

Inuit Culture and Relationship with the Environment

Lesson Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: Multiculturalism

Lesson Duration: Three class periods

Student Objectives

- Compare present-day Inuit to their ancestors to discuss their relationship to their environment.
- Describe how Inuit art reflects this relationship.
- Create a classroom art gallery.

Materials

- Discovery School video on *unitedstreaming: Biomes: Land of the Inuit*
Search for this video by using the video title (or a portion of it) as the keyword.

Selected clips that support this lesson plan:

- The Inuit Way of Life
 - The Inuit Way of Life
 - Inuit Hunting and Fishing
 - Culture and Traditions of the Inuit People
 - Inuit: A Culture of Autonomy
 - Tools of Survival in the Arctic
 - Inuit People Learn from Ancestors and Past Generations
 - The Threat of a Loss of Cultural Identity
- The Interdependence of the Inuit People
 - The Inuit: One Big Family
 - Hunting outside the Village
 - Base Camp for the Inuit
- Changes in the Climate
 - Climatic Changes Affect the Hunt
 - Climate Changes Affect Inuit Cultural Well-Being

- The Inuit: Guardians of the Planet
- Computer with Internet access
- Large index cards (one per student)
- Paper and pencil

Procedures

1. After watching *Biomes: Land of the Inuit*, have students define “Inuit.” Their definition should answer these questions: Who are they? Where do they live? How long have they lived there? (The Inuit are native peoples who have lived in the Canadian Arctic and Greenland for thousands of years.) What is the name of their autonomous territory? (Nunavut)
2. Based on the program, have students compare modern-day Inuit to their ancestors. To help spark conversation, ask them to think about Inuit homes, transportation, food, technology, tools, family relationships, and clothing. Have them create two-column lists, such as this on:

Now	Then
Live in houses	Lived in igloos
Rely on hunting and fishing for some food	Relied on hunting and fishing
Ride snowmobiles and power boats	Rode dog sleds and canoes
Wear fur and leather clothes, but also wear modern clothes	Wore clothes of fur and leather
Use traditional tools and modern appliances	Used tools made of animal bones and antlers
Pass stories and knowledge down through generations	Passed stories and knowledge down through generations

3. Ask students to discuss what has changed for the Inuit. You may want to create a Venn diagram to illustrate the comparisons.
4. Hold a class discussion about the relationship between the Inuit and their environment. Why do they have a strong bond? (The Inuit have depended on the land and its wildlife for food, shelter, and clothing, and they have strong spiritual ties to the environment.) Why would the Inuit have needed to understand the natural patterns of Arctic wildlife? (To hunt and fish) How is global warming disrupting these patterns? (Global warming has changed the sea ice, when plants bloom, and weather patterns.) Why is this significant to the Inuit? (Their livelihoods depend on normal Arctic patterns.)
5. Explain that the Inuit’s relationship with the environment is evident in their artwork, including tools, clothes, toys, and spiritual objects, which they have been creating for thousands of years.



The Inuit maintain their artistic traditions in paintings, prints, and sculpture, which reflect events, stories, and modern-day issues.

6. Tell the students they will explore Inuit art. They will select one artwork that reflects a bond with the land and its wildlife from the following Inuit Art list. Note: In order to explain the artwork, students will likely need to investigate the Web sites in the Cultural Information list.

Inuit Art

- Animals in Inuit Art: Image Preview [NOTE: Click image for more information.]
<http://www.carleton.ca/gallery/Creature/previewc.html>
- Inuit Prints Inspired by Legends
<http://www.carleton.ca/gallery/Inuit/prints.htm>
- More Inuit Art Web sites [NOTE: These sites have a wealth of images, but no background information on individual pieces.]
<http://www.inuit.com/>
<http://www.inuitfinearts.com/kulik/index.html>
<http://www.inuitgallery.com/home.html>
http://collections.ic.gc.ca/cape_dorset/artist.html

Cultural Information

- Canadian Arctic Profiles: Indigenous Cultures
<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/arctic/inuit/people.htm>
 - Inuit: Our World, Our Way of Life [NOTE: Click on Inuit topics.]
http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Inuit_Haida/english.html
 - Inuit Life in Nunavik
<http://www.kativik.qc.ca/ulluriaq/Nunavik/inuitlife/>
7. After students have chosen a work of art, they should print it out and complete an index card label with the following information:
Title of artwork:
Artist's name:
Materials:
Year:
Description: (How does this piece reflect the Inuit relationship with the Arctic land or wildlife?)
 8. Have students hang their labeled prints around the classroom to create an art gallery. Allow students enough time to view the artwork and read the labels. Then ask them to describe the art in their own words. Do the pieces show any similarities? (Answers will vary, but students might use these terms: flowing lines, lack of detail, playful, spiritual.)

9. As a final step or as an extension, ask students to create drawings that reflect their own relationship with something in the environment.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **3 points:** Students contributed one or more aspects of past or present Inuit culture; found an appropriate work of art that clearly reflects the Inuit relationship to the environment; created a complete label with all requested information; participated actively in class discussion.
- **2 points:** Students contributed one aspect of past or present Inuit culture; found an appropriate work of art that adequately reflects the Inuit relationship to the environment; created a satisfactory label with most requested information; participated in class discussion.
- **1 point:** Students did not contribute one aspect of past or present Inuit culture; found a work of art that does not clearly reflect the Inuit relationship to the environment; created an incomplete label with little or no requested information; did not participate in class discussion.

Vocabulary

Arctic

Definition: Region around the North Pole, including the Arctic Ocean and parts of North America, Asia, and Europe

Context: The Inuit have strong ties to their Arctic environment.

Inuit

Definition: Native peoples who have lived in the Canadian Arctic and Greenland for thousands of years

Context: Inuit means "the people" in their language.

Nunavut

Definition: The self-governing territory of the Inuit, located in the Northwest Territories of Canada

Context: Nunavut became a self-governing territory in 1999.

Academic Standards

National Academy of Sciences

The National Science Education Standards provide guidelines for teaching science as well as a coherent vision of what it means to be scientifically literate for students in grades K-12. To view the standards, visit <http://books.nap.edu>.

This lesson plan addresses the following science standard:

- Science in Personal and Social Perspectives: Populations, resources, and environments



Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Science – Life Sciences: Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media; Writing: Gathers and uses information for research purposes
- Visual Arts – Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Time, Continuity, and Change
 - People, Places, and Environments
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the [Discoveryschool.com](http://www.discoveryschool.com) Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>