



Activity Guide

800-788-1121

Dancing with the Indians

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ABOUT THE STORY

Based on incidents from the author's own family history, this story tells about an African-American family that go every year to visit the Seminole Indian group that rescued their grandfather from slavery. The family dances with the Seminoles in their yearly celebration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angela Shelf Medearis has written several books for young readers that focus on the reading needs of African Americans. She is the founder and director of Book Boosters, a multicultural program for school children that focuses on reading and drama. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and daughter.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Samuel Byrd is a painter, muralist, and illustrator. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife and daughter.

INTRODUCING THE STORY

Ask children what they know about African American enslavement in the United States before the Civil War. Discuss with them how and why people enslaved others and how the practice was ended. Explain that the book they will read is about a family whose grandfather was a slave who was rescued by a Native American group.

READING ACTIVITIES

Comprehension/Thinking Skills

1. "What group of Indians is the family going to visit?"
2. "Why do they visit the Indians?"
3. "What dance do the Indians do first?"
4. "What happens during the Rainbow Dance?"
5. "Why do you think the narrator is afraid during the Snake Dance?" (Draw conclusions)
6. "Why do you think the family finds it important to dance with the Indians each year?" (Draw conclusions)

Vocabulary

Write these words from the story on the board. Ask children to copy them, putting them in alphabetical order. Then have volunteers offer definitions for each word. If children have trouble defining the words, help them find definitions in a dictionary. Finally, have children use each word in a sentence.

canopies, plantation, writhe, cavalcade, slavery, rescued, gloriously, silhouettes

CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Social Studies: Escaping from Slavery

Have children work in small groups to find out about how slaves escaped from slavery. Ask them to look in reference books and encyclopedias for information about the Underground Railroad. Children can make maps showing the main routes of the Underground Railroad. Then they can report on what they have learned to the rest of the class.

Music: Native American Music and Dance

Play some Native American dance music for the class. Some possible recordings are Dancing Brave and Authentic Native American Music. Ask children to listen carefully to the rhythms. Children can work alone or in groups to make up dances to go with the songs you play. Encourage them to perform their dances for the class.

Health: Native American Recipes

The Seminoles, as well as many other Native American groups, had recipes for special dishes they served. Ask children to look in books about Native Americans, Native American recipe books, or on the Internet to find Native American recipes. Have them write down a recipe they find. Then collect the recipes in a class Native American cookbook.

Language Arts: Native American Legends

Have children look through collections of Native American legends to find one they especially like. One collection to check is Legends of the Seminoles by Betty Mae Jumper. Ask them to retell the legend, writing it down in their own words. Children can then tell their legends aloud to the class.

INTERNET ACTIVITY

Before you send children to do research using any of the keywords listed below, you may wish to try them yourself to make sure the sites are suitable.

Seminole Indians

Using the keywords Seminole Indians, children can work in pairs to research the Native Americans on the Internet. Have them choose one group of Seminoles, the Oklahoma group or the Florida group, to focus on. Children can write brief reports on the history of their group.