



A Fun Educational Website
for Teachers and Kids



DECEMBER 08, 2011

Arts Languages Literacy Math Science Soc Studies Articles Parents Teachers

Show us some love - click the +1 button!

Like

Tweet 0

0

2

Indian Drama Plays for Children Native American Skit

[Home](#) > [Social Studies](#) > [Native Americans](#) > [Plays and Skits](#) > [The Life of the Corn - The Planting Dance](#)

Native American Plays, Skits and Dramas

The Life of the Corn - A drama in 5 dances

by Alice C. Fletcher

The Planting Dance

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.—The rituals and ceremonies from which this dramatic dance with its accompanying songs are taken have been handed down through numberless generations. They deal with the perpetuation of the vocations of the people and also with the duties of the warrior, who must so protect the people that these vocations can be pursued in peace and safety. The portion of the ritual that relates to the planting of the maize is here given. It is practical in character. The ground is to be cleared of the debris of winter's storms and the dead leaves and twigs gathered into heaps and consumed by fire. When the brown earth is uncovered on the sunny slope it is to be mellowed and made into little hills with flattened tops to receive the kernels of the corn. The first seven of these hills must be ceremonially planted. Into the first hill one kernel of corn is dropped, two kernels are put into the second hill, three in the third, and so on to the seventh, in which are placed seven kernels. The product of these seven little hills must be kept separate, for it is to constitute the "first fruit offering" made to Wakon'da, through the priest, in recognition of the gift of corn as food. After the seven hills are completed, then the rest of the field is similarly prepared and planted. When the kernels are put in the loosened ground they are covered and stamped with the foot, so that each little hill bears the mark, the footprint, of the planter. The Ritual Song depicts the task of planting to its completion and compares the rows of little brown hills to lines of buffalo following one another down the slope. With this vision, suggesting the promise of abundant food, the workers joyfully turn toward the home fireside.

The words given for the first song are a brief paraphrase of the many stanzas of the original Ritual Song, which so touches the necessary acts of the planter as to lift them above a merely prosaic level.

Properties.—As this dance represents work, no scarfs or mantles are used. The garments should be plain and the arms free for the necessary dramatic motions in portraying the various acts connected with clearing, preparing and planting the ground. In ancient times the hoe used for this work was made from the shoulder blade of the elk, or a stick three or four feet long shaped at one end like a wedge. Similarly shaped sticks of wood should be used in this dance, one for each dancer. Pouches are required made of brown cloth, with broad bands or straps long enough to pass over the shoulder and chest and to let the pouches hang at the back. Both pouches and straps should be ornamented with geometric designs painted in red, yellow, blue or green; two or three of these colors should be combined in each design. The corn carried within the pouches can be represented by rounded chips, little stones or, when possible, by the corn kernels themselves.

The boys must wear head-bands, carry bows and have quivers hung at their backs. They must scatter around the border of the "field," move watchfully about, peer into the distance and act as if on the alert to detect or to meet any prowling enemy.

Directions.—A space should be set apart to represent the "field" where the dramatic action takes place. This dance requires considerable dramatic pantomime. The words in the two lines of each stanza of the song serve as a prelude to the action which follows. Sometimes the action may be confined to the refrain, but generally there must be acting throughout the singing both of the words and the refrain. Much in this dance must be left to the imagination and skill of the group of dancers, who should rehearse together and decide how best to make a clear, strong picture. The native music here given belongs to the act of preparing the ground and planting the kernels of corn. Attention is called to the second, fourth, sixth and eighth measures of the song. The three-quarter notes and the eighth and rest should be accented by movements of the hoe, the foot or both. The rhythm of the first measure is a little different from that of the third, fifth and seventh, caused by the third note being a quarter note, denoting a definite act or pause; the remaining four notes of the first measure are flowing, as well as all the notes of the third, fifth and seventh measures. By observing these little points in the music the drama will be given variety and made more picturesque and effective.

At the beginning of the song the dancers should be at a little distance from the space set apart to represent the "field," so that they will be able at the proper time to go toward it. As the first line of the first stanza is sung the dancers should stand in a loose group, adjust their hoes and pouches to be ready to go to the "field"; during the singing of the second line they should break into a file and move off. All these movements of body, hands and feet must be in strict time and rhythm with the music.

Native American Song No. 1

1

Here we stand ready now
to go on our way
To the field, buried under
leaves dead and gray.

Refrain: Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!

Site Search



HO HO HO
[Letters to Santa](#)

Follow Us...

Free Newsletter!

Join our other 415,028
readers.

Your E-Mail

Join Now!

We respect your privacy!

Newsletter subscribers are automatically [registered to receive](#) free teaching resources including lesson plan ideas and printables. Drawings are held for gently used books.



Native American
Activities

[Native American Unit of Study](#)

[Native American Games](#)

[Coloring Pages](#)

[Names and Rituals](#)

[Native American Plays - Skits](#)

[Songs and Dances](#)

[Native American Printables](#)

[Poems and Rhymes](#)

[Short Stories](#)

Holidays and
Teaching
Themes

December Games,
Learning Activities &

Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!



By the end of the first line of the refrain the dancers will have reached the "field" and have begun to dispose themselves over the space. Seven must stand in the first row, where they are to make the seven ceremonial hills. These seven dancers should lead the motions of all the others, so that the movements may present even lines, as in the bowing of violins in an orchestra. The refrain should be repeated as many times as is necessary while the dancers are taking position, clearing the field, etc. The number of repeats must be determined upon at the rehearsals of the dancers. Sufficient time should be taken to bring out the picture and to give it in perfect rhythm with the music. When the refrain closes, the dead leaves and twigs are supposed to be gathered into heaps ready to be burned.

2

See the fire send its
"word of flame" mounting high,
Now the smoke rolls about the earth,
shuts out sky.

Refrain: Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!
Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!

The action for this stanza should indicate the heat of the fire; shielding the face, pushing back stray leaves or twigs to the burning heap; the rolling smoke follows the dancers, who here and there try to escape it. This scene will require study to bring out the picture rhythmically. It should form a contrast to the preceding and the following scene, in both of which the movements are more or less uniform. In this scene groups should emphasize certain conditions: the fire, the smoke, the work of keeping the heaps together, so that the picture will be one of action diverse to a degree and yet every movement dominated by the rhythm of the song; the picture will thus be made a unit.

3

Mellow earth, make the little,
hills smooth on top,
On the earth softly the
kernels we drop.

Refrain: Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!
Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!

In the action of this stanza the seven dancers in the front row make seven ceremonial hills, mellowing the earth with the wooden hoes and gathering it into little hills made smooth on top. The pouches are swung to the front, the corn taken out with one hand while the other holds the hoe at rest, and the kernels are dropped on the softened earth. The dancers should be careful to remember that in the ceremonial row of seven hills but one kernel is to be dropped in the first hill, two in the second, and so on up to seven in the seventh hill. All the dancers scattered over the "field" must follow the movements of the seven in charge of the seven ceremonial hills.

4

Cover all gently,
leave the print of our feet
On the earth mellowed fine,
so brown, so sweet.

Refrain: Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!

Worksheets

- [Hanukkah](#)

- [Christmas Fun](#)

- [Christmas - Religious](#)

- [Winter](#)

- [Kwanzaa](#)

- [New Years Eve](#)

- [Other December Teaching Ideas](#)

Sample Thematic Games & Teaching Ideas

- [Letters of the Alphabet Games](#)

- [Community Helpers](#)

- [The 100th day of School Activities](#)

- [Summer](#)

- [Fall](#)

- [Winter](#)

- [Spring](#)

- [Presidents](#)

- [Read Across America - Dr. Seuss's Birthday](#)

- [Native American Study](#)

- [U.S. Geography](#)

Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!

In the action for this stanza the hoe and the feet of the dancers have a special part. The movements of the dancers should represent the covering of the dropped seed with the mellowed earth and the making of the footprint on the top of the little hill within which the seed is now hidden. In the native Ritual Song the term "footprint" is used symbolically; it represents a person—in this instance the one who had done the work—also the work itself that has been accomplished. The dancers should be careful to remember the rhythm of the second, fourth, sixth and eighth measures, as these can be used to emphasize "footprints" and also the completion of the task. During a repeat of the refrain the dancers should drop their hoes and gather in groups as if to look at the field; this action will bring them into the position required for the fifth stanza.

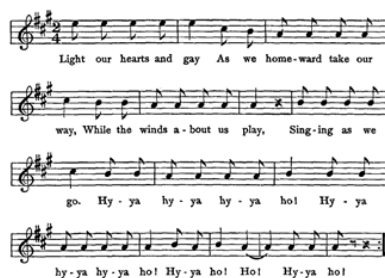
5
How like lines of buffalo
upon the slope,
Lie our little brown hills,
so full now of hope.

Refrain: Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!
Ah hey they,
Ah hey hey they,
Ah hey they ha!


The motions of the hands and the movements of the body should indicate that in looking over the field one is struck by the striped appearance made by the rows of little hills, recalling the resemblance to the buffalo descending the slope. The final "ha!" of the refrain should indicate pleasure. A brief silence should follow, during which the dancers pick up their hoes, adjust their pouches, fall into line and sing the following song:

Native American Song No. 2

Light our hearts and gay
As we homeward take our way,
While the winds about us play,
Singing as we go.
Hy-ya hy-ya hy-ya ho!
Hy-ya hy-ya hy-ya ho!
Hy-ya ho!
Ho!
Hy-ya ho!



This song should be repeated many times as all the dancers, with rhythmic, springing steps, wind about the camp ground before they finally disperse.

 [Email this page to a friend](#)

[Bookmark](#) 

ADD, ADHD, LITERACY, ESL, SPECIAL ED, BILINGUAL ED, GIFTED, HEALTH ED, EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

[Home](#) [Interactive Coloring](#) [Search](#) [About Us](#) [Contact](#) [Compensation and Affiliation Affidavit](#) [Getting Started](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Service](#) [Sitemap](#)

Online Classroom Games and Classroom Learning Resources
for Toddlers, Preschoolers, Kindergarten, and Elementary Students
Kid Safe Teacher Created Primary Website with Homeschooling Activities and Lessons
First Grade, Second Grade, Third Grade, Fourth Grade, Fifth Grade and Sixth Grade Teaching Materials and Lesson Plans
Copyright ©1999-2011
[Cool Web Design](#) and [Search Engine Optimization](#) by

Webstantaneous Web Marketing, LLC

[A Chandler, Arizona Web Design and Web Marketing Company](#)

