

*Dance as Storytelling: Parts of a whole*

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| **Introduction** | |
| The image shows a set of fingernail extensions in Thailand. They are eight bronze-colored metal fingernail extensions. Each one of them has a circular band that is worn around the finger with the pointed extensions tapering upwards. The extensions have decorative hole punches outlining both sides and two metal cut-outs dangling from their backs. The cut-outs are arrow-shaped, with three diamonds attached to each arrow. There are eight extensions in the set.  These fingernail extensions are worn in various traditional Thai dances including the fingernail dance called *Fawn Lep*. The fingernail extensions are six-inch-long brass fingernails and are intended to accentuate dramatic hand and finger gesture of each dancer.  Various dance styles have different adaptations of nail extensions. For example, some extensions feature sweeping curves resembling talons, while others have a relatively straight profile with upturned ends. Extensions can be crafted from materials like gold or stainless steel, and occasionally adorned with rattan, gems, or beads. These sets typically consist of eight pieces, excluding the thumbs, and are custom-made by skilled craftsmen to ensure a perfect fit for the wearer. The production process takes approximately one week to complete.  Dancers usually receive their first set of nail extensions when they are around eight to ten years old, and throughout their dancing career, they are expected to replace them multiple times. Given the rapid and fluid hand gestures involved in the dances, it is crucial that the extensions fit precisely. As part of the elaborate costume preparation, dancers traditionally moisten their fingers with saliva before wearing the extensions, using the combination of saliva and suction to help keep the nails securely in place. | |
| **Indiana Standards Connections:**  **7.3.3** *Describe and compare major cultural characteristics of regions in Africa, Asia, and Southwest Pacific.*   * ***Examples:*** *language, religion, recreation, clothing, diet, fine arts, family structure, and traditions*   **GHW.1.1** *Use maps, timelines, and other graphic representations to identify and describe the location, distribution, and main events in the development of culture hearths in Asia, Mesoamerica, and North Africa.*   * ***Examples:*** *Irrigation-based civilizations; Rainforest; Land-based civilization, pastoral societies*   **GHW.6.3** *Map the spread of innovative art forms and scientific thought from their origins to other world regions. Analyze how the spread of these ideas influenced developments in art and science for different places and regions of the world.*   * ***Examples:*** *Italian Renaissance and the growth of egg tempera paintings and frescoes, chemistry of oil paints (1500s); European Renaissance and the development of scientific ideas (1600–1800); England and the Industrial Revolution and its diffusion (1700–present); compare and contrast the spread of Asian, African and Latin American art forms (1900s–present); development of twentieth century music (jazz, etc.) in North America (1900s–present); east Asian anime and video gaming competitions.*   ***ES.4.1*** *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.*  ***S.2.1*** *Define culture and identify the material and non-material components of culture.* | **Compelling Question(s):**   * How can dance (as a cultural expression of a non-verbal art) function to transmit stories? * How do cultural traditions reflect the beliefs and values of a community? |
| **Lesson Objectives:**  Students will:   * Closely observe the fingernail extensions, understand them as a part of a whole of Thai artistic expression. * Describe the purpose and symbolism of fingernail extensions in Thai dance. * Recognize how dance can serve as a form of storytelling and cultural preservation. | |
| **Materials** | |
| W2W Lesson Plans   * [Fingernail Extension: W2W Website](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/fingernail-extensions.html) * [Manohra Costume- W2W Website](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/manohra-costume.html)   Cultural Context (Thai Dance)   * [Fawn Thai: The Classical Dance](https://www.sukhothai.be/post/fawn-thai-the-classical-dance) * [Inside the “Khon” Activity Room- Google Arts and Culture](https://artsandculture.google.com/story/-gXR5McCIO9JLA) * [Nora, dance drama in Southern Thailand- UNESCO](https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nora-dance-drama-in-southern-thailand-01587) * [Fawn Lep Dance- YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69LUiqLpAl4) | |
| **Learning Plan** | |
| **Activities**   1. Show students the images of the fingernail extensions and examples from the W2W [Fingernail Extension](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/fingernail-extensions.html) Lesson Plan. Ask them to describe what they see:  * What material are they made from? * Do they think they are heavy or light? * Who uses them? For what purpose? * Do they resemble anything they are familiar with?  1. Before telling the students that these are fingernail extensions worn by Thai dancers, show students the [Fawn Lep video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69LUiqLpAl4) to demonstrate their use. After watching the video, ask them if they guessed correctly. Why do they think dancers wear them? Explain that these extensions are part of their costume, dancers wear them to accentuate hand and finger movements. 2. Explain the importance of dance in Thai culture. Use the resources listed above from [UNESCO](https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nora-dance-drama-in-southern-thailand-01587) to show the variety of dances and traditions preserved and practiced in Southeast Asia. These types of nails are worn in multiple dances across Thailand. Each dance conveys a story, while some are based in Buddhist tales and Thai mythology, others depict social problems and social critiques. Dances are integral to Thai culture as they bring communities together to celebrate important events as well as in transmitting knowledge, traditions, and culture. 3. Divide students into small groups. Each group will research a type of classical Thai dance dramas in whcih dancers wear fingernail extensions. They can choose from different regions: central, northeast, northern, and southern Thailand (e.g. *Lakhon, Khon, and Fon, Serng kratip khoa, Serng Isan, Fon Phu Thai, Serng krapo, Isan bantheong, etc.)*.   Each group will locate Thailand in a map and present their findings to the class. The short presentations will include the following elements:   * Region where it is practiced * Representation: What kind of story or meaning does it convey to the audience? * How are fingernail extensions used in the dance? * Description of the costume * Characters * Final reflection   Students will present their selected dance to the class. Their presentation should focus on the visual elements of the dance and how these contribute to the storytelling. At the end, they should reflect on how the preservation of ancestral dances and the visual elements contribute to the strengthening of Thai culture. | |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  Assess students’ participation based on in-class discussions and group presentation. | |
| **Extensions**  Students can study other parts of this custom such as the [Manhora Lesson Plan](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/manohra-costume.html) to understand assemblage of items that contribute to the cultural expression of Thai dance. Thai dancers wear fingernail extensions to accentuate their movements, drawing attention to their movements and elongating the visual lines of their bodies. Looking at other parts of their costumes, students can focus on how other visual elements in the dance contribute to the story telling and enhancing the dancer’s performance. | |

Fingernail Extensions Activity Possibilities

Some of the best opportunities for education are *integrative*—meaning that students are able to make connections across disciplines to reinforce the knowledge that they are developing. For example, they may be learning about Renaissance Italy in World Studies at the same time that they read Dante’s *Inferno* in English class while also studying Botticelli in Art. Feel free to combine and adapt some of the ideas across disciplines and standards to best suit your particular context. You can also collaborate with other teachers at your school or supplement the resources provided by contacting your librarian.

**Note: The following ideas are meant to give general guidance for teachers to include artifacts and other material culture in their classrooms. They are not meant to be treated as comprehensive activities or lessons that are one-size-fits-all for any classroom. They should be personalized to best fit the needs of a teacher’s individual context in accordance with prior student learning, student abilities, available resources, and any curricular guidance.**

**Art**

**Visual Arts – Responding:**

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| **Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work**  **Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed throughout engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.**  **Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?** | |
| **VA:Re7.1.1a** | Select and describe works of art that illustrate daily life experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
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| **VA:Re9.1.5a** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society |
| **VA:Re7.1.Ia** | Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences. |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIa** | Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments |
| **VA:Re7.1.IIIa** | Analyze how responses to art develop over time based on knowledge of and experience with art and life |

**Visual Arts – Connecting:**

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| **Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.**  **Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.**  **Essential Question(s): How does art help us understanding the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the videos of a society> How does art preserve aspects of life?** | |
| **VA:Cn11.1.1a** | Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.2a** | Compare and contrast cultural uses of artwork from different times and places. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.3a** | Recognize that responses to art change depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made |
| **VA:Cn11.1.4a** | Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.6a** | Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.7a** | Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses |
| **VA:Cn11.1.8a** | Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIa** | Compare uses of art in a variety of social, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts. |
| **VA:Cn11.1.IIIa** | Appraise the impact of an artist or a group of artists on the beliefs, values, and behaviors of a society. |

*Students can be asked to consider how art reflects time periods, beliefs, cultures, traditions, etc. In exploring the fingernail extensions students are examining how items such as this represent belonging to ethnic or cultural groups. Students could also explore how different parts of a costume are used in rituals, festivals, and other social contexts promote social cohesion and strengthen social ties among community members. They can also explore different cultural dances and other elements that are part played with the instruments, if these songs are also played in other cultures and in what contexts they are played.*

**Social Studies**

**Grade 6: History, Places, and Cultures in Europe and Americas**

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| **6.1.3** | ***Explain the impact of humans on the physical environment in Europe and the Americas.*** |
| **6.3.10** | *Explain the ways cultural diffusion, invention, and innovation change culture.* |
| **6.3.11** | *Differentiate between the terms anthropology, archaeology, and artifacts while explaining how these contribute to our understanding of societies in the present and the past.* |

**Ethnic Studies**

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| **ES.4.1** | *Students examine historical and contemporary economic, intellectual, social, cultural and political contributions to society by ethnic or racial group(s) or an individual within a group.* |

**Geography and History of the World**

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| **GHW.4.2** | *Use a variety of text (writing, maps, timelines and/or other graphic representations) to show the movement, spread and changes in the worldwide exchange of flora, fauna and pathogens that resulted from transoceanic voyages of exploration and exchanges between peoples in different regions. Assess the consequences of these encounters for the people and environments involved.* |
| **GHW.4.3** | *Identify and compare the main causes, players, and events of imperialism during different time periods. Examine the global extent of imperialism using a series of political maps.* |
| **GHW.4.4** | *Analyze and assess how the physical and human environments (including languages used) of places and regions changed as the result of differing imperialist and colonial policies.* |

**World History and Civilization**

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| **WH.7.3** | *Investigate and interpret multiple causation in analyzing historical actions and analyze cause-and-effect relationships.* |
| **WH.7.6** | *Formulate and present a position or course of action on an issue by examining the underlying factors contributing to that issue and support that position.* |

*Outside of the 6th and 7th grade Indiana standards, the exploration regarding how the emergence of nation-states, and imperialism has led to an impact on other cultures and environments. Students should be able to examine the role of human environment interaction involved in the development and spread of different dances across Southeast Asia. There’s room for them to make connections to contemporary issues that are similar to and a consequence of this result of imperialism, colonization, and cultural diffusion.*

**Language Arts**

**Writing Skills:**

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| **4.W.5** | **Conduct short research on a topic.**   * **Identify a specific question to address (e.g., What is the history of the Indy 500?).** * **Use organizational features of print and digital sources to efficiently locate further information.** * **Determine the reliability of the sources.** * **Summarize and organize information in their own words, giving credit to the source** * **Present the research information, choosing from a variety of formats.** |
| **5.W.5** | Conduct short research assignments and tasks on a topic.   * With support, formulate a research question (e.g., What were John Wooden’s greatest contributions to college basketball?). * Identify and acquire information through reliable primary and secondary sources. * Summarize and paraphrase important ideas and supporting details, and include direct quotations where appropriate, citing the source of information. * Avoid plagiarism and follow copyright guidelines for use of images, pictures, etc. * Present the research information, choosing from a variety of sources. |

*Students could conduct research projects in which they examine examples of different dances and songs. Students can analyze the formal elements of the songs, their meaning, and cultural significance.*