



LESSON PLAN

LACROSSE IN NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

ELEMENTARY

AIM

In what ways can sporting games contribute to a culture?

GUIDING QUESTIONS/OBJECTIVES

After watching the Native Ed Lacrosse video, in what ways was this game part of the Haudenosaunee culture? What are some other ancient games? How were these important in their respective cultures?

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AT END

ACTIVITY

1. Tell students you are going to be showing them a brief video about a sports game. Tell them that while they are watching, you want them to try to notice any ways that the game affects their culture beyond being just entertainment or exercise.
2. Show the Native Ed video on Lacrosse
3. Discuss the question
 - a. **Possible answers:** Builds community, helps those in need by providing “medicine” (the “Medicine Game”)
4. Divide the class into groups and ask each to briefly research one of the following ancient sporting games. If the students have devices, they can research the links themselves. If they do not, you may need to print and distribute the readings. Tell them that while they are researching, they should consider:
 - a. Did these games also have an effect on the culture or were only played for entertainment?
 - b. Are they still played today? Or did they influence other games that are?
5. After they have finished their research, Groups share what they found out.

1. The Mesoamerican Ballgame (Pitz)

- BBC: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zbqyy4j#zpx496f>
- Imagining History: <https://www.imagininghistory.co.uk/post/the-maya-ball-game-information-for-kids>



Native Ed

2. Harpastum (Ancient Rome)

- <https://web.sas.upenn.edu/discentes/2023/09/17/beyond-the-gladiator-a-guide-to-ancient-roman-sports/>
- **ADAPTED FROM MONTESSORIPHYSICALEDUCATION.COM** Harpastum was an ancient ball game played by the Romans, often called the "small ball game." It was a simple game, played mostly for fun, unlike the big public events like gladiator fights or chariot races. Romans would play Harpastum with friends or coworkers as a way to entertain themselves. A Roman poet named Sidonius Apollinaris even mentioned playing it with his friends.
- The game was probably invented a long time ago, around the 5th century BC, during the Roman Republic. But because it wasn't a huge public event, like the gladiator games, there aren't many records about it. Scholars use writings from ancient Roman authors and comparisons with similar Greek games to learn about Harpastum.
- Harpastum was especially popular with kids and regular people, but later, Julius Caesar started using it to help train his soldiers. The Roman doctor Galen said the game was great exercise for the whole body and helped soldiers practice strategy. It was also good for teamwork and keeping soldiers in shape. Some historians say that when the Romans went to Britain, they taught the locals how to play. The Britons became so good at it that sometimes they even beat the Roman soldiers!
- The ball used in Harpastum was the smallest ball the Romans used for games, about the size of a modern softball. It could be made of different materials, like leather, reeds, or animal skin, and was filled with things like feathers, rags, or hair. Sometimes, Roman soldiers even used the heads of defeated enemies to play!
- The name "Harpastum" comes from a Greek word meaning "to grab" or "to snatch," which describes how players tried to grab the ball. The game was inspired by two Greek games called Phaininda and Episkyros. While those games were also about passing a ball, Harpastum became more intense and violent, with players trying to stop each other from getting the ball.
- There were two main ways to play Harpastum. In one version, it was a bit like rugby, with two teams trying to get the ball past the other team's end. In another version, the goal was to keep the ball on your side of the field and not let the other team take it. Players would pass the ball back and forth, trying to keep it away from the other team. Sometimes, they would lock each other in wrestling holds to prevent the other team from getting the ball.



- The game also had a "middle player" called the medicurrens. This player ran around in the middle of the field and could quickly help on offense or defense. After the ball was passed, the medicurrens would switch teams with the other team's middle player.
- Today, we don't play Harpastum anymore, but it helped inspire games like rugby and soccer. It was a simple game that didn't need special equipment or a big field, just a ball and some people ready to play!

3. MOB FOOTBALL (ADAPTED FROM MONTESSORIPHYSICALEDUCATION.COM)

Medieval football, also known as mob football or folk football, was a popular game in Europe during the Middle Ages. It was often played on Shrovetide, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, just before Lent began. Some parts of the game can be traced back to ancient sports played by the Greeks and Romans. For example, the Romans played a game called Harpastum, where players tried to keep the ball on their own side of the field, which was also part of medieval football. It became especially popular in England during the Middle Ages.

In medieval football, two teams would compete, with no limit on how many players could be on each team. The goal was to get the ball to the other team's goal line by carrying or kicking it. In one version of the game, the team would take the ball to their goal and hit it against a stone circle three times. The ball was often made from leather or a pig's bladder and could be inflated with air or water. The game could be played on fields of all sizes, with no official rules, and sometimes the game spilled into town squares, causing damage to buildings and other property. Because of this, it was banned several times, and one major law, the Highway Act of 1835, even banned the game on public roads.

One interesting part of medieval football was its connection to religion. The game was often played on religious holidays like Shrove Tuesday or Easter, bringing the community together to celebrate. Teams were usually from different neighborhoods or parishes, which were often separated by rivers or streams. The local priest would bless the ball before the game, and it was believed that playing would bring good luck and prosperity to the community. The game was also used to show which groups were stronger or more important, similar to how sports teams compete for dominance today.



Despite its religious connection, medieval football was a rough and dangerous game. There were very few rules—just "no murder"—and players could use any method they wanted to score goals. The chaos of the game often led to injuries, with players being trampled or kicked. But it was still very popular, and fans were very loyal to their teams, much like the rivalries we see in sports today, such as between the Chicago Cubs and the White Sox.

Medieval football is considered the ancestor of modern sports like soccer, rugby, American football, and Australian rules football. When you watch these sports today, you can see many similarities to medieval football: kicking the ball (soccer), running with the ball and passing it (rugby and American football), and kicking the ball for clearing or passing (soccer and Australian rules football). Though the game was wild and tiring, it was a fun way for communities to come together and celebrate during the Middle Ages.

4. HURLING

<https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/hurling/487505>

Hurling is a traditional Irish sport that is the oldest and fastest field game in the world.

With a history of over 3000 years, hurling is still the second most popular sport in Ireland today.

The History of Hurling

The first mention of hurling dates back to 1272 BC during the battle of Moytura in County Mayo. The rulers of Ireland at the time, the Fir Bolg, were challenged by the invading Tuatha Dé Danann. Before the battle began, both sides played a game of hurling. Even though the Fir Bolg won the game, they eventually lost the battle and were driven out of Ireland.

In Irish mythology, hurling is linked to famous warriors like Cuchulainn and Fionn Mac Cumhail. It was thought that hurling might have been taught as a skill for battle, and warriors were known for their skill at the game.

Hurling was banned in 1336 by the Statute of Kilkenny, after the Normans invaded, but people kept playing anyway. It was banned again in 1537 with the Statute of Galway, but this didn't stop the game from growing in popularity. Even though it was banned, hurling remained popular into the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Great Famine of Ireland, which killed one million people and caused another million to leave the country, put hurling in danger. Other versions of the game became more popular, and the traditional version of hurling almost disappeared. But then a man named Michael Cusack



decided that the game needed rules to help it survive. In 1882, he wrote about reviving the game. Two years later, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was formed to make rules for hurling and other traditional Irish sports. Today, the GAA is Ireland's largest sports organization and is in charge of hurling.

Playing Hurling

Hurling is played between two teams of 15 players, called hurlers. Each player uses a hurley (a special stick) to hit the sliotar (the ball) on a 160-yard long field with H-shaped goals at each end.

Here are some basic rules for playing hurling:

- The sliotar must be flicked up from the ground using the hurley; picking it up by hand is not allowed.
- Players cannot throw the sliotar by hand, but they can pass it by slapping it with their hurley to another player.
- Players cannot take more than 4 steps while holding the sliotar, but they can carry it on the base (the flat part) of their hurley or pass it.
- Players cannot switch the sliotar from one hand to the other.
- Pushing, tripping, and pulling on someone's jersey is not allowed.
- Chopping, which is when a player uses their hurley to hit another player's hurley, is forbidden.

To score a goal, a player must get the sliotar under the cross-bar and past the goalkeeper. If the sliotar goes over the cross-bar, it scores a point.

EXIT TICKET

Think about the most popular sports in the world today: Soccer, football, baseball, basketball, hockey, cricket. Choose one (or a different sport if you prefer) and give one way you think this sport affects our culture beyond just being entertainment.



COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Common Core Social Studies Standards

1. History/Social Studies

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.3-5.2**
 - **Key Ideas and Details: Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.**
 - **Application: Students will summarize key information from their research on ancient games like Lacrosse, the Mesoamerican Ballgame, Harpastum, and Hurling. They will explain how these games contributed to their respective cultures beyond entertainment.**
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.3-5.9**
 - **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: Compare and contrast the treatment of the same topic in different media (e.g., video, text, and visual sources).**
 - **Application: Students will compare the Native Ed video on Lacrosse with other texts or resources provided about the ancient games. They will consider how different media portray the importance of these games in their cultures.**



2. Civics/Government

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.3-5.3**
 - **Key Ideas and Details: Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.**
 - **Application: Students will identify how ancient sports contributed to social cohesion, community identity, and cultural values in their respective societies.**

3. Cultural Understanding

- **Standard 5: Culture**
 - **How culture is expressed through the arts, recreation, and other forms of human expression.**
 - **Application: This standard is directly aligned with the lesson's focus on understanding how ancient sporting games are cultural expressions that shape and reflect the values of societies. Students will investigate and discuss how these games affected the culture of the Haudenosaunee, Mesoamerican civilizations, Ancient Rome, medieval Europe, and Ireland.**



Common Core Literacy Standards for Speaking and Listening

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-5.1

- **Speaking and Listening: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.**
- **Application: Students will engage in group discussions, share their findings on ancient games, and express their ideas about how these games contributed to their respective cultures.**

2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3-5.4

- **Speaking and Listening: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.**
- **Application: After researching, students will present their findings about the cultural significance of the ancient games to the class.**

Writing Standards

1. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.1



- **Text Types and Purposes:** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- **Application:** In the exit ticket or any related follow-up assignments, students can write about how a contemporary sport affects culture, supporting their opinion with reasons beyond just entertainment.

2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3-5.8

- **Research to Build and Present Knowledge:** Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
- **Application:** Students will gather information from various resources (BBC, Britannica, etc.) about the ancient games and use this information to inform their discussions and presentations.

Additional Standards

- **Standard 6: People, Places, and Environments**
 - **Understanding** how humans interact with their environment.
 - **Application:** Ancient games were often tied to specific environments (e.g., fields for Harpastum or the spiritual



significance of lacrosse), and students will explore how these games were shaped by and contributed to the communities and environments in which they were played.