

The Bear Dance as an Expression of Ute Culture

Summary

The student will learn about Ute culture by investigating the Bear Dance tradition.

Main Core Tie

Social Studies - 4th Grade

[Standard 2 Objective 1](#)

Additional Core Ties

Social Studies - 4th Grade

[Standard 1 Objective 1](#)

Social Studies - 4th Grade

[Standard 1 Objective 2](#)

Social Studies - 4th Grade

[Standard 2 Objective 2](#)

Time Frame

2 class periods of 30 minutes each

Materials

Teacher Materials

- [At a Glance: The Bear Dance and Ute Community](#) (pdf)
- *The Night the Grandfathers Danced*
by Linda Theresa Raczek and illustrated by Katalin Olah Ehling
Video: [We Shall Remain: The Ute](#)
- [Ute Bear Dance Chart Answer Key](#) (pdf)

Student Materials

- [Ute Bear Dance Chart](#) (pdf)
- [Bear Dance Photographs](#) (pdf)

Background for Teachers

The Utes say that the Bear Dance came from a bear just emerging from hibernation who encountered a young hunter. The bear described the dance, which would ensure successful hunting for the Utes. The dance is a celebration of spring and an opportunity for Ute bands to join together after the long winter months.

Instructional Procedures

Read *The Night the Grandfathers Danced* to your students. Ask them to share their favorite parts of the story in an informal discussion. Ask the students if they are ready to take a test about Ute culture. Once they are calmed back down, offer to read through the story again, page-by-page, having them look for clues as you go along. Pass out a copy of the Ute Bear Dance Chart for the class to take notes on as the story is reread. Allow students to work with a partner in completing the Ute Bear Dance Chart.

Conclude with a clip from *We Shall Remain: The Ute* to show students a contemporary example of the Bear Dance.

Extensions

If you do not have access to the book or the excerpt available on www.UtahIndians.org, the chart can be completed from watching the film clips and leading a discussion on Ute culture.

Have students share dances that have meanings within their own cultures and compare them to the Bear Dance.

Use the stories in *Weenoocheeyoo Peesaduehnee Yak:anup: Stories of Our Ancestors*, available at www.UtahIndians.org, to find other clues about Ute culture.

Compare and contrast with *Coyote Steals Fire: A Shoshone Tale* and *Pia Toya--A Goshute Indian Legend*, both available on www.UtahIndians.org

Assessment Plan

Discussion participation

Completed Ute Bear Dance Chart

[End of Unit Assessment](#)

Bibliography

Conetah, Fred A. *A History of the Northern Ute People*. Ed. Kathryn L. MacKay and Floyd A. O'Neil. Fort Duchesne, Utah: Uintah-Ouray Tribe, 1982.

Krudwig, Vickie Leigh. *Searching for Chipeta*. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum, 2004.

Lyman, June, and Norma Denver, comps. *Ute People: An Historical Study*. Ed. Floyd A. O'Neil and John D. Sylvester. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970.

Weenoocheeyoo Peesaduehnee Yak:anup: Stories of Our Ancestors. Fort Duchesne, Utah: Uintah-Ouray Tribe, 1974.

The University of Utah's [American West Center](#) (AWC) produced the curriculum materials in consultation with the [Utah Division of Indian Affairs](#), [Utah State Office of Education](#), [KUED 7](#), and the Goshute, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Ute nations.

Authors

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