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Peace Gardens

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Activity II: Food and Culture in the Peace Garden

On page one, we introduced the idea that plants connect us all because all living things depend on them -- air, food, shelter, clothing, even water. For this exercise, students will investigate food plant origins as a way to illustrate 1) cultural diversity 2) how plants provide links among peoples.

Objectives: Students will:

- learn about cultural diversity by researching food plant origins;
- compare how different cultures use the same food plants;
- learn about and compare harvest festivals of various cultures.

Standards Addressed: [click here](#)

Materials:

- Online resource for researching food plant origins: [The Food Museum](#)
- World map (PDF files of world maps are available at [Eduplace.com](#))
- Harvest festival information: [Harvest Festivals Around the World](#); [HarvestFestivals.net](#)
- Post-it notes



Investigating Food Plants and World Cultures

Ask the students to name as many fruits and vegetables as they can. List their responses, and have students – individually or in groups – choose a fruit or vegetable from the list. Ask them to research and report on these questions:

1. In what region or country did this food plant originate? Each student can write the country/region name and the food plant name on the world map outline. To represent this exercise on a classroom map or globe, write the plant name on a Post-it note, and attach it to the correct spot.
2. In what regions of the world do people use this plant for food? Is this the place the plant originated? If not, when was this food plant introduced to different parts of the world? Who helped this plant spread from region to region? What path did it take in its travels? Use this information to draw lines on individual maps. Or, use yarn attached with pushpins or tape to trace the path on the classroom world map or globe.
3. What is the climate like where this plant originated?
4. Given our climate, could this plant grow in our peace garden?
5. What ethnic groups live in the country or region of this plant's origin?
6. Learn about a harvest festival of the ethnic group or the region you've identified. What foods are featured? What rituals (e.g., dancing, singing, parades) are performed? Does your family have a tradition of celebrating the harvest? Are there similarities among all these celebrations? What about them is different? Compare these festivals with an American Thanksgiving holiday.
7. Pick a traditional or popular dish from this ethnic group or region that includes the food plant you're researching. If you can, prepare this dish to share with the class. Write a detailed description of the ingredients and how it is prepared. Compare it to a familiar American dish that is made with the same food plant. What is different about these two dishes (e.g., ingredients, how it's prepared or served)?
8. Review all of the nations and cultures represented by student work. Are there nations or ethnic groups that aren't represented that the class would like to include? (This could lead to the same investigation of foods, but from the opposite direction, starting with the region or ethnic group and finding out what food plants originated there.)

9. Write and illustrate reports with this information, and create a classroom book of foods of the world, or develop a PowerPoint presentation. Ask students to suggest titles that reflect the content: food plants, geography, cultures, and celebrations (e.g., Food Travels: Connecting Cultures)

Extensions

Social Studies:

- Plan a multicultural luncheon or banquet, and invite parents and community members. Consider selling tickets to raise funds for your peace garden, or for a local or global peace organization. At this function, the class can share what they've learned via posters, presentations, or copies of their book. They can even unveil the design for their multicultural garden plan.

Language Arts/Fine Arts:

- Write and perform a play based on your research (e.g., about harvest festivals around the world; how food plants traveled from place to place).

For the basics on planning and creating a school garden, please read [Mapping Out the Schoolyard](#).

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