




Art and History of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians

This Florida Seminole Art unit was put together to help celebrate Viva Florida 500  and teach my students about Florida's Native American people. I had an opportunity to attend a seminar called: **Tribal Traditions in the Modern World: The Seminole Tribe, Their Voices & Their stories**, July 23-27, 2012 sponsored by the Florida Humanities Council. We spent a week visiting, talking with and learning from the Seminoles in south Florida. It was a great learning experience. It inspired me to create this unit. This unit starts with a history of the Seminole Indians and then we focus on their art. We create beaded rings, illustrate Seminole legends, make a page of Seminole pattern designs and then create a Seminole doll.

Grade Level: 6-8 (can be adjusted for other grades)

NGSSS: Big Idea: HISTORICAL AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Enduring Understanding 1: Through study in the arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live (d). (VA.68.H.1)

Learning Goals:

When asked, Students will be able to briefly describe the history and art of the Seminole Indians of Florida. Students will use their new knowledge of Seminole art as inspiration in creating their own artwork including: bead rings, illustrating Seminole legends, inventing their own pattern design and making a Seminole style doll.

Lesson 1: History of Seminole Indians and their artwork (2-3 Days)

- Give the students a short pretest, asking them to write what they know about the Seminoles, their history and art. Using their pretest, have them determine where their current knowledge falls on the teacher created learning scale.
- Show students a movie *The Seminole, Indians of North America*, Schlessinger Media, ISBN: 187915160X, 1993 (Available on Safari Montage) 30 min. This movie gives a good history of Seminoles, point out that there are Seminoles in Oklahoma and Florida. Our lesson focuses on FL though I am sure most of it is applicable to both. It barely mentions their art but I don't think you can skip the history lesson and understand their art and how it has evolved.
- I usually give my students a series of questions to answer during any movie otherwise they don't focus, then we will change papers and grade so they will see what the answers are.
- Show a PowerPoint about the Art of the Seminoles. The Pp talks about Clothes, historically and current, including men, women and children. Then I teach about patchwork design, sweet grass baskets, beadwork, chickees, dolls and the modern day painter Noah Billie. I

also teach about clans, Osceola, alligator wrestling, Seminole reservations and their tribal flag. My students are given a sheet of visuals that they take notes on.

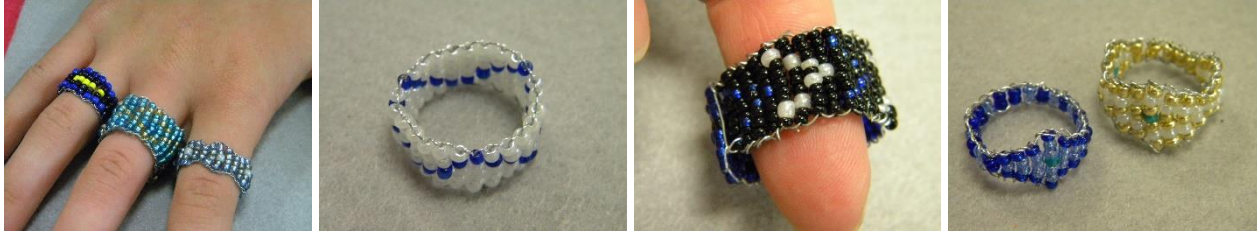
- Students create a Seminole Indian page in their sketchbooks. They are instructed to watercolor paint a 2 page background in stripes like the Seminole flag (white, black, red, and yellow) with a patchwork border design on the top and bottom. Then they cut out their visuals and glue them on top of this background.

Lesson 2: Beaded Rings (5-6 days, student speed varied greatly)

- ❖ Introduce students to the importance of beads to the Native Americans as trade goods and in their artwork. Decide how much time you want to spend on this, it could be a huge discussion about what is valuable to one culture may have little value in another.
- ❖ Show a short PowerPoint of Seminole bead art. I showed them 2 of the rings I bought at the Seminole Museum store. Then I showed them the ones I made, starting with my first attempt which wasn't great.
- ❖ Explain that they are going to make a practice ring so they can learn how they are made. This ring will probably be a little rough because it takes a bit of time to learn how to make rings. There are many different ways to make rings but for my students we are making them using the woven seed bead style which is the same style the sample rings I bought were made. Make a few yourself so you know how to help them with their problems.
- ❖ Demonstrate how to start the ring and the weaving of the wire. I found great directions at this site: <http://nelkindesigns.blogspot.com/2010/02/woven-seed-bead-ring-tutorial.html>. I made a handout based on her directions. Most will catch on fairly quickly. The closing can be a bit tricky. You might not be able to feed the wire back through the original beads, if not just start the weaving down the sides and it will close it tight. Since they all finish at different times, you might need to teach them how to close in small groups. Get them to teach each other.
- ❖ Managing seed beads can be a challenge. I found little jewelry bags and made a bag of beads for each student. Make an assortment of color combinations and just have them grab one. I also labeled zip-lock sandwich bags for each student. I kept them in boxes by period. Make sure they close them tight after each class session. I handed out plastic plates for them to put their beads in while they worked at their tables.
- ❖ Show them a PowerPoint of different ring designs. I collected ideas on google images and pinterest. Hand out graph paper and make them draw 2-3 designs. Have them choose their favorite design. I let them choose colors but I wouldn't do that again it was too hard to manage. Next time I would put together 3-5 bags of color choices and they would have to work within those colors for their design. You will probably have a 50% bead loss so be prepared. You can buy different color combinations at Hobby Lobby and elsewhere. Shop around, everyone has beads, the higher quality gets expensive. You can also add bugle beads for another design element.
- ❖ I precut pieces of wire (3') and put them in a box for them to grab. If the wire breaks, you can add another piece by being creative, weaving the old piece or new piece down the side. I went through several different types of wire, all sizes types and colors, trying to figure out which worked best. I finally found some in the florist department at

Joanne's that was the cheapest and worked the best. It was 30g silver on a paddle about \$2 a roll. You will need about 5' each students for both rings. The wire needs to be able to go through the beads twice.

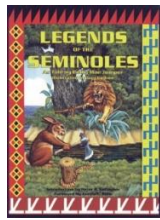
Student Rings:



Materials: seed beads, small plastic jewelry bags, zip-lock lunch bags, wire 30g (florists section of the craft store), graph paper, color pencils, optional bugle beads



Lesson 3: Seminole Legends (4-5 days)



- ❖ Discuss with your students the idea of legends and myths and how they fit into different cultures. I showed them some short YouTube videos of a few Native American legends and myths and had them analyze what the myth was trying to teach. There was a good one about earthquakes and tsunamis from NW America Indians. I couldn't find any Seminole stories on YouTube so I used other Native American tribes. I also had them identify some legends and myths they were familiar with in their own cultures.
- ❖ Give each student a copy of a different Seminole legend to illustrate. They need to read the story and decide how they want to illustrate it. They had to create 2 scenes using watercolors or color pencils.
- ❖ When they are finished I had them present their story to the class. They told their story and showed their illustrations. Students had to write down the artist's name, story name, what the story was trying to teach or tell and what grade they would give the work.
- ❖ The book Legends of the Seminoles by Betty Mae Jumper is really well done. It has nice illustrations. There are also stories available on-line.

Materials: YouTube videos of Native American legends, copies of Seminole stories, 9x18 paper, watercolors or other color medium,

Student Examples:



Lesson 4: Seminole Patchwork (2-3 days)

- ❖ Introduce students to Seminole Patchwork, probably the artwork they are best known for. Show them a PowerPoint of different articles of clothing, dolls and other items using the patchwork. Teach them a short history of the art and how it has evolved in the last 100 years. I showed them a YouTube video entitled Seminole Patchwork filmed at the art museum on the Seminole reservation AhTahThiKi Museum <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4SLkFr4fk4>. It is 7:02 and shows a museum curator talking about different patchwork pieces in their collection.
- ❖ I made a poster with 24 different black and white patchwork patterns and gave them a list of the pattern names. They had to match the names to the patterns. They worked together at their tables. This took them about 10-15 minutes. They had a hard time matching them all. We went over them before they left class. (I made 4 copies of the poster 1 for each group).
- ❖ Student then had to make a page of designs using pencil, sharpies and watercolor. They had to invent at least one design of their own and give it a name.

Materials: PowerPoint of the history of Seminole Patchwork, YouTube video: Seminole Patchwork, 9x12 paper, rulers, pencils, watercolors or another color medium

Poster of Patchwork Designs & Student Work:



Lesson 5: Seminole Dolls (4-5 days)

Original Dolls from seminoletribe.com:



- ❖ Introduce students to Seminole dolls and their place in Seminole Art history. I bought a few small examples on eBay to show to the students. Some are highly collectable and expensive. A short history of the Seminole Doll.

http://smithsonianeducation.org/images/educators/lesson_plan/native_dolls/native_dolls.pdf

- ❖ Give each student a piece of 5x12 white paper. Using their patchwork drawing skills, have them draw a page of designs running the length. Then give them a piece of white fabric to staple on top of their designs. Just need a staple on each side. Use sharpies to color in the designs. The bottom paper will be thrown away so don't worry about it bleeding through, you will just use the cloth top.



- ❖ Make a head for your doll using a piece of brown fabric about 6" square. Wad up newspaper in to a ball about the size of a round egg. Wrap the brown fabric around the ball. Tie it off at the bottom with a piece of yarn. Hot glue the head into the top of the water bottle, stuffing the tied end into the bottle. Make sure names are on the bottom of each bottle.



- ❖ Add some black yarn hair to your doll. Draw in the face using the paint pens in a similar style to Seminole dolls. Let the white dry before adding the black or it will run. Store each period in a different box.
- ❖ Cut a cape for your doll (2" x 12") and glue a piece of rick-rack on the bottom.
- ❖ Use a needle and thread to attach the cape to the dress and gather the fabric. Hot glue this to the bottle around the neck. Hot glue the edges together, overlap in the back.



- ❖ String some beads on a piece of wire about a foot long. Tie a knot. Make small bags of beads and let them choose a bag. You could also make earrings for your doll. Wrap this around her neck. If you want to make a boy you can just add a neckerchief, make a turban and a silver necklace. (find a picture of Osceola for ideas)
- ❖ Have your students write an adventure story about their doll and what her/his life is like living in a reservation in south Florida.



My student Tucker made gators for his doll. Very creative.

Materials: mini-water bottles, white paper 5x12", Smart-Fab Disposable Art and Decoration Fabric in white and brown and a few other colors for the cape, (Nasco Art 17.95 48"x40'), color sharpies, black yarn, seed beads, wire, white/red/black paint pens, hot glue gun and glue sticks, rick-rack, needles & thread

Books & other resources:

Art of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians by Dorothy Down, 1995. University Press (Good book for Seminole Patchwork patterns and over all history of their art)

Legends of the Seminoles by Betty Mae Jumper, Illustrated by Guy LaBree, 1994, Pineapple Press (Illustrated book with the legends and stories of the Seminoles.)

She Sang Promise, The Story of Betty Mae Jumper, Seminole Tribal Leader, by Jan Godown Annino, Illustrated by Lisa Desimini, 2010, The National Geographic Society (Children's book about Betty Mae Jumper an important leader who also wrote recorded the legends of the Seminoles.)

Patchwork, Seminole and Miccosukee Art and Activities by Dorothy Downs, 2005, Pineapple Press (Great book with some project ideas and visuals, short read)

Seminole Tribe Website: <http://www.semtribe.com/>

Seminole Museum: <http://www.ahtahthiki.com/> (I bought my bead rings at their gift shop. They have other great examples of their art available.), brochure also has a good one page history of the Seminoles

Brochure from the Museum <http://www.ahtahthiki.com/Seminole-Brochure.html> It has a nice concise history and great visuals.

Vocabulary:

Seminole Indians, Chickees, clans, seed beads, beadwork, Green Corn Dance, patchwork, legends/myths, Miccosukee, Muscogee & Miccosukee Languages, palmetto dolls, dugout canoe, reservations

Student Assessment Strategy:

[Rubric on performance](#), written assessment of projects, written critique of each other's work, class discussion, teacher observation, finished projects