

Second Line Arts Collective

Lesson 2 - Mardi Gras Indians

Lesson Overview

This lesson introduces students to the vibrant traditions of Mardi Gras Indians in New Orleans. Students will explore the history of this cultural group, their elaborate costumes, and their role in preserving African and Native American heritage. The lesson includes a movement-based activity to engage students in the spirit of Mardi Gras.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will:

1. Understand the historical and cultural significance of Mardi Gras Indians.
2. Learn how music, art, and dance are used to express cultural identity.
3. Participate in a playful movement activity inspired by Mardi Gras traditions.

Materials Needed

- Colorful scarves, fabric, or ribbons (one per student).
- Percussion instruments (optional, helpful for 2nd grade and older students).
- Visual aids: images or videos of Mardi Gras Indian costumes and parades.
- Space for movement and group interaction.

Lesson Steps

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- Start by asking students if they've ever heard of Mardi Gras or seen a parade.
- Explain that Mardi Gras Indians are a unique part of New Orleans culture, with their own music, costumes, and traditions.
- Share some key facts:

- Mardi Gras Indians are groups of African Americans who celebrate Mardi Gras with parades, songs, and handmade costumes.
- These costumes are inspired by Native American culture to honor their help during slavery.
- Their music often includes call-and-response singing and rhythmic drumming.

Show and Tell (5 minutes)

- Use [images](#) or [videos](#) to showcase Mardi Gras Indian costumes with their intricate beadwork, feathers, and bright colors.
- Highlight how much time and effort goes into creating these costumes each year.
- Ask students to describe what they notice about the colors and designs.

Movement Activity: Peek-A-Boo-Na-Na-Ne (10 minutes)

- Introduce the game "Peek-A-Boo-Na-Na-Ne," inspired by Mardi Gras Indian chants.
- Explain that this is a playful call-and-response song combined with movement.
 - Leader calls: "Na Na Ne!"
 - Students respond: "Na Na Ne!"
- Add a playful element:
 - On "Peek-A-Boo," students hide behind their scarves or hands.
 - On "Na Na Ne," they wave their scarves in rhythm.
- Encourage students to dance freely while following the music.

Group Reflection and Discussion (5 minutes)

- Ask students how it felt to sing, move, and play along.
- Discuss the importance of Mardi Gras Indians celebrating their history and culture through music and art.
- Relate it back to how music can tell stories and bring people together.

Extension Activities

- Art Connection: Have students design their own Mardi Gras Indian-inspired masks or drawings.
- History Exploration: Share [more](#) about how Mardi Gras Indians honor both African and Native American cultures.
- Music Activity: Follow the leader. Teach a simple drum rhythm that mimics the style of Mardi Gras Indian music. Have students take turns leading their classmates with call and response rhythms.

Reflection Questions

- What did you learn about Mardi Gras Indians today?
- How do you think making costumes and singing together helps celebrate their culture?
- Can you think of ways your family or community celebrates special occasions with music, art, or costumes?