

The Life of the Corn - An Indian Skit

A Stereotyping Lesson for Middle School

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MLR: HISTORY C-1, C-4

Target Grade: 8

Objective: After completing the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Analyze a dramatic script for Indian stereotypes and historical accuracy
2. Display an initial understanding of why "playing Indian" is not appropriate.

Materials: Copies of the *Life of the Corn* script (selections – Introduction, Act 1, Act 5) in two groups – these are available online at <http://www.apples4theteacher.com/native-american/plays/index.html>

Resources: It is recommended that the Teacher borrow a copy of *Iroquois Corn* or read about corn and the Pawnees at the websites below:

Native American History of Corn - <http://www.nativetech.org/cornhusk/cornhusk.html>

Corn Facts (easy reading) - <http://www.iroquoismuseum.org/corn.htm>

Green Corn Ceremony - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Corn_Ceremony

Pawnee Indians -

http://www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark/record_tribes_016_4_17.html (easier)

Pawnee - <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/NA-Pawnee.html> (easier)

Pawnee photographs - <http://php.indiana.edu/~tkavanag/phothana.html>

Pawnee life - read the section on corn ceremonies -

http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/PP/bmp52_print.html

Lesson:

1. Assign all students to read the *Introduction*. Discuss:
 - a. What is the purpose of this musical skit?
 - b. What do you know about role of corn in the Native American world?
 - c. What do you know about who was responsible for agriculture in a Native American tribal group or family?
 - d. What do you know about Indians and the buffalo? Where did buffalo live?
 - e. What do you know about ceremonial dances of Native American?
 - f. What do you know about the Pawnees?
 - g. How did you learn this information?
2. Hand out copies of the two Dances: *The Mystery* and *The Harvest*. This should be done in small groups.
 - a. Distribute to each group the **Question Sheet**.
 - b. Have students work through the questions quietly. They will need to access the websites above to answer some of the questions. Groups might want to divide up the questions.
 - c. As a class, discuss answers to the questions. Students should reach an understanding of the stereotypes and inaccuracies included in the skit, the dangers of oversimplification, and the harm of "playing Indian" (especially of imitating ceremonies).