

Piñatas, Grade 6-8

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Lesson Plan Summary:

In this lesson plan students will extend their understanding of Mexican culture by learning about the piñata, including its origins, its modern day use in Mexico, as well as other cultures around the world. Student groups will design and produce their own piñatas, presenting their piñatas to the class.

Objectives:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the products people create and how they are related to the perspectives of the cultures studied.

TEKS §114.22. Levels I & II - Novice Progress Checkpoint (c)(2)(B)

The student is expected to use resources (that may include technology) in the language of the cultures being studied to gain access to information, and to use the language to obtain, reinforce, or expand knowledge of other subject areas.

TEKS §114.22. Levels I & II - Novice Progress Checkpoint (c)(3)(A,B)

The student is expected to demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the student's own culture and the cultures studied, and to demonstrate an understanding of the influence of one language and culture on another.

TEKS §114.22. Levels I & II - Novice Progress Checkpoint (c)(4)(B,C)

Lesson Objectives:

Students will discover the original uses and ceremonial meanings of the piñata, how this meaning was changed by contact with European culture, and how the piñata has been incorporated into celebrations in other cultures around the world.

Students will use this knowledge to produce their own piñatas, and then demonstrate their understanding of the concepts by displaying their product to their classmates, explaining in Spanish the reasons for their designs and by describing the type of celebration into which their piñatas could be incorporated.

Materials:

- Piñata PowerPoint, including images of piñatas on TIDES
- Tyler Museum of Art Video
<http://tides.sfasu.edu/Teachers/Tides/docs/VirtualExpeditions/videos/pinata.htm>
- Research materials – computer lab, library, or resources made available in the classroom
- Handout: “How to Make a Piñata, Step by Step”
- Video: Girl Scout World Center: Piñatas
<http://tides.sfasu.edu/Teachers/Tides/docs/VirtualExpeditions/videos/pinatas.html>
- Recipe for “Engrudo” (a special kind of glue used for pasting newspapers and decoration papers)

- Materials to produce the piñata
 - Disposable bowl for glue
 - Water
 - White flour
 - Salt to prevent mold
 - 1 bag of assorted size and shape balloons
 - Old newspaper
 - Masking tape
 - Paint
 - Crayons or markers
 - Crepe paper, tissue paper, and/or construction paper
 - Feathers, glitter, lace and fake flowers
 - String or yarn
 - Wrapped candy, small toys or confetti to be used for stuffing the piñata

Procedures:

1. Students will view the Piñata PowerPoint, which contains basic information about the history of piñatas and examples of piñatas. They will take brief notes to record significant information which they will use later in their oral presentations. The PowerPoint presentation will be followed by a class discussion regarding their own experiences with piñatas.
2. Students will research further examples using available resources. This activity can be adapted to the classroom circumstances – if a computer lab with internet access is not available, resources can be gathered by the teacher and then made available in the classroom.
3. The students will break into small groups, and each group will design the piñata that they are going to create, choosing materials and colors. Students will turn in a sketch of the design with the resources used and the supplies needed listed on the back of the sketch.
4. Students will view TIDES photos of students making piñatas, and then read and discuss the instruction sheet “How to Make a Piñata, Step by Step.”
5. Students will then make their own piñatas.
6. Students will present their piñatas to the class, explaining in Spanish the reasons for their designs and describing the type of celebration into which their piñatas could be incorporated.

Extra Activity:

Students may make a brochure containing accurate information about Piñatas, illustrated with colorful images. These brochures could then be handed out to students from other grades, who will be invited to help break the piñatas.

How to Make a Piñata – Step by Step

1. Mix flour and water into paste in a disposable container. Every “how to” article on piñatas has slightly different instruction about the best paste recipe. The most common options are available at <http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/papermache/a/blpmpastes.htm>. The traditional glue is called “Engrudo,” and a recipe for it is available at TIDES.
2. Blow up the balloon. The balloon will form the body of your piñata, so choose the size and shape of the balloon based on the size and shape you want your piñata to be.
3. Make additional shapes (arms, legs, star points, etc.) out of cardboard or newspapers to finish your design, and attach them securely to the balloon with masking tape.
4. Tear newspapers into 1” – 2” X 6” strips. Most articles agree that newspaper must be torn, rather than cut, because it affects the way the newspaper layers on the balloon.
5. Dip strips of newspaper into the glue and lay them one at a time over the balloon until it is completely covered. Let dry until it is no longer sticky to touch. Leave a hole at the top of the balloon so you can pop it and fill the finished piñata with goodies.
6. Repeat until the balloon is covered in several layers of paper mache. All instructional articles agree that each piñata must have at least three layers. The more layers that you apply, the stronger your piñata will be. For a really strong piñata, several articles suggested wrapping the balloon in string or tape after the third layer has dried, and then applying two more layers. This will, however, make your piñata much more difficult to break to get the goodies out.
7. Paint it with the design that you want it to have.
8. Glue 1” -3” squares of crepe paper, tissue paper, or construction paper onto the smooth surface, changing colors to indicate the design you are attempting to create. Start at the bottom and work upwards, overlapping the layers.
9. Add other decorations – feathers, beads, glitter.
10. Cut a small hole at the top and attach a string.
11. Fill with goodies through the hole you left when you popped the balloon, and then cover the hole with additional paper.

Resources

Fournier, Catherine. “Fridge Art: Making a Piñata.” Domestic Church Communications, Ltd., 1997-2005. <http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19981101/FRIDGE/pinata.htm>

“How to Make a Piñata.” <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Pi%C3%B1ata>.

Osborn, Sheri. “Family Crafts: Paper Mache Pinata.” About.com. <http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/papermache/l/blpmachpl.htm>.

Osborn, Sheri. “Family Crafts: Paper Mache Paste Recipes.” About.com. <http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/papermache/a/blpmpastes.htm>



Engrudo (Wheat Paste) Recipe

1 cup **very hot** water
3 tablespoons white flour
Cold water

Use just enough cold water to moisten the flour and make it liquid enough to pour easily. Pour this mixture slowly into the hot water while constantly stirring. Bring to a boil and continue to boil until mixture thickens. Allow to cool.

This paste can be used like any regular glue, and can be spread onto a surface using a paint brush. For an even stronger paste, add 1 tablespoon of sugar when mixture thickens, before it is allowed to cool. Leftovers can be stored after reheating in a covered jar or container, to sterilize it, or can be kept in the refrigerator. Other types of flour will work, if white flour is unavailable.