

MARIACHI-MANIA

PRIMARY LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** Strand 1-Concept 6 (apply reading strategies) Strand 2-Concept 1 (identify facts and main ideas, author's purpose) Strand 3-Concepts 1 (analyze non-fiction) Strand 2 – Concept 2 (recognize historical and cultural perspectives)
- **Writing:** Creative Writing: Strand 2-Concepts 1,2 & 4, Strand 3-Concept 1 (Grade1) Strand 1-Concept 2, Strand 2 Concepts 1,2, & 4, Strand 3-Concept 1 (Grade 2) Strand 1-Concept2, Strand 2-Concepts 1,2 & 4, Strand 3-Concept 2 (Grade 3) Strand 3-Concept 1. Writing Process: Strand 1- Concepts 1-5, Strand 2-Concept 6 (Grades1-2) Strand 1-Concepts 1 & 3-5, Strand 2 Concepts 1 & 6. Gather & Report Information: Strand 2-Concept 1-2, Strand 3-Concept 2-3 (Grade 1) Strand 1-Concept 2, Strand 2-Concepts 1-2, Strand 3 Concepts 2-3 (Grade 2) Strand 2-Concepts 1-2 (Grade 3).
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-F1 and LS-F3 (shares, presents, participates in activities)
- **History:** 1SS-F2 (knowledge of past & present) 1SS-E1 (research tools)
- **Civics and Government:** 2SS-F1 (multiculturalism)
- **Geography:** 3SS-R1 (concept of location)
- **Arts:** 1AM-R1 (songs) 1AM-R2 (rhythm) 1AM-R6 (instruments) 1AM-R7 (Respect for personal work and work of others) 1AV-R1/F2 (use of art materials) 1AV-R2/E1/3AV-R2 (communicate through art) 1AV-R3 (art symbolism) 1AM-R6/3AV-R4 (art appreciation) 2AV-R2 (art & culture)

Goals & Objectives

Students will:

- Discuss the importance of music
- Identify mariachi music
- Identify and describe the instruments of a mariachi band
- Play the beats of the most popular mariachi song form: the Canción-Ranchera.
- Interpret the Cancion-Ranchera, 'El Rey'.

Length of lesson: Three one-hour periods/ or two block periods

Materials & Preparation:

- paper/ crayons
- recordings of mariachi music (see discography)
- recording of mariachi song 'El Rey' by Pedro Infante
- recordings of a variety of songs/music
- pictures of the vihuela and guitarrón. If possible, use actual instruments.

LESSON:

First Period:

- Have mariachi music playing as students enter the room. As warm-up ask them to discuss in pairs why they think music is important to us. Is there any kind of music or a song that makes you feel good? Is it the words you like or the music or both? Play some fragments of different songs to the students. After each fragment, ask students how that song makes them feel, what it makes them think about, or what memories it brings to them.
- Play a mariachi tune and ask them the same question. Do they know what kind of music it is? Ask students to get up and move with them to the music. Do a march around the class to the beat of the song.
- Ask students, where do they think Mariachi music is from? Discuss with them how it is from Mexico but that people love it so much it has spread all around the world. For example, Tucson is famous for its mariachi music.
- Is the song in English or in Spanish? Why, even though we don't understand the words, does this music make us feel energetic and happy? Discuss with students why they think mariachi songs are so popular everywhere, but can be especially meaningful for Mexican-Americans.
- Ask students to try to identify the instruments they hear. List all students' answers on the board.
- Show students pictures of mariachi bands, preferably print out different posters from Tucson's International Mariachi Conferences (available on the Web. See list of suggested resources). How many musicians can they see? What instruments can they identify? Are there any instruments written on the board that they do not see in the picture? Scratch them off. What about instruments they see on the picture but are not on the board? Add them. Point at the *vihuela* (small guitar) and the *guitarrón* (big guitar). If possible have both instruments in the class so that students can experience them first hand.
- Students draw a picture that represents mariachi music. The only requirement is that it must include all the instruments traditionally present in a mariachi band.

Second Period:

- Play the mariachi 'El Rey' as students walk in the class. How does it make them feel? Can they try to do the beat of the song on their desks and with their feet? Let them try.
- 'El Rey' is an example of a mariachi song form that is called Canción Ranchera. Most times we just call these songs 'rancheras'. This is the equivalent of the country western songs found in the United States. The singer has to express the

emotion of the lyrics and often times they are very dramatic! The beat is sort of like a Waltz, three beats, equally distant from one another but the first one stronger than the following two. Do the rhythm with them. What instruments can they hear?

- Explain to students that the lyrics of 'El Rey' are sad and funny at the same time. The singer is a man who has lost everything, love, friends, money, everything, but he is still convinced he is a king and that makes him feel better. Divide the class into groups and tell them to try to represent the story of this man who thinks he is a king. In the song nothing happens to him, just that. Ask students to invent an end to the story.

Closure:

- Students act their performances (see above paragraph). Students can bring tortilla chips and some mild salsa and/or avocado dip to celebrate the final performances. Talk to them about how these foods are like Mariachi and show Tucson's shared history with Mexico.

Evaluation: Assess student participation throughout the lesson. Grade their paintings and their skits with Spanish words: ¡Bien! (good!), ¡Muy Bien! (Very good) ¡Viva! ¡Bravo! (hurray!), ¡Excelente!, ¡Magnífico!, etc.

Extensions:

#1 Bring a mariachi group to class so that students can interview the musicians.

#2 Print out various examples of the posters for the Tucson International Mariachi Conference and ask students to design a poster for the next conference. Have a contest in class. The posters must show why mariachi music is so important in many parts of the United States, including Tucson.

#3 Cooperate with the music teacher and the Spanish teacher at the school so that students can perform the chorus of a famous mariachi song.

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INTERMEDIATE LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** Strand 2- Concept 1 (identify main ideas, author's purpose) Strand 3- Concept 1(analyze non-fiction) Strand 2- Concept 2 (Compare and contrast historical and cultural perspectives)
- **Writing:** Strand 2-Concepts 1,2,4,5 (Grades 4 & 5) Strand 2 Concepts 1,2,5 (Grades 6, 7, 8) Strand 3-Concept 1 (Creative writing) Strand 2- Concept 1 (Grades 4 & 5), Strand 3-Concept 2 (Grades 5-8) Strand 3- Concept 2 (Grades 5-8) Concept 6 (Grades 6-8) (Summarize info) Strand 2-Concept 1 (Grades 4 & 5) Strand 3-Concepts 2 & 6 (Grades 4-8) (Research Skills)
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-E1, LS-E2, LS-E4 (shares, presents, responds), VP-E1-E3 (analyze, plan, develop, compare and contrast)
- **History:** 1SS-E8(research tools)
- **Geography:** 3SS-E4 (using geographic tools) 3SS-E5 (regions) 3SS-E6 (social interaction, migration) 3SS-E8 (applying skills)
- **Arts:** 1AM-E3/E4 (musical performance) 1AV-F2 (use of art materials) 1AV-E1(communicate through art) 2AV-F1 (communication through art) 2AV-F2/F3/E3/E4/3AV-E3(cultural & historical expression) 2AV-E2 (art careers) 3AV-E1 (purpose of art) 1AD-E4 (identify dance)

Goals & Objectives

Students will:

- Identify Mariachi music
- Explain different theories about the origin of the word 'mariachi'
- Formulate and support their own theory on the origin of the word 'mariachi'
- Compare and contrast mariachi music from its beginnings to the present
- Compare and contrast mariachi music and country western music
- Draw links between the history of mariachi and Tucson, Arizona (or other parts of the United States as applicable).

Length of lesson: Two one-hour periods/ or one block period.

Materials & Preparation:

- poster board/ crayons or colored pens
- recordings of mariachi music
- recordings of country music
- pictures of mariachi bands in history
- copies or actual prints of the Tucson international Mariachi Conferences (available in their website and also in the booklet by Gregory Rodriguez –see list of suggested sources)

LESSON:

First Period:

- Start the class with Mariachi music. Ask students to explain why they were able to identify the song as a mariachi: the language used, the beat, the sound of the violins, the tone of the singers' voice, etc.
- Ask students if they think Mariachi is part of U.S. culture, specifically in the Southwest. What is culture? Is culture stagnant or does it change and move over time? What are other examples of U.S. culture that find their origins in other countries? And vice versa? As an example, country music is very popular in Australia, where they celebrate one of the biggest country western music festivals in the world!
- Now play some country western music. Ask students why they think you chose to play a Country Western song for a lesson on mariachi.
- In groups, ask students to complete in pairs the Venn diagram on handout #5 and then individually write two paragraphs comparing and contrasting Mariachi music and Western country music. To motivate students, have pictures of country music and mariachi musicians on display.
- Distribute handout #1. Students write their own theory about the origin of the word 'mariachi' and then share their answers in groups. Each group decides on the most convincing theory and shares it with the class.
- Go over handout #2 with students. Divide the class into groups and give each group pictures of the pioneer mariachi groups, but without the name, and ask them to put them in chronological order based on the information on the handouts and looking at the musicians' suits, the instruments that appear, the quality and background of the picture, etc. You can find pictures on various web pages (see recommended sources). Include a picture of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference, or of important Tucson mariachis such as the Changuitos Feos, Mariachi Cobre and Mariachi America.

Second Period:

- Bring copies or originals of the posters for the Tucson International Mariachi conference from 1985-1995. Which elements in the posters reflect Tucson's or the Southwestern U.S. culture and history? (i.e. rodeos, S.Xavier del Bac, Native American art, colors, certain native kinds of plants and foods, the names and images of Tucson mariachi groups etc. Ask students to look at the writing in the posters: who sponsors the conference? Are the posters in Spanish, in English or in both? What is in Spanish and what is in English? Which poster do they like best? Why? In your opinion, which poster represents Tucson's culture best? Encourage students to look at both the content and the form.

- Final Assignment. Students design a poster for next year's Tucson International Mariachi Conference. Each student must write a short essay explaining how their artistic work represents the art of mariachi and its importance in Tucson (or the U.S.).

Closure:

- Have a public display of the student Mariachi posters. Have students vote for their favorite poster.

Evaluation: Assess students' participation for each activity. Give students an individual grade for handout #1, #5, and the poster.

Extensions:

#1 Bring a mariachi group or some mariachi musicians to class so that students can interview the musicians and hear them play.

#2 Cooperate with the music teacher and the Spanish teacher at the school so that students can perform the chorus of a famous mariachi song.

#3 Students can research new forms of mariachi that incorporate percussion, techno, rap etc. Have students adapt a mariachi tune, keeping the main elements, but challenging its traditional form.

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SECONDARY LESSON

Arizona State Standards:

- **Reading:** Strand 2-Concept 1 (apply reading strategies) Strand 3-Concept 1 (analyze non-fiction)
- **Writing:** Research Document: Strand 1-Concept 1, Strand 2- Concepts 1,2,6, Strand 3-Concept 6.
- **Listening and Speaking:** LS-P1 & P5 (shares, presents, listens & responds) VP-P1-P3 (develop, analyze, evaluate, organize)
- **History:** 1SS-P1(chronological & spatial skills) 1SS-P2 (research methods) 1SS-P3 (interpretation) 1SS-D1 (historical sources) 1SS-D2 (historical thinking)
- **Geography:** 3SS-P2 (regions) 3SS-P3 (social interaction, migration)
- **Arts:** 2AV-P1/P2/3AV-P2(cultural & historical relevance) 2AV-P4(role of art in society)

Goals & Objectives

Students will:

- Identify mariachi music and its different musical forms
- Question the various theories about the origin of the word 'mariachi'
- Compare and contrast mariachi music and country western music
- Compare and contrast mariachi music from its beginnings to the present
- Research new forms of mariachi and discuss the concept of *mestizaje*
- Identify the instruments in a mariachi band and research their history
- Research different aspects of the history of mariachi music in Tucson, the Southwestern U.S. or specific cities, such as Los Angeles, San Diego, El Paso, San Antonio.

Length of lesson: Three one-hour periods/ or two block periods

Materials & Preparation:

- recordings of mariachi music
- recordings of country music
- handouts #1, #2, #3, #3b, #5

LESSON:

First Period:

- Start the class by playing Mariachi music. Ask students to write down what they know about this musical form. Share the answers and write a list on the board with words and sentences they would use to describe mariachi music. As a class, write a definition of mariachi music.
- Ask students if they think Mariachi is part of U.S. culture, specifically in the Southwest. What is culture? Is culture stagnant or does it change and move over time? Discuss the concept of cultural *mestizaje* (mix) and ask them to apply that concept to other genres of music: jazz, rock, rap, hip-hop, punk, classical, Country music, etc.
- What are other examples of U.S. culture that, like mariachi, find their origins in other countries? And vice versa? As an example, country music is very popular in Australia, where they celebrate one of the biggest country western music festivals in the world! Discuss with students the similarities and differences they find between mariachi and country western music. Use handout #5.
- Where do students think the word ‘mariachi’ comes from? Distribute handout #1 and go over it in class. Give time for students to make up their own theory on the origins of the word and share some in class. Encourage students to use language and facts that will make their theory believable.
- Go over handout #2 and #3 with students and ask them to work in groups of two or three on handout #3b. Play mariachi music while they work. Go over the answers in class and ask some groups to share their timeline.

Second Period:

- Start the class by showing posters of the Tucson International Mariachi Conference. Do they think mariachi is part of Tucson and U.S. culture in general? Explain to students that the mariachi conference in Tucson is one of the most important in the world, but that its beginnings were difficult. Read with students’ handout #5. Why would Tucson celebrate a mariachi conference? What do students think were the incentives and obstacles in starting the mariachi conference? If students are not from Tucson, does their city have a Mariachi conference? Where can they listen to mariachi music? Do they know if Mariachi music is taught in schools?

- Final Assignment: students must pick an instrument used in mariachi music and research its history. Explain to students that they will write the story about the journey of a mariachi instrument from its construction in 18th century Spain to the hands of a mariachi musician in the U.S. today. Their story will be fictional, but the characters, years and names of places must be real.

Closure:

- Student presentations of their stories. In groups, ask the class to assess each story based on its historical and fictional content, creativity, accuracy and communication.

Evaluation: Assess students' participation for each activity. Give students an individual grade for handout #1, #5 and the first part of handout #3b. Grade the last activity in handout #3b as a group grade. Assess the final assignment individually.

Extensions:

#1 Students can research new forms of mariachi that incorporate percussion, techno, rap etc. Have students adapt a mariachi tune keeping the main elements, but challenging its traditional form.

#2 Write a letter to the principal of the school to convince her/him of why it is important to have students learn about mariachi and have mariachi bands in their city's schools.

#3 Organize a field trip to the International Mariachi Conference in Tucson, or to any location in their city where they can listen to Mariachi music live.