  
*Dance as Storytelling*

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| **Introduction** | |
| These are pieces of a *Manohra* (also shortened to *nora*)folk dance costume. *Nora* is a traditional folk-dance from Southern Thailand. While it can be used in religious practices, it is also a form of popular entertainment. It is named after Manohra, a beautiful bird-like celestial nymph in Thai folklore. To mimic Manohra’s half-bird appearance, dancers wear vibrant attire comprising of headdresses, elaborate crowns, beaded accessories, waist-bound bird-like wings, decorative scarves, and flowing swan tails. They also wear long [metallic fingernails](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/fingernail-extensions.html) that gracefully extend from their fingertips.  Nora dance is characterized by graceful movements, intricate hand gestures, and vibrant costumes. A traditional nora cast only includes three dancers, who swap in and out of several roles as needed. These dancers often portray roles of the opposite sex to cover all the needed characters. Traditionally dancers were only male, but today they can be both men and women.  The Manohra folk dance is not only a form of artistic and religious expression, but also a way to preserve and showcase Thai cultural heritage. It is performed during special occasions both within Thailand and on international stages. The dance serves as a source of pride and identity for the Thai people, representing their rich mythology, values, and artistic traditions. | |
| **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 does the Manohra dance promote family and social cohesion among southeast Asian communities? * 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 recognize how dance can serve as a form of storytelling and cultural preservation. By examining an assemblage of items such as Manohra costume, khaen, and fingernail extensions, students will connect these elements of Thai material culture. They will understand how these components work together to reflect cultural values, reinforce traditions, and strengthen social cohesion within Thai communities. | |
| **Materials** | |
| W2W Lesson Plans   * [Fingernail Extension- W2W Lesson Plan](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/fingernail-extensions.html) * [Manohra Costume- W2W Lesson Plan](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/manohra-costume.html) * [Khaen- W2W Lesson Plan](https://w2w.indiana.edu/explore-collections/khaen.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)   Jakata Tales   * [The Jakata Tales](https://thejatakatales.com/) * [Manohra tale](https://thejatakatales.com/canda-kinnara-jataka-485/) | |
| **Learning Plan** | |
| **Activities**  Note: This lesson plan can be studied with other similar lesson plans (e.g. Khaen and Fingernail Extensions). Some cultural context can be omitted from this lesson if the students are already familiarized with the importance of Thai dances and/or music in Southeast Asia.   1. Observe the different items on this lesson plan. Ask students to describe them.  * What materials do you think they are made from? * How might they be worn or used? * Who do you think would wear them and on what occasion?  1. Show students a video of the Manohra dance. Ask students to observe each item in this lesson plan in the [video](https://youtu.be/YOZVmLS9N0o?si=VqFgaGndhtEZhyqw). Note that not every part of the costume is part of the lesson plan, but students can point out different items that they consider relevant to the dancer’s performance.   Discuss:   * How are the traditional items used or worn in the performance? * How are movements emphasized or enhanced by these items? * Any other garments not in the lesson plan they notice * How do the costumes and accessories enhance the dancer’s storytelling and movement?  1. 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. Remark that Nora dance is recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. After reading and watching the resources listed above, notice the different objects shown in this lesson plan.  * Discuss the importance of this classification. * Why do you think UNESCO gave this dance this official recognition? * What values of beliefs are passed down through the Manorha dance? * How does recognition help preserve culture?   Cultural context: Manohra Folktale  Manohra dance is based on the Jataka Tales; a series of Buddhist folktales about the Buddha’s past lives. Nora dance can be traced to multiple Southeast Asian countries, each adopting and interpreting the story in different ways. However, the story follows a similar structure and core themes of love, separation, duty, and magic. In this folktale, the Buddha is a main character who tells the story of his past lives and through this retelling, the other characters have a breakthrough and ae able to overcome their difficulties.  Group activity  [Manohra tale](https://thejatakatales.com/canda-kinnara-jataka-485/)   1. Students will select a Jataka Tale and in small groups they will interpret the story's message and consider:  * How would you show this story through dance or movement? * Which item or costume pieces would you use and why? * How would gestures, expressions, or music help tell the story?  1. Students will present in groups their chosen tale addressing the points above. They will summarize the tale and address the main themes of the folktale. | |
| **Assessment Suggestions**  Assess students’ participation based on in-class discussions, active participation, and group presentation. | |
| **Extensions**  Students can review the Manohra, Fingernail extensions, and Khaen lesson plans to understand that all three items are part of Thai cultural practices, usually observed together in festivals. When observed these items together, they are an assemblage of Thai artistic expression. Individually, each item indexes a part of Thai culture.  Students can research another culture’s festival, dance, or oral tradition. They can focus on individual items/ objects to understand how that object indexes a part of a culture’s artistic expression. After this, they can explain how that part is part of a whole system of cultural practices. | |

Manohra Dance 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. |
| **VA:Re7.1.6a** | Identify and interpret works of art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
| **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 Manohra costume 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 cultural diffusion. For instance, they can research and compare different Thai dances. Students can analyze the songs and/or visual elements that contribute to the storytelling of the dance. Through the formal analysis, students can observe similarities and differences in dances across regions of Thailand.*