of Indonesia. The goal of this lesson is to help students realize the importance of creating traditions to celebrate and preserve history and culture.

Grade

K-5

Subject

Dance

Essential Standards

- 2.C.1 Understand cultural, historical, and interdisciplinary connections with dance.
- 2.C.1.1 Exemplify dance representing the heritage, customs, and traditions of various cultures.

Essential Questions

- What makes something a tradition?
- Why do we keep traditions in our families?
- How do you celebrate the important things in your life?
- How different would the world be without traditions?

Materials

- Teacher access to a computer with projection and speakers
- My Favorite Holiday Is... worksheet (attached)
- Saman Dance of Indonesia PowerPoint
- A map of the world, attached or available at <http://www.mapsofworld.com/>
- Video of Saman dance performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b5mnnNXPI> (runs 4:48)
- Tutorial video for teaching Saman dance: I have created my own video demonstrating my method of teaching the Saman dance to students, accessible here: <http://goo.gl/LDwqut>

Duration

60 minutes

Teacher Preparation

Preview a video tutorial on how to teach Saman dance like the one here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmREZIQIMfM>), and ensure understanding of Saman dance in order to re-teach it to the class.

Procedure

My Favorite Holiday Is...

1. Hand out the attached worksheet, and ask students about their favorite holiday and family traditions. After students have had time to gather their thoughts on the sheet, ask for volunteers to share their responses. Write the holiday each student shares on the board, and underneath write the traditions or

celebrations the student identifies. Allow the remainder of the class to then add additional traditions for that same holiday. Ask for another volunteer who wrote down a different holiday. Repeat the process.

2. After the majority of major holidays have been covered (ensuring that students from all cultures representing in the classroom have had a chance to share), begin discussing with your class why traditions and celebrations are important to community and family. What things can you do to keep traditions alive in your community? Ask them what would it be like to miss trick or treating, or not decorate their home during Christmas time?

Introducing Indonesia and Saman Dance

3. Project a map of the world and find Indonesia (example attached). Next, begin going through Power point presentation. Point out that Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims in the world (slide 2). Share the facts on slides 3-4. Introduce the holiday of Ramadan as a holiday celebrated in Indonesia and share the facts on slide 5. Discuss with the class any similarities or differences they see between Ramadan and other holidays such as Christmas or Easter. Ask the class if they know anyone who celebrates Ramadan.
4. Explain that a mosque is where Muslims go to pray, especially on Fridays, the holy day in Islam. Mosques also hold special dinners for the community during Ramadan where people break their fast at the end of the day, called *iftar*. Pass out copies of the mosque maze and allow students to complete the maze.
5. Introduce the Saman dance and its origin (slides 7-10). Share that the dance is a very old dance, and was created around 1300. Tell students that at first it was only displayed for special events, like the celebration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Today, Saman Dance is done for many different celebrations such as weddings and parties. Saman is not only performed to celebrate Islamic holidays but is also performed to promote Indonesian culture, and is sometimes performed at cultural festivals, national ceremonies or even abroad to promote Indonesia as a whole.
6. Show the video clip at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b5mnnNXPI>, reminding students of the importance of being respectful when watching a performance of another person's celebration and traditions. Remind them to pay close attention to the focus the dancers are giving in their performance. After viewing the dance, discuss:
 - Who do you think taught them this dance?
 - Why do you think the dancers want to perform this dance?
 - What do you think the singers words are about?

Learning the Saman Dance

7. Next, let students know that they will be learning the Saman dance themselves!
→**Teacher Note:** I have attached a video link of myself teaching the saman dance to my students. Teachers can also view a tutorial at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmREZIQIMfM>.

It will be best to have the students learn the hand movements of the dance individually on their knees first. Once they have practiced and feel comfortable, have them link up in smaller groups of 4 and 5 and practice the steps as a group. If they are having lots of success, divide the class up into two large lines and have them practice several times at different speeds. Once they have practiced, let them perform the dance for each other sharing feedback of each other's performance. Afterwards, discuss:

- Do you think this dance is important to people of Indonesia?
- Explain how you can tell this dance is important (i.e. costuming, intricate or difficult hand choreography; well-executed performance).
- How does teaching and performing the Saman dance help preserve (keep) Indonesian and Muslim tradition alive?

- Can you think of a way you can share your favorite holiday with others through a song or a dance to show it is special or important to you?
8. If there is time, have students create their own Saman dances within small groups. Try having them recite a favorite poem with the dance or possibly recite the Pledge of Allegiance while attempting a simple Saman dance of their own making.



This lesson was created by Marie Hopkins as part of the Global Islam and the Arts Teacher Fellows program. For more information about the program, please visit ncmideast.org.



Help Kareem and Aliah
find their way to the Mosque

