

Lesson Plan: Nature's Stories and Rhythms

An Introduction to Native American Appreciation Through Creativity

A Note on Cultural Sensitivity: This lesson respectfully introduces the theme of appreciation for nature, a value present in many (though not all) of the hundreds of diverse Native American nations. It is designed to foster appreciation and avoid cultural appropriation by focusing on universal creative activities rather than specific tribal traditions, ceremonies, or symbols. Always refer to Native American peoples in the present tense ("they live," not "they lived") and as diverse nations.

Materials Needed

- A large piece of cardboard or construction paper (for the collage base)
- White school glue or a glue stick
- Crayons or markers
- A collecting bag or bucket
- Natural items found outdoors (leaves, small twigs, pebbles, flower petals, blades of grass)
- A small drum, or a pot/plastic container and a wooden spoon to use as a drum
- An age-appropriate picture book by a Native American author focusing on nature (e.g., *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom, or *Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story* by Kevin Noble Maillard) OR the simple story provided below.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate an appreciation for nature by creating a collage using found natural objects.
- Listen to a story and verbally share one idea or feeling from it.
- Participate in a rhythm activity to express a simple idea (like a heartbeat or rain).

Lesson Activities

Part 1: The Listening Walk & Story Time (15 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Storytelling, Discussion, and Sensory Exploration

1. **The "Hook" - Listening Walk:** Begin by going outside for a 5-minute "listening walk." Ask the student to be as quiet as possible and listen for all the sounds of nature. Ask: "*What do you hear? The wind? Birds? Rustling leaves?*" This helps the child connect with their environment.
2. **Introduction:** Come back inside and explain: "*Today, we're going to learn about showing respect for the earth and nature, which is a very important idea for many Native American people. They have been living on this land for a very long time and have amazing stories about nature.*"
3. **Story Time:** Read your chosen picture book. If you don't have one, you can tell this simple story:

"Once, there was a wise woman who told her grandchild, 'When you walk in the woods, walk softly. The earth is a drum. If you listen, you can hear its heartbeat. The trees are storytellers. If you are quiet, you can hear their whispers in the wind. The animals are our teachers. Watch them and they will show you how to find food,

water, and shelter. Always say thank you to the earth for the gifts it gives us.' The grandchild learned to walk softly, to listen closely, and to always be thankful."

4. **Discussion:** Ask simple, open-ended questions.
 - "What was your favorite part of that story?"
 - "What is one way we can say 'thank you' to the earth?"
 - "Why is it important to be kind to nature and animals?"

Part 2: Nature's Art (20 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Kinesthetic Learning, Hands-on Activity, and Creative Expression

1. **Nature Collection:** Take the collecting bag and go back outside. Explain: *"We are going to borrow some beautiful things from nature to make art. We will only take things that have already fallen to the ground, like leaves and twigs, to show our respect."* Help the student gather a variety of textures, shapes, and colors. Talk about what you find: *"This leaf is so red!"* *"This pebble is very smooth."*
2. **Create a Nature Collage:**
 - Lay out the large piece of cardboard or paper.
 - Encourage the student to arrange their collected items on the paper to create a picture or a beautiful design. It could be an animal, a face, or just a pattern.
 - Once they are happy with the design, help them glue the items down.
 - They can use markers or crayons to add extra details, like drawing a sun in the sky or grass on the ground.

Part 3: Rhythm and Movement (10 minutes)

Instructional Strategy: Auditory Learning, Music, and Kinesthetic Connection

1. **Heartbeat Drum:** Sit in a circle on the floor with your drum (or pot). Say: *"In the story, the earth had a heartbeat. Let's make a heartbeat sound."* Pat a slow, steady rhythm on the drum (BUM-bum... BUM-bum...). Invite the student to copy the rhythm on their own "drum" or by patting their lap.
2. **Nature Sounds:** Ask the student to create other nature sounds with the drum.
 - "Can you make the sound of gentle rain?" (Light, fast tapping with fingertips)
 - "Can you make the sound of a big bear walking?" (Slow, loud, heavy beats)
 - "How about a little squirrel running up a tree?" (Very fast, quiet tapping)
3. **Story Rhythm:** Encourage the student to tell a short story using only the drum sounds. It could be the story of an animal waking up and looking for food. This encourages creative thinking beyond words.

Conclusion and Assessment (5 minutes)

Assessment Method: Show and Tell, Observational Checklist

1. **Show and Tell:** Ask the student to present their nature collage. Prompt them with questions like:
 - "Tell me about your artwork. What did you make?"
 - "Which nature piece is your favorite and why?"
 - "How did making this art help you say 'thank you' to the earth?"

This serves as the summative assessment, showing if they grasped the core theme.

2. **Review:** Briefly recap the main idea: *"Today we learned that being kind to nature and listening to its stories is important. You did an amazing job creating art and rhythms to celebrate the earth!"*

Differentiation and Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Pre-draw a simple shape (like an animal outline) on the paper for the student to fill in with their nature items. Guide their hand during the drumming activity to help them feel the rhythm.
- **For an Advanced Challenge:** Encourage the student to create a pattern in their collage (e.g., leaf-pebble-leaf-pebble). Ask them to create a more complex story with their drum, including a beginning, middle, and end. They could also try drawing pictures of the animals from the storybook.