



FOLKART / PAPEL AMATE

Level: middle school / 6-8 grade
Course: art, social studies, Spanish

Rationale

To introduce students to an unusual, yet very popular, form of folkart found around Oaxaca, Mexico. To allow them to study and identify some of the traditional costumes, architecture, sports, celebrations, flora, and fauna. To allow students to analyze the technique before assimilating one of their own.

Objective

Students will be able to identify the area where this art form comes from on a map of Mexico. Students will be able to describe what real papelamate is made from and how it is made. Students will make an imitation papelamate using a torn section of a paper grocery bag and then discuss the techniques and colors they used as well as what they depicted and why.

Lesson Overview

Before starting the actual art project, students should first be introduced to the area in Mexico from which papelamate comes. They should then be shown photographs if at all possible of the trees from which the bark is taken. For this particular lesson, I filmed and interviewed an actual papelamate maker from Puebla Mexico selling his art in Guanajuato. The 2nd session could be made up of the students tearing up their bags, wetting and wadding them up, and finally inking them and allowing them to dry.

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Time Needed

anywhere from three to five 55 minute sessions

Materials

Make ground materials on papel amate, such as photographs of the bark, sample pieces of the art, brown grocery bags, India Ink, paint brushes of various sizes, bright fluorescent paints

Procedures

To provide background, I filmed and interviewed an actual papel amate maker from Puebla Mexico selling his art in Guanajuato and explaining the different types of papel amate as well as how it is made and then sold to artists from another town to be painted. The video is in Spanish and therefore would need to be translated for non-Spanish speaking students or dubbed over in English.

After viewing the video, students should be able to answer the following questions:

1. Where was the man from who made the papel amate?
2. What would you call him?
3. What language did he speak?
4. Are there different types of papel amate?
5. Do the artists who usually make the paper also paint it?

This should take up the first 55 minute session.

To save time, students could sketch their designs for their papel amate art piece at home and then paint them at school during the third session or sketch during the third and paint during the fourth.

First have the students tear out various sizes of rectangular shapes from brown grocery bags. Next, have them wet them and squeeze them into balls. Then, have them smooth them out on top of newspapers, large rags, or towels. Before they dry, have them brush on a mixture of 1/8 India ink and 7/8 water allowing the ink to collect in the wrinkles and folds. Allow them to dry and then iron them flat. Finally have the students sketch a scene similar to the ones they drew the day before and then paint them.

Students should share their paintings and discuss the techniques and colors they used as well as what they depicted and why.

Other topics students might discuss are:

1. Why do you think the artists use bark as their medium to paint on?
2. What do our artists usually paint on?

3. What other natural objects have you seen before that people have used to turn into works of art?
4. Why do you suppose the artists choose those objects?

Possible follow up activities

1. Have the students do papel amate pieces depicting their local area or customs using colors of their choices.
2. Discuss the scientific process that takes place in order for the crushed bark to adhere to itself.
3. For a writing project, students could write a journal entry on what they learned from the project or actually write out the specific directions so that other students might try it at another date and time.
4. Students could make an art piece out of a natural object found in their area.

Bibliography

<http://gnn.com/cgi-bin/gnn/>

(follow to Travel Resource, to Region, County, State, and City Guides, to Latin American and Caribbean, to Mexico not "Welcome to Mexico," to Historia, to Geografia, to Arte, to Economia, to Ciencia, to Deporte, to Turism, to Folklore, then under Folklore one can go on to other subtitles such as: Fiestas y Tradiciones, to Religion, to Musica, to Danza, to Tianguis y Mercados, to Charrería, to Picardía Mexicana, or to Cocina).

Daniel F. Rubin de la Borbolla, Arte popular de Mexico, Mexico, D.F. : Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1963.

Frances Toor, Mexican Popular Arts, Detroit: Blaine Ethridge, 1973.

Gerd Dorner, Folk Art of Mexico, New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1962.