

Inside Art, Spring 2018 — *Climate Change: Cuba/USA***Title**

Cocos: Cultural Traditions

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson

2 class periods

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that their cultural traditions are part of who they are; that culture is alive and changing constantly; and that it is via experience, observation, and reflection that they will better understand and identify with their own culture and the similarities and differences between cultural groups.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 6-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts
Social Studies

Curriculum Standards**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards**

- Visual Arts: VA.68.H.1/ VA.912.H.1
- Social Studies: Humanities-SS.912.H.1, SS.912.H.1.2; Sociology-SS.912.S.2

National Standards for Arts Education

- Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
- Anchor Standard #10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Council for the Social Studies

- Culture
- People, Places, and Environments
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Common CoreMiddle School:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1

High School:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- Describe a cultural tradition (rite/custom/practice/act) s/he practices by engaging in a think-write-pair-share activity and gallery walk.
- Examine the Afro-Cuban cultural tradition, *tirando los cocos*, via whole class discussion.
- Select/Create a visual representing his/her own cultural tradition (rite/custom/practice/act).
- Explain his/her cultural tradition (rite/custom/practice/act) by writing a description of this practice.
- Discover the cultural traditions (rites/customs/practices/acts) of classmates by engaging in a gallery walk.

Learning Activities Sequence**Attention-Getter:**

Think-Write-Pair-Share: Activate Power Point presentation (slide 1). Ask students to engage in a Think-Write-Pair-Share exercise based on the following prompt, "Describe one tradition (rite/custom/practice/act) you practice." After students' share their responses, advance to slide 2 and state that today's lesson focuses on cultural traditions.

Learning Activities:

Whole Class Conversation: Advance to slide 3. Ask students, "What do you think 'Afro-Cuban' means?" On this slide, the map appears separately from the question; have students consider the term "Afro-Cuba" before displaying the map. If unsure, ask them where Cuba is located. Ask them to locate Africa. Ask them what they think Cuba has in common with Africa --- what are their possible connections? The following links can be used to aid this conversation:

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Cuban>
- <https://www.essence.com/2016/08/02/discovering-afro-cuban-culture>

Advance to slide 4. Ask students to examine the two photographs on the screen. Using the Visual Thinking Strategies (University of South Florida Academy of Teaching and Learning Excellence, n.d.) approach, ask:

- What's going on in these pictures?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Tell students that the images are part of a video by artist Javier Castro that is highlighted in a four-part video series called *Cuatro Cosas Básicas/Four Basic Things* (2018) commissioned by USF's Contemporary Art Museum. Pull up and display the following website that provides students with information about the artist (also hyperlinked to slide):

<http://www.artcentersf.org/javier-castro/>. Have a volunteer read aloud the information displayed on the website. Another great resource to share with students is Smith's (2017) *Interview with artist Javier Castro*. Explain that Castro's video series, *Cuatro Cosas Básicas/Four Basic Things*, is displayed in such a way that the viewer can experience all four videos running simultaneously and that these two images are from the second work in the series, *Cocos*.

Advance to slide 5. Have a volunteer read the following aloud (displayed on slide): "The second work speaks about uncertainty and the anxiety of seeing the future. A man repeatedly throws four pieces of coconut shells on the floor [as a divination ritual], reads the position they fall in and gives an answer—this is what normally happens. In the video, the viewer cannot get an answer because there are always pieces that fall outside of the frame. So that the reading is continually open and unresolved." Retrieved from: <http://www.cubanartnews.org/news/5-artists-1-curator-on-climate-change-cuba-usa/6623>

To extend on the still images previously presented and students' response to the images along with the author's explanation above, share that the video from which these still images are from is of an Afro-Cuban man engaging in "tirando los cocos," throwing down shards of a coconut shell in an Afro-Cuban Santeria rite to ask and obtain answers from the *orishas*, or spirit deities. How the pieces land provide insight to the question asked (often a "yes or no" question). Allow time for students to discuss their understanding of this cultural tradition. The following links can be used to aid this conversation:

- <http://www.religioustolerance.org/santeri3.htm>
- <http://www.aboutsanteria.com/what-is-santeria.html>

Gallery Walk Activity: Advance to slide 6. Ask students to reflect back on their own cultural traditions (rite/custom/practice/act) they practice. Ask students to assume they found themselves living in another place and possibly at another time where no one knew of their cultural tradition. Charge them with describing/explaining their cultural tradition to these people who were not familiar with such a practice. Ask students to come up with the following to be displayed via a gallery walk:

- A visual that represents their cultural tradition (rite/custom/practice/act)
- A detailed label of their visual that describes (1) the image and how it represents their tradition and (2) the significance of their tradition to them.

Provide the resources necessary for students to complete this task (e.g., computer, internet access, printer, magazines, 5" x 8" index card). Devote the remainder of the period to completing this task. Encourage students to consider the various forms of visuals (e.g., photographs, graphics, video, paintings, personal objects, sculptures). Allow time for students to select their visual and create their label using the index card provided. The label will be displayed next to the visual during the gallery walk.

Day 2: (*This activity, along with the closure activity, will most likely not take the entire class period*)

Cultural Traditions Gallery Walk: Project slide 7. Divide the class into two groups. Group one will display their visual and label first. All members of group one will stand next to their visual and label ready to talk with their classmates who are walking about the room examining the products and asking questions about their work. After a set period of time the groups will switch and the process repeats.

Closure:

Stand and Share: Advance to slide 8. Ask, "What did you learn as a result of engaging in the cultural traditions gallery walk?"

Close by reminding students that our cultural traditions are part of who we are; that culture is alive and changing constantly; and that it is via experience, observation, and reflection that we better understand and identify with our culture and the similarities and differences between cultural groups.

Evaluation

- Think-Write-Pair-Share
- Gallery walk visual and description
- Class participation

Optional Extension Activities

- Have students explore a local cultural tradition and report on this tradition in a format of his/her choice.
- Ask students to look through a newspaper and ask students to report back on all stories that are related to cultural traditions.
- Have students interview a family member about other traditions important to their family.

Materials and Resources

- Computer
- Projector
- Screen
- Internet connection
- 5" X 8" index cards
- Printer
- Various magazines

- Still images from the video *Cocos*, from *Cuatro Cosas Básicas/Four Basic Things*, 2018, by Javier Castro. Courtesy USFCAM.

Internet Links

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Cuban>
- <https://www.essence.com/2016/08/02/discovering-afro-cuban-culture>
- <http://www.religioustolerance.org/santeri3.htm>
- <http://www.aboutsanteria.com/what-is-santeria.html>

References

University of South Florida Academy of Teaching and Learning Excellence (n.d.). *Visual thinking strategies*. Retrieved from <http://www.usf.edu/atle/teaching/visual-thinking-strategies.aspx>

Art Center (2016, March 7). *Javier Castro*. Retrieved from: <http://www.artcentersf.org/javier-castro/>.

Smith, N. (November, 2017). *Interview with artist Javier Castro*. Tampa, FL: USF CAM.

The Farber Foundation (2018, January 16). 5 Artists + 1 curator on *climate change: Cuba / USA*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cubanartnews.org/news/5-artists-1-curator-on-climate-change-cuba-usa/6623>