

Somali Ethnic Studies, Lesson Plan 8, Unit 2

Somali Traditional Dances: Comparative Analysis

Subjects: Ethnic Studies / English Language Arts

Overview

This lesson plan focuses on teaching students about various Somali traditional dances, their origins, characteristics, cultural significance, and how they compare to traditional dances from the U.S. or Minnesota. The plan is designed for 2-3 periods, each lasting 55 minutes.

Essential Question

How do traditional dances, both Somali and those from the U.S. or Minnesota, reflect the values, history, and identity of the cultures they represent?

Learning Objectives :

- Students recognize traditional Somali arts across genres.
- Students can identify and describe the Saylici and Jaandheer dances.

Standards

- **Ethnic Studies**

Identity: Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity, and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased, or ignored.

Benchmark: Analyze how the definitions, identifications, and understanding of racial and ethnic groups have changed over time as a result of politics. **(9.5.23.1)**

- **English/Language Arts**

Writing: Engage in inquiry-based learning and research processes to create texts and presentations for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Benchmark: Formulate self-generated questions that guide inquiry to solve a problem, generating additional questions for further research and investigation. **(9.2.7.1)**

Materials:

- Projector for viewing dance segments.

- Access to tablets for writing assignments.
- Google Slides

Lesson 9.1: Introduction to Somali Traditional Dances

Note: “DOK” throughout refers to Dept of Knowledge questions (Level 1: recall; Level 2: skills and concepts; Level 3: strategic thinking; Level 4: extended thinking)

Estimated Time	Content	Materials
10 mins. DOK 1	<p>Introduction (“Ignite”)</p> <p>Brief overview of Somali culture and the importance of traditional dance. (Ask students: Are you familiar with Somali dances? Which ones? When do Americans dance? What are some examples of traditional American dances?)</p> <p>Read aloud the Essential Question: How do traditional dances, both Somali and those from the U.S. or Minnesota, reflect the values, history, and identity of the cultures they represent?</p> <p>Have student(s) read aloud the Learning Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can recognize traditional Somali arts across genres. • I can identify and describe the Saylici and Jaandheer dances. 	<p>Projector for viewing dance segments.</p> <p>Slide #1</p> <p>Slide #2</p> <p>Slide #3</p>
20 mins.	<p>Saylici Dance (“Chunk”)</p> <p>Share the origins and evolution of Saylici. (Originated from the town of Zeila (Saylac) in Northern Somaliland. Initially a religious chant, it gradually evolved into a dance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of Lyrics: Unchanged for hundreds of years, preserving its Islamic foundation. • Cultural Significance: Traditionally performed at weddings and special occasions. • Clan Connection: Strong connection to the Samaroon (Gidabursi) clan, more than any other group. <p>Watch selected videos showcasing Saylici dance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Saylici Dance Example 1 (2.44 mins.)</u> 	<p>Slide #4</p> <p>Slide #5</p> <p>Slide #6</p>

<p>DOK 2 DOK 3 DOK 3</p>	<p>Ask students what they notice... What do they think is the significance of the scarves on the men? Why is it call and response? Why do the two men retrieve the girl?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Saylici Dance Example 2</u> (11 mins.) <p>For this dance, have students line up, share examples of the movements they saw, and face one another. Have them try to mimic the moves of the dancers.</p>	<p>Space for students to practice dance, facing each other in two lines.</p>
<p>10 mins.</p> <p>DOK 3 DOK 4</p>	<p>Jaandheer Dance (“Chunk”)</p> <p>Discuss the origins and significance of Jaandheer. (<i>The Jaandheer dance, meaning "big leap or step," hails from Northern Somalia and is primarily practiced in the provinces of Nugaal, Sool, Sanaag, and Bari. This dance is commonly featured in Somali weddings and festive occasions.</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ <u>Jaandheer Dance Example</u> (4.26 mins.) <p>What are the differences between this dance and the Saylici? Do students feel that there are “lead dancers” in this example?</p>	
<p>10 mins.</p> <p>DOK 3 DOK 3</p>	<p>Writing Exercise (“Chew”)</p> <p>Before having students compare and contrast the Saylici and Jaandheer dances, generate a list of the movements they noticed while they were watching the video.</p> <p>Have them write a one-page reflection discussing the dance’s origins, movements, cultural significance, and any observable similarities or differences. (For example: Why do you think the men hold their hands over the women’s heads? What might be the significance of the scarves? Did you notice a lead dancer in the Jaandheer?)</p>	
<p>5 in class; remainder as homework</p>	<p>Family Interview (“Review”)</p> <p>Have students identify a family member to interview about traditional dances – Somali or otherwise. As an exit ticket,</p>	

DOK 1 & 2	<p>write the person's name and their relationship to the student.</p> <p>As homework, ask the family member what dance is their favorite (again, whether Somali or an example of a dance from another culture) and why they like it.</p> <p>Reflect on their responses in a paragraph that contains the necessary elements: a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.</p>	
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Assessment: [Interviewing/Writing Assessment of Community Member](#)

Differentiation Strategies: Students could videotape an interview or write up an interview for the eventual booklet on Somali American profiles, including a photo of the interview subject.

Lesson 9.2: Exploring Dhaanto and Shirib Dances

Materials:

- Projector for viewing dance segments.
- [Google slides for Dhanto](#)
- Copies of [Venn Diagram](#) for students

Note: “DOK” throughout refers to Dept of Knowledge questions (Level 1: recall; Level 2: skills and concepts; Level 3: strategic thinking; Level 4: extended thinking)

Time	Content	Materials
5 mins.	<p>Student Sharing (Ignite”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students share what they learned from their interviews with relatives the previous night. • Was there a favorite dance that emerged, class-wide? 	Slide #1
DOK 4	<p>Read aloud the Essential Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do traditional dances, both Somali and those from the U.S. and/or Minnesota, reflect the values, history, and identity of the cultures they represent? • How does Dhaanto reflect the cultural identity and values of the Somali people, and in what ways does it serve as a medium for community expression and connection? 	Slide #2
DOK 4	<p>And have students read aloud Learning Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can recognize the Dhaanto dance and its characteristics. • I understand the significance of the Shirib dance. 	Slide #3
10 mins.	<p>Intro to Dhaanto Dance (“Chunk”)</p> <p>Present the origins (Ogaden Region), evolution, and characteristics of Dhaanto:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showcases various styles tailored to different Somali communities. • Evolved during the early 20th century – during Dervish Period – and Somalia’s emerging national identity. • Popular among young people during celebrations. • Features free and relaxed arm movements along with rhythmic head and knee bobbing. • Costumes include colorful dresses for women and traditional white sarongs (Macawiis) for men. 	Slide #4 Slide #5 Slide #6 Slide #7 Slide #8

<p>DOK 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variety of versions of the dance. <p>Listen/watch dance.</p> <p><i>Discuss: Ask students to compare this dance to the previous two they have learned about: the Saylici and the Jaandheer.</i></p>	<p>Slide #9 (skip #10) S</p> <p>Slide #11 (with dance embedded @ 3 mins.)</p>
<p>20 mins.</p>	<p>Intro to the Shirib dance (“Chunk”) and Isunka Festival</p> <p>The Shirib dance plays a vital role in the Istunka festival preparations and is performed by groups of men reciting songs and poetry, usually on Friday nights – a holy day when farmers aren’t in the fields. This dance symbolizes community pride and bravery, often serving to taunt rival groups.</p> <p>Discuss the vocabulary and key figures involved in Shirib.</p> <p>Watch Shirib performance video (@ 5 mins.)</p>	<p><u>Google slides for Shirib</u></p> <p>Slide #3</p> <p>Slide #4</p> <p>Slide #5</p> <p>Slides #6-#12</p> <p>Slide #13</p>
<p>15 mins.</p> <p>DOK 4</p>	<p>Venn Diagram (“Chew”)</p> <p>Compare Dhaanto and Shirib dances to a traditional U.S. or Minnesota dance (e.g., square dancing, polka). Use the Venn Diagram as an organizer for pre-writing, considering how they are similar or different in terms of style, purpose, and cultural significance.</p>	<p><u>Copies of Venn Diagram</u></p>
<p>Homework</p> <p>DOK 4</p>	<p>Family Interview (“Review”)</p> <p>Conduct family interviews by asking about traditional dances in students’ families. Are there certain dances or songs for weddings, etc.?</p> <p>If a Somali family, ask about the Dhaanto and Shirib dances. Inquire if the parent or guardian has any personal stories or experiences related to these dances.</p> <p>Summarize the talk in a good paragraph, with a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.</p>	

Assessment: [Interviewing/Writing Assessment of Community Member](#)

Differentiation Strategies: Students could videotape interview or could write up interview for the eventual booklet on Somali American profiles, including a photo of the interview subject.

Lesson 9.3: Other Traditional Dances and Creative Expression

Note: “DOK” throughout refers to Dept of Knowledge questions (Level 1: recall; Level 2: skills and concepts; Level 3: strategic thinking; Level 4: extended thinking)

Time	Content	Materials
5 mins. DOK 4 DOK 4	<p>Introduce the Essential Question: (“Ignite”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How do traditional dances, both Somali and those from the U.S. or Minnesota, reflect the values, history, and identity of the cultures they represent? ● In what ways do Buraanbur, Saar, and Wilisaqo reflect the cultural identity and experiences of Somali women, and how have these art forms contributed to social change and empowerment throughout history? <p>Have students read aloud the Learning Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I can recognize Saar, Wilisaqo, and Buraanbur dances. ● I can create a group performance inspired by Somali traditional dances. 	Slide #1 Slide #2 Slide #3
15 mins.	<p>Overview of Dances (“Chunk”) (Saar, Wilsaqo, and Baraanbur)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discuss each dance's origins, characteristics, and significance. ○ Saar (or Saarka) is a specific, popular traditional Somali folk dance, especially in central and southern regions, known as a joyful, communal dance often performed with chanting and hand-clapping, representing Somali cultural heritage alongside other dances like Dhaanto and Buraanbur. It's practiced at weddings and community events. (See video performance embedded in slide #4. Each video is about 3 mins.) ○ Wilsago: A traditional Somali dance celebrated for its cultural significance. Primarily practiced in central Somalia. The Xawadle clan is known for its rich tradition. Both men and women participate, showcasing unity and celebration. Performed 	Slide #4 Slide #5

<p>DOK 3</p> <p>DOK 4</p>	<p>during weddings and other joyous occasions, symbolizing prosperity and community spirit. (See video performance embedded in slide #4. Video is about 3 mins.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Baraanbur is a popular dance and poetic genre among Somali women. It serves as a medium for women to share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations. The poems often address social and political issues, reflecting the community's values and concerns, such as female genital circumcision, as the poet sings about in this video. ○ Question students: "If these dances are a 'mirror' of Somali culture, what roles are men and women playing? Who takes the lead, how do they interact, and what does that say about their responsibilities in the community?" 	<p>Slide #6 - #8</p>
<p>20 mins.</p> <p>DOK 3</p>	<p>Comparative Analysis Discussion (“Chew”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitate a class discussion comparing all the Somali dances studied so far. ○ Ask students to think about how these dances reflect Somali culture and how they compare to traditional dances from the U.S. or Minnesota (for example: waltz, disco, square dance, line dance). ○ Encourage students to provide specific examples from their homework assignments, when they interviewed family members. 	
<p>15 mins.</p>	<p>Creative Group Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In groups, have students create short performances that incorporate elements of the dances studied. (This is also an opportunity to partner with the Somali Museum of Minnesota, where they offer traditional dance classes.) ○ Each group will present its performance to the class in the following session. 	
	<p>Closure (“Review”)</p>	

	Encourage students to continue exploring Somali traditional arts and consider how cultural expressions shape identity. Discuss how understanding different dance forms fosters appreciation for cultural diversity and deepens understanding of collective identity.	
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Student Assessments

Class Participation: Contribute to discussions on the similarities and differences among all studied Somali dances and their U.S. counterparts, using the [“Do Your Part”](#) assessment tool.

Interview/Writing Assignments: Use the [Interviewing/Writing Assessment of Community Member](#)