

Lesson and Activity Excerpted from the Tanenbaum Curriculum *World Olympics*

# My Traditions

**Lesson Overview:** Students interview their families about an important holiday or tradition and create poems about these celebrations to the accompaniment of handmade musical instruments.

**Grades:**  
2-6

**Principles for Inclusive Education**

**Explored:** Exploring Multiple Identities, Teaching and Learning about all Cultures, Preventing Prejudice

**Skills:** Comparative Analysis, Music, Poetry, Oral Communication

**Materials:** World Map, Chart Paper, Pencils, "Ancestor Celebrations" Worksheet (included), Poetry Templates (included), Directions for making instruments (included), Markers, Crayons, Construction Paper, Scissors, Glue, Tape, Decorative beads, Lace, etc.

**To Make a Rain Stick:**

Cardboard tube, Different types of dried beans, lentils, rice, etc.

**To Make a Drum:**

Small round container (metal or cardboard), Rubber balloons, Rubber bands, Thin sticks (drumsticks)

**Recommended Resources:** *Children Just Like Me (Series): Celebrations!* by Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley; *Festivals Together* by Sue Fitzjohn, Minda Weston and Judy Large

## **PROCEDURE**

### **Before beginning the lesson**

**Distribute the “Ancestor Celebrations” worksheet (included) as homework the day before beginning this lesson.** Ask students to take it home, fill it out, and bring it back to use with this lesson. Explain that the goal of the exercise is to see where students’ ancestors came from and what celebrations took place there. Fill out your own “Ancestor Celebrations” worksheet as an example for students.

If you can’t make copies of the worksheet for all students, have the children write down the questions to ask their families.

### **Part I – Learning about the Students’ Traditions**

**Step One:** The next day, in class, have the class sit in a circle. The students should have their family’s answers to the interviews they conducted the previous day for reference. Have a world map up on the wall where everybody can see it.

You can provide the first example of telling students about one traditional holiday in your family. Make sure to record information about the holiday on chart paper and point out which country the holiday comes from on the map.

An excellent way to help students learn more visually is to create a “world-wide web”. Take a thumb tack with a piece of yarn. Place one end of the yarn at your present location (ex-New York City), tacking it to the map. Now point out where the holiday your family celebrates is originally from and run the yarn to that place (making a connection point between the two points). Tack the other end as well.

Go around the circle and have all the students share their answers. As students share, repeat the same process, asking if anybody can identify the relevant locations on the map. For variety, different color yarn and thumbtacks can be used.

**Step Two:** Take a moment to examine the finished class chart paper of holidays and the world map. Ask students what they notice about the answers on the chart paper or about the map. Did anything surprise them? What did they learn?

**Step Three:** Ask students to pick one holiday to write a poem about. Some students may not celebrate any holidays. If this is the case, students can write about a favorite tradition (for example, a yearly family reunion or going to the mosque for Friday prayers).

Explain that students will write a poem about this particular holiday or tradition and then read it out loud to the accompaniment of hand-made instruments.

If desired, students can use the templates included at the end of the lesson to structure their poem. Help students write their poems about the holidays they have chosen. Encourage the children to be as descriptive as possible in their writing.

**Step Four:** Now help students make their own musical instruments for the poetry

reading. Make sure that each student has the appropriate materials, including directions for making the instruments. Be careful of safety concerns when younger students work with scissors, balloons, etc. If you have made your own musical instruments in advance as an example, show them to students.

**Step Five:** Once all of the students have made their instruments, explain that students will read their poems out loud to the accompaniment of their instruments.

Have the class come together in a circle. Ask students to pick one instrument that they like, and have a volunteer act as the accompanying musician. Each student can take a turn to read their poem out loud while the volunteer softly plays the instrument that was chosen as background music. If desired, you can give the students a few minutes to practice in pairs.

**Step Six:** With younger students, after each student shares their poem, ask the other students:

*What did you find most interesting about \_\_\_\_\_'s poem and why?*

*What is important to \_\_\_\_\_ about his/her holiday?*

*What is important to you about your holiday?*

*How are these similar?*

*How are they different?*

For older students, have them think about respectful questions they can ask each other to learn more about what is important to their classmates about the tradition they wrote about.

**Emphasize that not everybody who is of the same religion or culture celebrates the same holiday in the exact same way. For instance, there are variations in how different sects of the same religion or different regions in the same country celebrate the same holiday. In addition, each family may have unique traditions of their own for celebrating a holiday or may not observe a particular holiday at all.**

# Ancestor Celebrations

Ask an adult at home these questions:



1. Where were you born?
2. Where were your parents or caregivers born?
3. Where were your caregivers' or parents' parents born?
4. What is an important holiday or family tradition that we celebrate?
5. How do we celebrate this holiday or tradition?
6. Why is this holiday or tradition special to our family?

# Poetry Templates

**Acrostic Poem:** A modified example of an acrostic poem that can easily be set to music is given below:

## **Eid**

**E is for Everybody**  
**I is for** Invitations to visit  
**D is for Dressing up**

**Five Senses Poem:** A five senses poem captures the sensations involved with a celebration (seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting and feeling), as shown below:

## **Pongal**

Pongal is  
Green and Purple Sugarcane (seeing)  
Pungent, Smoky Fires (smelling)  
Banging, Clattering, "Pongal!" (hearing)  
Sweet, Ripe, Crunchy (tasting)  
Special, Family, Fun (feeling)  
To me.

## **Name of the Holiday**

\_\_\_\_\_ is  
3 words that have to do with how it looks  
3 words that have to do with how it smells  
3 words that have to do with how it sounds  
3 words that have to do with how it tastes  
3 words that have to do with how it feels to me.

# Make your own Rain Stick!

**Rain Sticks are used by some Native American cultures in Chile, South America as well as some Native American cultures in the United States to bring rain. When the sticks are turned upside down they make a lovely sound like falling rain!**

## **Materials:**

Cardboard Tube  
Cardboard  
Scissors, Masking Tape  
Contact Paper (optional)  
Blank Paper  
Rice, Dried Beans, Lentils, etc.  
Markers

## **Directions:**

Cut two pieces of cardboard into circles the size of the ends of the cardboard tube. Fix one of the circles on one side of the tube and tape it tightly shut. Save the second cardboard circle to close the other end later.

Twist a few pieces of blank paper into thin strips, and put them inside the tube horizontally, so they are parallel to the ends of the tube. Tape the strips to the walls of the tube so they don't fall out of position. Through the open end, fill the tube partially with beans, lentils, rice, etc. Each will produce a different sound.

Close the open end of the tube with the second cardboard circle and seal it with more tape.

Decorate the tube using markers. If the tube is difficult to decorate, try covering it with contact paper. Hold your brand-new instrument and turn it upside down slowly. Listen to its beautiful sounds!

# Make your own Drum!

**Drums are one of the oldest musical instruments in human history. Drums all over the world are often remarkably similar! In some cultures, drums are even used to pass on messages over a long distance.**

## **Materials:**

Scissors, Masking Tape  
Small Round Container (can be metal or cardboard)  
Rubber Balloon  
Strong Rubber Band  
A Thin Stick  
Contact Paper (optional)  
Markers

## **Directions:**

Remove the lid of the container and clean it off. A small container works best for this activity.

Cut off the end of the balloon and stretch the balloon over the opening of the container. Secure it tightly with a rubber band and tape.

Decorate the drum using markers. If the drum is difficult to decorate, try covering it with contact paper.

Use the stick to beat on the rubber surface of the drum. Listen to its beautiful sounds!