



CHOCTAW CORN HUSK DOLLS LEGACY OF SADIE VAUGHN

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CONTENT SCOPE

Students will learn the significance of the corn husk dolls. Students listen to the legacy of Sadie Vaughn told by Sonya Monk to emphasize the significance of the corn husk dolls. As students learn more about the Corn Husk Doll and Choctaw culture, they will develop an appreciation for Choctaw culture.

FOR TEACHERS

Subject & Topic: Social Studies (Native American History) and Art

Grade Level: K-12

Lesson Time: 1 Hour Class Period

Group Size: Regular Class Size (18 - 25 students)

MATERIALS

- Dried corn husks (6 pieces per doll)
- Yarn (hair and knots)
- Scissors
- Pan of water
- Paper towels
- Corn Silk (optional for hair)
- Fabric paint (optional for decor)
- Small pieces of fabric or ribbon for clothing (optional for decor)

OBJECTIVES

STUDENTS WILL:

- Learn about the Choctaw people, focusing on their history, culture, and Corn Husk Dolls.
- Understand the significance of Corn Husk Dolls in Choctaw society, including its uses and cultural significance.
- Develop skills by creating their own Corn Husk Dolls.



WHO IS SADIE VAUGHN?

Sadie Vaughn, a beloved Mississippi Choctaw and Elder of the Bogue Chitto Indian Community, was more than a gardener and craftsperson. She was a living repository of knowledge, a guardian of traditions, and a grandmother (Pokni, "poke-nee") to her neighbor's children. Born and raised in the Bogue Chitto Indian Community, Sadie was known for growing a large field of corn every year. The children in the area, Sonya included, were always playing in or helping to chase mice out of her field. Many days, Sonya would spend hours with her and she would always make a corn husk doll for her to take home.

CORN HUSK DOLLS

Creating corn husk dolls is not merely a craft; it is a connection to history, culture, and the wisdom of those who have walked before us. Sonya recalls the influence Sadie Vaughn, a cherished Mississippi Choctaw Elder and Gardener of the Bogue Chitto Indian Community, had on teaching her to create corn-husk dolls.

"Corn husk dolls, with their simplicity and cultural significance, provide a gateway to understanding the Choctaw way of life. My childhood memories of the corn husk doll are a continuous reminder of the importance of paying homage to remarkable Choctaw Elders like my beloved Sadie Vaughn. The rustling sound of the dried husks, and the careful folding and tying, all echo the timeless artistry passed down from her generation to mine."

Corn husk dolls are not just playthings; they carry stories, traditions, and cultural significance. In the Choctaw culture, these dolls were often made for children as both toys and tools for teaching life lessons. Sadie Vaughn's dolls, crafted with love and wisdom, embodied the essence of Corn Woman, a Choctaw folk tale that has been passed down from one Choctaw generation to the next.

Sadie Vaughn's approach to corn husk doll-making was a testament to the artistry of simplicity. She embraced the natural beauty of the materials, allowing the husks to dictate the form. In a world often entranced with perfection, Sadie's dolls stood as a reminder that profound beauty could emerge from the simplest of elements.

HEALING WITH THE ARTS

Engaging in the age-old practice of making corn husk dolls is a therapeutic journey. The rhythmic process, coupled with the stories woven into each strand, offers a sense of healing and grounding. It is a reminder that traditions, like the dolls themselves, have the power to mend and strengthen the fabric of Choctaw cultural identity.

POKNI

Like many cultures, the Choctaw people have their own language. For example, the Choctaw word for grandmother is "Pokni" (pronounced poke-nee). In many families, grandmothers might also be affectionately called "granny," "nanny," "mee-mee," among other endearing terms. Reflect for a moment on the special names you have for your own grandparents.



INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Begin the lesson with a brief overview of the Choctaw people's connection to Tennessee lands. Highlight key historical points, including their forced removal, resilience, and how they have continued to thrive, particularly in Mississippi. In connection with their long history, the teacher will share more about the significance of corn husk dolls particularly for Choctaw peoples. The teacher is encouraged to share more history and background surrounding the shell gorget. Upon understanding the significance corn husk dolls play in Choctaw culture and history, students will replicate their own Choctaw Corn Husk Doll.

ACTIVITY

We will be making your own Corn Husk Dolls. This activity is a great way to immerse yourself in Choctaw culture respectfully while learning more about the culture and honor in creating a Corn Husk Doll. After learning about the Choctaw people and the significance of the Corn Husk Doll. Students will engage with Sonya's story and create their own Corn Husk Doll.

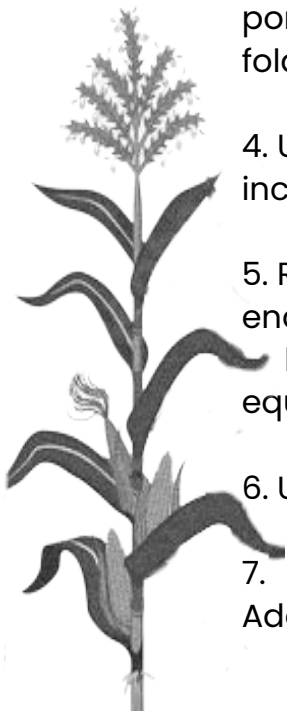
Prep

Soak corn husks in water for about 10 minutes or until pliable.

Distribute 6 pieces of soaked corn husks, paper towel pieces, and hair strands to each student.

Steps

1. Lay six husks (always an even number) in a stack.
2. Using thin twine, tie husks together, about 1 inch from the top.
3. Separate husks into equal portions (2 and 2, or 3 and 3), and fold halves down, covering twine.
4. Using thin twine, tie husks about 1 inch down, creating the head.
5. Roll a single husk and tie at the ends to make arms. Position arms below the knot at neck, between equal portions of husks.
6. Using twine tie off the waist.
7. Decorate your Corn Husk Doll!
Adorn with fabric and ribbon!



EVALUATION

Evaluate students based on their engagement in discussions, the effort and creativity displayed in their medallion creation, and their understanding and respect for Choctaw culture and corn husk doll-making as reflected in their final piece and participation in class discussions. This lesson plan not only educates students about Choctaw history and art but also encourages them to think critically about indigenous cultures and the importance of preserving such traditions.

- What did you learn about the history and cultural significance of corn husk dolls by the Choctaw people?
- Have you ever learned how to make something from an elder or a grandparent? What is the name you call your grandparent?
- What did you find challenging or successful in recreating the Corn Husk Doll?