Introducing Haitian Culture to Young Students
Lesson Plan by Cynthia Pederson

Grade Level: 2-5
Subject: Social Studies and Art

Objectives:
* Gain a better understanding of Haitian people by hearing or reading a Haitian folktale
* Gain a greater appreciation for Haitian people by doing an art project
* Introduce another culture to students via the sense of taste

Resources:
* Copy of Children of Yayeoute
  with California Afro-American Museum Foundation of Los Angeles, 1993.
* Map of Caribbean
* Copy or photocopy of craft activity from
* Craft materials, esp. card stock and fabric (see list in activity)
* sea salt
* teacher-or student-made food Suggested recipe “Island Sugar Cakes” from
  (part of a series: Kids in the Kitchen: The Library of Multicultural Cooking) or pumpkin
  soup

Procedure:
1. With clean hands, have students receive several grain of sea salt.
2. Discuss generally about how and why we use salt. Teacher should share information
   about the history of collecting salt in the Caribbean.
3. Use food as an introduction to the folktale to follow.
4. Depending on the age group and objective of lesson, students could read or the teacher
   could read or tell “The Dancing Poupées” (The Dancing Dolls) from Yayeoute.
5. Discuss story.
6. Explain that the tale is set at New Year’s and the art activity is from Carnival time.
8. Students could make a doll instead of a “monster” to put in their box.

Follow-up:
Review the folktale “The Dancing Poupées.”
Share this story with another class.
Share peeks in boxes with another class. (The teacher could provide fake pennies for this
activity so students could “buy” peeks.)
Discussion Questions for *The Dancing Poupees*:
1. We have talked about salt and shared some food from a Caribbean recipe (like pumpkin soup). What other food does this story mention?
2. Do you eat any special food for New Years Day? (or Christmas?)
3. Why is the wife in the tale so unhappy and grouchy?
4. What kind of magic or cure happens in the story?
5. What explanation is given for the curse and for the cure?
6. Does this remind you of any other folktale or story?
7. Is there a moral to the story?
At Carnival time in Haiti, some children decorate small boxes and hide "monsters" (often a bug, lizard, or mouse!) inside. They run around, offering a peek at the monster in exchange for a penny.

You need:
- Poster board or thin cardboard (A cereal box or department store gift box is perfect.)
- Ruler
- Ballpoint pen
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons
- Tape
- Glue
- Optional decorations: yarn, feathers, dry pasta, buttons, beads, colored tissue paper, etc.

To make the monster:
- Cotton balls or pom-poms; white glue, construction paper, yarn, pipe cleaners, etc.

You and child do:
- Cut out a 6- by 8-inch rectangle of poster board (or thin cardboard) and use a ballpoint pen to draw the grid in Figure 1. Press hard with the pen as you draw the grid. This will score the grid lines and make folding easier.
- Cut Figure 1 to produce Figure 2 shape.
- Cut along cutting lines indicated in Figure 2.
Fold A tabs up. Fold B tabs to overlap A and each other. This will form one side. Tape in place.
Fold C tabs to overlap remaining A tab and each other. This will form the other side. Tape in place.
Leave top open. (4) Decorate with colored tissue paper, markers, paint, crayons, feathers, etc.

Make a monster: Rather than use the traditional bug or mouse, make a tame “monster” out of cotton balls, pom-poms, pipe cleaners, or other supplies at hand. Twist two pipe cleaners together to make a pipe cleaner spider. (5) Or glue black paper eyes and nose, and yarn whiskers to one end of a cotton ball; glue a yarn tail to other end. Glue paper paws to bottom. (5) When glue is dry, hide monster inside the Lamayote.
Asia

China was probably the first place in the world where solution mining took place. Today, China has a lot of underground salt, but most of China’s salt production is through solar evaporation of seawater and inland salt lakes. In India and islands in the Pacific Ocean, most salt is produced through solar evaporation.

Island salt

Starting in the 1600s, the islands in the Caribbean Sea were used for solar evaporation of salt. The Dutch and English established colonies on the islands. Slaves were sent to rake and harvest the salt, and European ships carried it to North American colonies where it was used to preserve food. Today, on Great Inagua Island in the Bahamas, and Bonaire, an island in the south Caribbean, North American companies still use local labor to produce salt for export.

The salt industry on the Caribbean islands was built on slave labor. For a few hours a night, the slaves slept in huts such as this one on Bonaire.
Carnival

Carnival is a time of great fun in the Caribbean. It takes place during the six weeks before Lent. Lent is a special time for Christian people in which they prepare for Easter. During carnival, parades of masked people dance through the streets in shiny costumes made of feathers and brightly colored cloth. This festival (FES-tih-vul) usually takes place in February or March. Trinidad has one of the largest celebrations (SEL-uh-BRAY-shunz) of all the Caribbean islands. Food is cooked and served everywhere at carnival. Pastelitos (pah-stel-EE-tchs), made of flavored meat or cheese wrapped in plantain dough, can be bought at stands in the street.
You will need:

3½ c. (875 ml) grated coconut or packaged coconut flakes
¾ c. (175 ml) water
¾ c. (175 ml) sugar
½ tsp. (2 ml) cream of tartar
1 tsp. (5 ml) almond extract
3–4 drops red or green food coloring

HOW TO DO IT:

• In a medium saucepan, bring sugar and water to a boil over medium-high heat.
• Add coconut and cream of tartar and stir.
• Continue to heat, watching mixture closely.
• Remove from heat when mixture no longer sticks to sides of pan.
• Beat for 3 to 5 minutes with a spoon.
• Add food coloring and almond extract. Mix well.
• Drop by spoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet.
• Repeat until all of mixture is used.
• Allow balls to harden.
• Store in an airtight container.

Makes 28 cakes

Always ask a grown-up to help you when using knives!
Always ask a grown-up to help you when using the stove or oven!