

CONTEXT Since piloting our [Culture, Community, and the Classroom \(CCC\)](#) series in 2018, we have engaged traditional artists from diverse communities and connected them with public school teachers and museum educators in learning residencies. CCC uses a three-phase series model, starting with a 12-hour professional development workshop that includes artists, culture bearers, and regional educators learning together. The second phase pairs artists and teachers working together in a classroom. The final phase brings everyone who participated together in a program showcase to reflect on what was learned and to strengthen peer networks and connections. This lesson plan was shared with us by a teacher who participated in the CCC program. It can be adapted for use with a local artist in another region. Or, [Contact Us](#) to learn how to invite the named artist in this lesson to your learning space.

WHAT WE LOVE Folk and traditional arts are a natural fit for the social studies classroom. They easily facilitate learning and conversations about diverse communities, both local and global. This residency demonstrates how music and social studies can dovetail. It also models how multiple subject areas—music, English Language Arts, and social studies—came together in a single artist residency. The tools of folklore—close listening, observation, interviewing—deepened student preparation for the residency and their engagement with the artists.

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND THE CLASSROOM GUEST ARTIST LESSON PLAN

TEACHER: James Longbotham

GRADE LEVEL: 3rd **SUBJECT AREAS:** ELA/Social Studies

SCHOOL: Lenape Elementary School, New Paltz, NY

GUEST ARTIST: Pulso de Barro—Maria Puentes Flores and Mateo Cano

ART FORMS: Drumming/Music/Dancing/Storytelling with artists and then Drawing/Painting/Writing as follow-up

CURRICULAR CONNECTION: An overarching theme for this study and artist collaboration will be steeped in NYS Social Studies Standard 3.6: Communities from around the world interact with other people and communities and exchange cultural ideas and practices.

LESSON TITLE: Unlocking Inquiry in the Social Studies Classroom Through Mexican Traditions

LENGTH: Five one-hour class sessions and one grade-level assembly

MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

- World map or globe
- Pictures, video, and/or visuals related to the State of Veracruz, Mexico
- Storybooks or printed stories about Veracruz, such as *I am Veracruz* by Claritza Rausch Peralta as well as information about Veracruz from Britannica School- Elementary
- Artist Statements and Artist Portraits
- Performance space
- PA system and lighting
- Gathering space in the classroom for sitting in a round
- Artist-provided Cajon (wooden box drum) and other Mexican instruments
- Other percussion instruments from music classroom
- Sketching paper with pencils
- Hand drums for each student
- Sharpies, brushes, and acrylic paints
- Paper plates as palettes
- Rinse water and paper towels
- Chromebooks or paper and pencils for writing

USING THIS LESSON IN YOUR LEARNING SPACE *Local Learning is committed to fair use and open access of educational materials. We, as Publisher, also look to protect the work that we publish from unauthorized, commercial use. This lesson is shared via a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, CC-BY-NC-SA. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>. This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as they credit the Author(s) (the teacher and/or artist) and the Publisher (Local Learning), and license their new creations under the identical terms.*

This CCC project was supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Individual Donors to Local Learning.

PREPARING/PLANNING: To prepare for this collaboration, I reached out to the artists and we discussed their art forms, possibilities in terms of activities, and the flow of their two visits. I began to think about how to integrate this cultural study into my Social Studies program. As they are performing artists, I asked if they would be interested in coming in earlier to perform for the benefit of the entire grade level since they would only be working with my class for the two visits. They were amenable and I secured separate funding through our local PTA and BOCES CoSer program. After we talked through the lessons for the two visits, I began planning the following pre-visit (Day 1), visits (Day 3-4) and post-visit (Day 5-6) lessons.

Day 1: Finding and Exploring Veracruz, Mexican Culture

Objective:

- In a Pre-Visit lesson students will learn about the incoming artists through their Artist Statements and Artist Portraits as well as the State of Veracruz in Mexico through video and picture books.

Materials Needed:

- World map or globe
- Pictures, video, and/or visuals related to the State of Veracruz, Mexico
- Storybooks or printed stories about Veracruz
- Artist Statements and Artist Portraits

Activities:

- 1. Introduction (30 minutes):**
 - Begin by discussing the upcoming artist collaboration and visit. Inventory the students' assumptions of what they may be learning about and what the experience may be like.
 - Share the Artist Statements and Artist Portraits by projecting them and reading the statements aloud.
 - Then discuss the concept of culture and how different regions have unique traditions, music, and stories.
 - Show Veracruz on the world map or globe and briefly introduce its location and significance.
- 2. Veracruz Culture (30 minutes):**
 - Read aloud a story or share a video related to Veracruz. Choose a folk tale, legend, or historical account that highlights the culture, people, or natural beauty of the state.
 - Discuss key themes from the introduction to Veracruz and complete a Venn diagram with the students after sharing about Veracruz people, places and culture. Keep the focus open-ended to discover what students found interesting.

Day 2: Exploring Veracruz Through Storytelling, Song, and Dance Assembly

Objective:

- Artists will come in for a grade-level assembly and students will learn about the State of Veracruz in Mexico through engaging storytelling, song, and dance. At the end of the performance the artists responded to questions from the students.

Materials Needed:

- Performance space
- PA system and lighting

Day 3: Learning About Veracruz Through Storytelling, Song, and Dance Classroom Residency

Objective:

- Artists will come in for their first in-class visit and students will learn about the State of Veracruz in Mexico through engaging storytelling, song, and dance.

Materials Needed:

- Gathering space in the classroom for sitting in a round.
- Artists provide a Cajon (wooden box drum) and other Mexican instruments, and the teacher provides other percussion instruments with support of the Music teacher.

Activities:

- 1. Introduction (5 minutes):**
 - Artists introduce themselves and discuss instruments.
 - Incorporate the concept of culture and how different regions have unique traditions, music, and stories.
- 2. Veracruz Storytelling (10 minutes):**
 - Artists tell a story related to Veracruz. (Story of Iguana and the Iguana dance)
Choose a folk tale, legend, or historical account that highlights the culture, people, or natural beauty of the state.
 - Discuss key elements of the story, such as characters, setting, and plot.
- 3. Veracruz Drumming (35 minutes):**
 - Artists introduce traditional Veracruz music, especially the lively rhythms of **Son Jarocho**.
 - Provide students with simple percussion instruments (e.g., tambourines, maracas, or hand drums).
 - Teach students basic rhythms inspired by Veracruz music.

- Encourage students to create their own short drumming patterns.
- 4. **Reflection (10 minutes):**
 - Have students share what they learned about Veracruz and how the story and drumming made them feel.
 - Discuss the importance of preserving cultural traditions.

Post-Visit: Classroom teacher hosts discussion with class and brainstorms initial questions that students have about the artists and their cultural traditions. These questions will then be used to interview the artists during their next visit.

Language Arts Lesson:

Prior to the artists' second visit, present a lesson on two different types of questions—literal and inferential. Present examples of each and then brainstorm a list of interview questions for both artists. Examples of some generated by the students follow:

- What's it like in Mexico where you were born?
- How do you make up the dances and why?
- Why is singing and dancing important to you?
- How do you get a donkey's jaw (instrument)?
- How do you gather your stories and songs?
- What is one of your favorite concerts that you have been in?
- Was singing and dancing always your dream?
- What is your favorite instrument and why?
- How did you learn to play your instruments?

Day 4: Creating Veracruz Rhythms and Interviewing Classroom Residency

Objective:

- Students will explore Veracruz rhythms through hands-on drumming activities and then interview the visiting artists.

Materials Needed:

- Gathering space in the classroom for sitting in a round.
- Artists provide Cajon (wooden box drum) and indigenous instruments. The teacher provides other percussion instruments with support of the Music teacher.
- Assign interview questions to students.

Activities:

1. **Review (10 minutes):**
 - Artists recap the previous lesson on Veracruz and its culture.
 - Remind students of the story they heard and the rhythms they practiced.
2. **Veracruz Rhythms Exploration (20 minutes):**
 - Artists play songs together to immerse students in the sounds of the region.
 - Demonstrate more complex rhythms inspired by Veracruz music.
3. **Interview artists (30 minutes):**
 - Students take turns with artists asking and answering their generated questions.

Day 5: Designing and Painting Our Own Hand Drum

Objectives:

- Students will first sketch a design on paper for their drum, paint their design onto their hand drum, and then share the significance of their design.

Materials Needed:

- Sketching paper with pencils
- Hand drums for each student
- Sharpies, brushes, and acrylic paints
- Paper plates as palettes
- Rinse water and paper towels

Activities:

1. **Review (15 minutes):**
 - Recap the previous day's lesson on Veracruz and its culture.
 - Remind students of the story they heard and review rhythms they practiced.
2. **Planning and Painting (60 minutes):**
 - Students sketch the design they would like to see on their drums.
 - Students then apply design with a Sharpie.
 - Students then use acrylic paint to paint designs on their drums.
3. **Cultural Reflection (15 minutes):**
 - Students share the significance of their design as a closing circle.

Day 6: Writing Activity—My Drum Speaks!

Objective:

- Students will play their drum within a drum circle and then write about how their drum “speaks” to them. (The artists raised this question with students.)

Materials Needed:

- Students’ personal drums
- Chromebook for writing

Activities:

1. **Review (15 minutes):**
 - Students will warm up by playing their drum within a drum circle, practicing a variety of rhythmic patterns.
2. **Cultural Reflection (45 minutes):**
 - Students will write about how their drum “speaks” to them as they are drumming on their own and within a drum circle.
 - Students will then share as a closing activity.

Assessment:

- Informally assess students’ participation, engagement, and understanding during the storytelling and drumming activities.

Extension:

- Invite a guest speaker (e.g., a musician or someone with knowledge of Veracruz) to share more about the culture and music of the region.
- Encourage students to explore additional Veracruz stories or create their own based on the state’s rich heritage.

Remember to adapt the lesson plan based on your classroom dynamics and available resources. Enjoy exploring the vibrant culture of Veracruz with your students!

NYS Next Gen ELA Standards 2017

3W4: Create a response to a text, author, theme, or personal experience (e.g., poem, play, story, artwork, or other).

NYS Next Gen Social Studies Standards 2016

3.2 The location of world communities can be described using geographic tools and vocabulary.

3.4 Each community or culture has a unique history, including heroic figures, traditions, and holidays.

3.5 Communities share cultural similarities and differences across the world.

3.6 Communities from around the world interact with other people and communities and exchange cultural ideas and practices.

