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# World Olympics

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Preparing Students for a  
Multicultural and Multireligious World

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A CURRICULUM DEVELOPED BY TANENBAUM FOR GRADES K-6



Imagine... a more peaceful world that respects difference.  
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# Olympic Mascots

## Unit 2, Lesson 6

**Objective:** Children will learn about the mascots of the Summer 2016 and Winter 2014 Olympics and Paralympics and create mascots for their final Olympics. Finally, students will vote on the best design and create cartoon strips and posters for their final event that feature the mascots.

**Skills:** Art, Teamwork, Critical thinking

**Grades:** K-6

**Materials:**

- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Information on the Mascots of the 2016 and 2014 Games (included)
- Construction Paper
- Paint, Crayons etc.

**Background for Educators:** Many U.S. sports teams use images of Native Americans as a theme for team names and mascots. Some examples follow in this lesson. Most of these mascots and team names use stereotypes of Native Americans that show them in traditional garb, or as “savage” or “war-like.” Some people insist that these symbols have been associated with their teams for a long time and resist changing them.

However, many other teams are choosing to change their Native American-themed mascots and team names. For example, in February 2007, the University of Illinois changed their mascot, Chief Illiniwek, which depicted Native Americans in a stereotypical manner.

**For more information:**

<http://aistm.org/cartoons.htm> has cartoons on this issue that can be used as discussion prompts.

<http://main.nc.us/wncceib/MascotLinks.htm>

<http://willl.illinois.edu/chief-illiniwek-understanding-the-issues>

The following is an excerpt from the 2005 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Executive Committee’s guidelines for using Native American mascots:

“...we believe that mascots, nicknames or images deemed hostile or abusive in terms of race, ethnicity or national origin should not be visible at the championship events that we control.”

## PROCEDURE

**Step One:** Engage the children in a discussion of mascots: *What is a mascot? What is your school's mascot? Do you have a favorite mascot? If so, what is your favorite mascot?*

**Step Two:** Introduce children to the information on the 2016 and 2014 mascots (included with this lesson). After students have learned about the mascots, ask: *What do these mascots symbolize? What do the Olympic Games symbolize?*

**Step Three:** Now ask the students if they have ever heard of particular team mascots that utilize names of sports teams derived from indigenous people. Some examples include:

Aloha Warriors  
Atlanta Braves  
Brooklyn Redmen  
Burlington Chiefs  
Cleveland Indians  
Elora Mohawks  
Florida State Seminoles  
Washington Redskins

Visual images of these mascots can be found online. Recommended websites are included on the previous page.

**Step Four:** Engage students in a discussion of why these names and mascots might be considered disrespectful. Questions may include: *Do you think that these mascots represent positive images of Native Americans? Do you think that the way that the mascots look, and act at games is respectful of Native Americans? How might you feel if something from your culture was used as a mascot?*

**Step Five:** Now show students the image on the next page and discuss: *What do you think of these banners? Are there differences between them? In what ways might these banners be considered disrespectful? Are any of these real? How do you think the banners make people who are members of the group feel? Is there a difference if it is your own culture being represented? Why or why not?*

**Step Six:** Tell your students that they will be creating a mascot for their Olympic Games. Divide them into small cooperative groups and have each group brainstorm what kind of mascot they would like to create. Tell the class that it is important that the mascot that they create is respectful. Ask them: *What can you do while you are creating your mascot to be sure it is fun and not hurtful to anybody?*

Ask questions to guide the groups' discussions: *What qualities will your mascot represent? Will it be a totally new character or will it be based on our school traditions? What colors and symbols will it have? Why?*

**Step Seven:** Have the groups create a preliminary image of their mascot proposals on poster paper. Each group should choose presenters that will show and explain their mascot proposal to the class.



**Step Eight:** After the presentations, have the class vote on one mascot that will represent the Olympic games at their school. If the students would like, they may take ideas from more than one of the presentations and create a combination that includes ideas from more than one group. If this is the case, try to incorporate some piece of each group's idea in the final mascot.

**Step Nine:** After the mascot has been selected, have the students create posters and comic strips with storylines that are relevant to the featured mascot that will be displayed at their final Olympics.

**Recommended Resources:**

*Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* by Beverly Slapin & Doris Seale (Editors).

This book offers informative articles, poetry, book reviews, and resources from Native American perspectives.

## Mascots of Rio's 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Vinicius and Tom are the official mascots of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games and Paralympic games. Both mascots were born out of the explosion of joy that followed the announcement in 2009 that Rio would host the Games. Vinicius is a mixture of Brazilian animals, while Tom is a fusion of all the plants in the Brazilian forests. They are each other's closest friends.

Their names, which were voted on by the public, honor well-known Brazilian Bossa Nova musicians Vinicius de Moraes and Tom Jobim. Bossa Nova is a type of music that combines the sounds of samba and jazz and was developed in Brazil during the 1950s and 1960s. As stated by the president of the Rio 2016 Organizing Committee, "In addition to representing the Brazilian fauna and flora, our mascots also connect to the best of our music."

Vinicius lives in a tree-house in the Tijuca Forest, from which he can see the whole city and plan adventures. His special power is the ability to stretch himself as much as he wants. Since he's a mixture of Brazilian animals, he can do all the best things that they can do. He can also imitate the voice of any animal; he's super communicative! His mission is to spread joy and to celebrate the friendships that flourish among people from all over the world during the Olympics.



Tom lives in nature and takes naps on water lilies in the middle of a refreshing lake. This way, he can make the most of photosynthesis; sun bathing for him is like a banquet! He loves outdoor adventures, making friends, reading and learning about the world, listening to Brazilian music, and relaxing in the forest. Tom knows all of the secrets of nature and can pull many useful objects out of his head of leaves when he's in a jam. His mission is to inspire everybody to use creativity and determination to reach further and have fun.

Information from: <http://www.olympic.org/news/olympic-fans-name-rio-2016-mascots/242217> and <http://www.rio2016.com/mascots/#!/home>

Image from: <http://www.sayhellotobrazil.com/meet-olympic-mascots-rio-2016/>



## Mascots of Sochi's 2014 Olympic and Paralympic Games

There were three mascots for the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games and two mascots for the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Winter Games. The three Olympic mascots were chosen based on a popular vote open to the entire country of Russia. A committee of Russian Paralympic athletes selected the Paralympic mascots. The three Olympic mascots were the polar bear, the hare and the leopard.



The polar bear lives on a shelf of ice beyond the Arctic Circle. Raised by Arctic explorers, he learned the sports of skiing, speed-skating and curling from his human friends beginning at a very early age. His favorite sport is bobsledding, which he often practices with his friends and fellow Arctic animals, bears and seals alike.



The hare is the busiest creature in the winter forest. From her studies at Forest Academy, where she receives excellent grades, to helping her mother in the family restaurant, she's always on the go! She loves all kinds of sports, as well as singing and dancing, and makes sure that, no matter how busy she is, she always makes time to share these fun activities with friends.



The leopard lives in the uppermost branches of a big, tall tree located on the highest peak of the snowy mountains in the Caucasus. A rescuer and mountain-climber, he is always ready to help those in need. He has even saved nearby villages from avalanches! As an expert snowboarder, he has taught all of his friends and neighbors how to participate in this exciting sport. He enjoys the company of others and always wears a cheerful smile.





The two Paralympic mascots were the Ray of Light and the Snowflake. Both mascots overcame many difficulties to arrive on Earth from a distant planet.

The Ray of Light flew down to Earth from a planet that is always hot. He had to adapt to Earth's cold climates and learn to make friends with the unknown people around him. Although his amber skin, flame-like hair and spark-filled eyes make him look different from people on Earth, these differences are only external. The more Ray of Light interacts with people, the more they learn that

they are much more similar than they originally thought. People taught Ray of Light various winter sports, including skiing and biathlon.

The Snowflake flew down to Earth from an icy planet. With her snow-white skin and crystal-like appearance, she seems in some ways very different from Ray of Light. But they soon found that they both have a lot in common, including their love of sports. Together, they decided to stay on Earth and use their fantastic abilities to teach people sports and encourage them to discover their own talents and skills.

Despite their differences, the Snowflake and the Ray of Light are united through both their great sporting abilities and their friendship. They have infinite potential and demonstrate that anything is possible.