

Aotearoa – Unity in diversity - December

Celebrating a multi-cultural summer break

Pre-school – Junior Primary Level Activity

OVERVIEW:

This resource is about making a celebratory wreath to symbolise our culture, treasured customs and aroha for friends and family during the December holiday. Contrasted with the origins of traditional northern hemisphere, New Zealand celebrations in the summer break and students' identity are symbolised in the wreath.

Inclusion of students' multi-cultural and diverse backgrounds encourages a sense of belonging, while common ground of celebrations encourages 'unity in diversity'. The activity can be adapted across preschool to level 3-6 of the N.Z. curriculum. A similar wreath unit covers the Pre-school to Primary curriculum levels.



ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES:

New Zealand Curriculum – Visual Arts Level 4

The level of difficulty can be adapted – please refer to the New Zealand Curriculum for objectives at higher levels

Understanding the Visual Arts in Context

Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Practical knowledge:

Explore and use art-making conventions related to wreaths and symbolism. Apply knowledge of elements (colour, shape) and selected principles (motifs, symmetry, asymmetry, overlapping, balance, unity) through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas

Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating about art:

Explore and describe ways in which meanings can be communicated and interpreted about holiday celebrations in their own and others' work in different places/times.

New Zealand Curriculum – Social Sciences Levels 4

Level 3:

Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.

Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.

Level 4:

Understand how people pass on and sustain culture and heritage for different reasons and that this has consequences for people.

Celebrations then and now – inherited traditions

THEN:

Find out: who sent the first Christmas card in December and why?

For younger students this information could be provided, older students could use research skills.

Look: at historic Victorian Christmas cards online from this period (see examples below)

Discuss:

- Why were the first Christmas cards sent?
- The role of traditional Post Offices
- How did people communicate over long distances before postal systems?
- What other celebrations/occasions did people send cards?
- What kinds of things are mostly in the Christmas pictures?
- Can you identify any particular religions or cultural beliefs?
- What time of year and season is it in the pictures?



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Victorian_Christmas_Card_-_11222307273.jpg#globalusage

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa_Claus_and_His_Reindeer.jpg

Image (right) courtesy of Pixabay - https://pixabay.com/p-1855287/?no_redirect

Compare: these cards with Te Papa's New Zealand Christmas card collection.

Points for discussion

- How are these cards different from the traditional Christmas cards?
- What kinds of objects/activities are taking place in these postcards?
- How did people send these cards to their friends and family at the time?
- What season is it and can you identify any religious or cultural practices?



This page and overleaf: Te Papa Christmas cards, circa 1900s, Wanganui, by A. D. Willis Ltd, Kennett Watkins.
Purchased 1995. Te Papa (GH012084), (GH012083), (GH012082), (GH004848), (GH012084).

Now...

Explore:

How do people celebrate holidays around the world – across religions and cultures; websites/activities/videos online (see links in appendix)

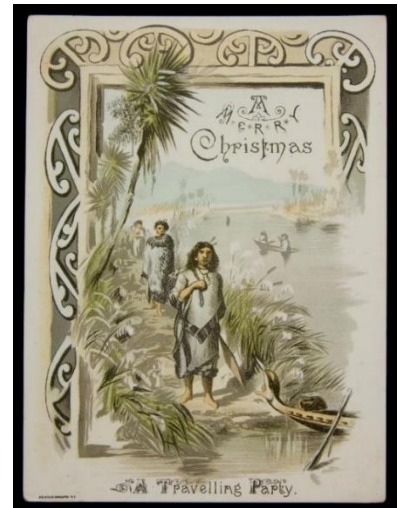
Discuss:

Current examples of cards on sale

Cards they exchange with friends and family

Types of cards they see for sale and different reasons they get sent

The changing ways that people are communicating – emails, e-cards, texts



Art Activity: Creating a symbolic wreath

Pre-learning: A wreath is a way of arranging symbolic materials in a circle. Traditionally the materials were from nature; flowers, leaves, twigs and fruits.

Wreaths are an ancient symbol and have been used by many cultures from Ancient Romans and Greeks as a symbol of mana and victory, across Europe as decorations and symbols at celebrations and memorials through to table and door decorations and are also worn on heads. Circular symbols, adornments and ornaments are common in many cultures as a symbol of the sun, eternity, life and many other things.

Older student activities – symbolic collaged wreaths

Tools: pens, pencils, scissors, (stencils if necessary), devices and printer

Media: paint test cards, magazines

Techniques/skills; scissor skills, balancing composition: arrangement of colour and shape,

Understanding; colour (symbolic, primaries or emotive), traditions and belonging, group culture and celebrations.

Step 1 – create a wreath base using large and small leaf shapes



- Encourage students to brainstorm and think carefully about colours they associate with December in New Zealand (limited palette)
- Using a template of a leaf shape students locate and cut out colours and textures in magazines
- Refine ideas about textures and arrangement, natural or artificial, subdued, vibrant by using the arranging process as a thinking exercise
- Patterns and colours associated with students' cultural traditions, Dulux 'Colours of New Zealand' swatches with printed place names as well as students own painted swatches or drawings could be included.
- Students can be introduced to the idea of scale and contrast with the introduction of smaller leaf shapes

Step 2 decorate the wreath with circles of colour and personal symbols

- Brainstorm again about what the December break means for each student including ideas about; family, friends, their whakapapa, holiday activities and cultural traditions.
- Think about images/colours that could symbolise December in Aotearoa as distinct from other countries.
- At this stage students could locate found or copyright free images in magazines or online. They could print images and/or create their own imagery through drawing.
- Found images could include native flora/fauna, landscapes, maps, letters or hand-written elements, documents, postcards, family photographs, flags, portraits of current family or ancestors, or students themselves.



Step 3 Assemble symbolic images in wreath

- Revisit ideas about colour, shape, overlapping, symmetry, asymmetry, balance and unity in an artwork.
- Students could try several different types of arrangements and photograph them as a reference to refine their ideas.
- Additional images, colours, shapes could be found and added at this stage for compositional reasons.
- Paste base wreath in a circle using glue-sticks for lighter papers and PVA for heavier papers.
- Add layers of smaller leaves
- Finally paste in decorative circles with some overlapping
- Note: this wreath has been created using traditional colours – alternative colour palettes could be explored



Collaborative class wreath,

Instead of completing individual wreaths a project highlighting the diversity of the class as a community could be established. Shapes could be scaled up and assembled on a wall and could include students' hand-prints. As a take-home memento, class or individual photographs next to the wall installation could be given to students. There are many online resources related to collaborative wreaths online.

Appendix of resources

Te reo salutations for the holidays:

- Meri Kirihimete (merry Christmas)
- Ngā mihi o te wā me te Tau Hou (A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year)
Ngā mihi o te Kirihimete (Christmas Greetings)
- Ngā mihi mō te Kirihimete (Wishing you a very Happy Christmas)
- Ngā mihi o te Tau Hou (Happy New Year)
- Ngā mihi o te Tau Hou ki a koutou katoa (Wishing you all a very Happy New Year)
- Ngā mihi o te wā me te aroha nui, nā
(Happy Christmas lots of love, from*name*)
- Ngā mihi o te Tau Hou ki a kōrua
Wishing you both a very Happy New Year

Song: [‘White Wine in the Sun’](#) by Tim Minchin (for senior students)

Web-links for global multicultural celebrations:

[Cultural Celebrations and Storytelling](#)

[Teaching Multiculturalism and Diversity During Winter Holidays](#)

[Little Thinkers UNIT 3: Holidays Around the World /Christmas Around the World](#)

[My holiday traditions freebie](#)

