

CATEGORY: VENEZUELA: NOW

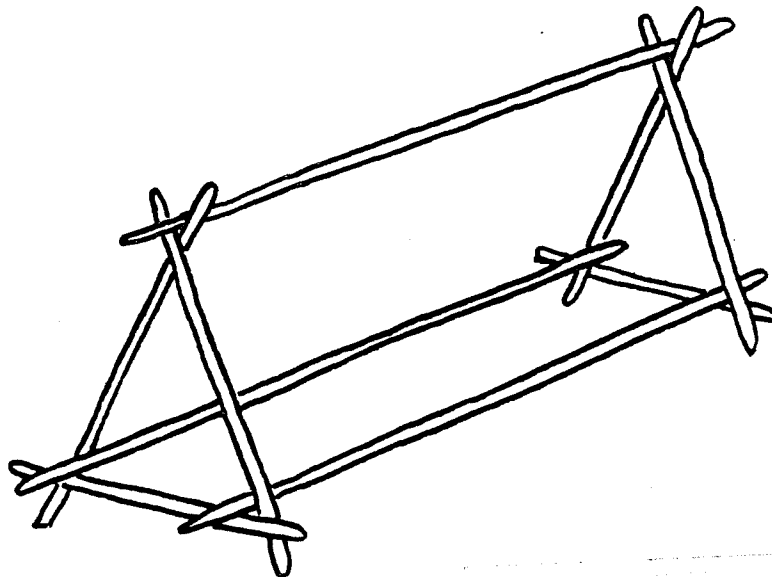
CONCEPTS: HOLIDAYS, folklore, art

ACTIVITY: MAKING A "BULL OF TACHIRA." In the Venezuelan State of Táchira, especially during the Christmas season, a "bull" appears on the streets of the towns to add excitement to the holiday festivities. Such a bull is not too complicated to make as a class project and can be used to liven up a Latin American Day or program.

OBJECTIVE: The class will make its own "bull of Táchira" for a festive occasion or to display to other classes.

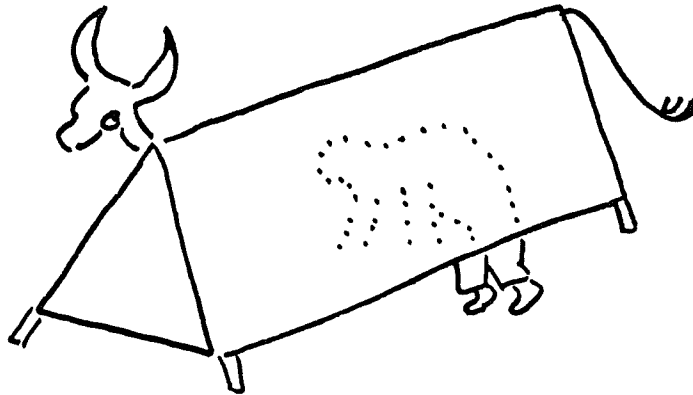
MATERIALS: lightweight wooden poles or plywood rods  
an old sheet, king-sized  
piece of rope  
cardboard  
paints

PROCEDURE: Make a framework for the bull as shown below:



**LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES**  
Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. | 1999.

The framework should be the size to allow a student to fit comfortably inside but also carry. (In Táchira, the person inside does not crouch down - it doesn't matter if a student's legs show.) Cover the frame with the sheet, stretching it tightly and covering the four sides separately, as you see here:



Be sure to cut out a square in the front through which the student can see where s/he is going.

Paint the sheet with black and/or brown stripes, spots or whatever the students find artistic and "bull-like." Attach a tail of rope with a frayed end.

The head can be made with paper-maché, a cloth bag stuffed and painted with cardboard horns attached, or simply a cardboard mask with horns. In Táchira they use an actual bull or ox skull, which gives it a ghostly appearance. If you teach in a farming community, one of your students may be able to come up with such an artifact.

In Táchira, the bull comes out at night. Its horns are dipped in kerosene and lit for an eery effect. If you use extreme caution, you can repeat this effect by attaching sparklers to the horns or have several students accompany the bull's appearance with sparklers or candles.

You can use the "bull" in several ways:

1. As part of a procession (see Brazil: carnival procession).
2. In a program of Latin American dances, music, etc.
3. To visit another class "by surprise."
4. To set up a game in the gym or playground. In Venezuela, the bull "tags" people, and youngsters practice bullfighting passes with capes.
5. To liven up a market like the one described in the unit on Mexico (Tianguís).

6. To visit your own or another class during a party and distribute small gifts: Christmas candy, etc.

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Although no one knows exactly where this tradition comes from, it is possible that it has roots in ancient religions. In Valencia, Spain, there is a carnival "Bou de foc" (ox of fire), probably related to the old Mediterranean bull worship. Have students check into the figure of the bull in mythology, particularly in Crete. This will give them an idea of how some traditions have fascinating and ancient roots, and spread from culture to culture over time and space.