

Journey to the River of Perfumes

Discuss—Explore--Create

I. Lotus Flower

Discuss: The lotus flower is the national flower of Vietnam and is considered a symbol of beauty. It grows at the bottom of muddy ponds or lakes, using its roots as an anchor. The stem grows straight up through the water, so that the lotus flower appears to be floating on the surface. At night, the flower closes and sinks beneath the water, in the daytime it blossoms and rests on the surface. Lotus flower seeds are edible. In Vietnam, the stems are eaten in salads and soups. The fragrant flower petals are used in tea and have a wonderful fragrance. What flower seeds have you eaten? Have you seen plants growing in water?

Explore: Visit a park or botanical garden that has lotus flowers. Bring a sketchpad and draw what you see. Don't forget to draw the parts you cannot see (remember the stem and roots are under water). Bring markers or crayons in shades of yellow, purple, and pink for the flowers.

Create: Make a lotus flower out of 5 -10 inch square sheets of colored tissue paper, a green pipe cleaner,

green felt cut in the shape of a lily pad and strong glue. Instructions: 1) Stack sheets of tissue paper 2) Fold like a fan 3) Put pipe cleaner around center with stem 4) Pull the sheets of tissue paper towards the center carefully, one by one. 5) Cut out lily pad from green felt. 6) Cut stem of pipe cleaner down to one inch. 7) Glue lily pad to bottom of flower.

II. Common Herbs and Spices Used in Vietnamese Cuisine

Discuss: Herbs and spices are food enhancers. They are not eaten alone, but in or on food to add flavor, color, and texture. Talk about common Vietnamese herbs (basil, mint, cilantro) and spices (ginger, cinnamon, turmeric). With which ones are you familiar? Which have you tasted? In Vietnam, fresh herbs are used in hot food while they are still very fragrant. In Pho (rice noodle soup), fresh herbs are put into the hot soup as condiments.

Do you know the differences between herbs and spices? Both herbs and spices are parts of plants. Herbs come from the leafy green parts and typically grow in temperate climates. The spices are parts of the root, stem, bulb, bark, or seeds of the plant which grown in more tropical climates. You may find herbs that are dried for longevity. Many herbs and spices have medicinal values. For

example, turmeric has anti-inflammatory and anti-fungal properties. Ginger is a preventative for nausea and colds. Also, spices can act as preservatives to increase the length of a foods edible length. Salt has been used historically for this purpose.

Explore: Take a look in your spice cabinet and smell various spices. Which ones do you like or dislike? Make a list with two columns. Record your preferences.

Take a trip to a local farmers market or supermarket with a grown up and write down a list of the herbs you see. Circle the ones used in Vietnamese cooking. Why not buy an herb you have never tried before?

Create: Plant some herbs at home in a small pot. Make sure the plants have sun and don't forget to water them regularly. Easy plants to try are basil, mint, and green onion. You can cut the herbs off the stems to use in cooking or you can leave the stems long and create an herb bouquet by assembling the herbs together and placing them in a bowl of water to make a fragrant centerpiece for your kitchen table

III. Non-la: Vietnamese Traditional Hat

Discuss: A Non-la (palm leaf conical hat) is an outdoor hat that functions to protect one from sun or rain. During both the wet and dry seasons in Vietnam, people spend many hours outside in the rice paddies and farming, so the Non-la is necessary to protect their skin and keep the sun out of their eyes.

It is also worn as a symbol of pride during holidays, along with the traditional dress. The Non-La is made of palm leaves. There is a special Non-la made in Hue city(where Journey to the River of Perfumes takes place) with a poem placed in between the layers of the palm leaves. You can only see it when you hold the hat up to the light.

Explore: Take out some of your hats. How do they function? Are they for fun or do they have a purpose? Talk about the origin or purpose of those hats.

Create: Make your own Vietnamese Non-La out of several paper plates cut and stapled together. Then, punch a hole on either side. String a ribbon through the holes and knot the outside of each hole. The ribbon will go under your chin. Decorate it however you like, and choose your own poem to write on your Non-la like they do in Hue city.

Hidden in the Himalayas **Discuss--Explore--Create**

I. The Himalaya Mountains

Discuss: Where are the Himalaya Mountains? Check a map or globe. They are in Asia, separating the countries of Tibet and India. The Nepalese believe these mountains are sacred and refer to them as “Mother.” Mount Everest, in the Himalayan range, is the highest mountain in the world. Build your own mountain range. You can use clay, paper, foil, or whatever medium you like. Be creative!

Explore: What is a trek? It is a long distance walk through mountains, over rivers, or anywhere else

to observe nature. Find a park or reservation with trails and plan a short trek with a grown-up. Grab your backpack and put things in it for your trek. Make a list. What will you need for a day out walking? What kind of things do you see, smell or hear along the way? Bring your notepad and make notes or draw pictures of your discoveries.

Create: Draw a detailed map of your trek starting from your house to your destination. Draw a key at the bottom of your paper and make sure to include pictures on your key.

II. Yaks & Naks

Discuss: Yaks are very important in Nepalese society. Because yaks live at high altitudes, they have a large lung capacity to absorb oxygen. They cannot live below 3,500 meters. They are domesticated (They are not wild animals and can work with people). Yaks are very useful creatures. They can carry heavy loads, their milk is used to make butter, their fur is used for clothing, and their poop is even used as fuel! A male is called a yak and a female is called a nak.

Explore: How about taking a trip to the zoo or a farm? Make a list with two columns. In the first column write down the domestic animals you see (the animals that help people). In the second column, write what they do to help people.

Create: Make your own yak or nak mask. Using a paper plate, brown construction paper, and black or brown yarn cut into 2-3 inch pieces.

Instructions: 1) Color your paper plate brown or black 2) Cut out eyes and a mouth. 3) Glue 2-3 inch pieces of yarn all over its face 4) Cut out ears from brown paper 5) Tape a stick to the back to hold up the mask. Create a puppet show with your yak and nak masks!

A Zopkio is a cross between a yak and a cow. These animals can live at lower altitudes. Do you know of another animal that comes from two different animals? Ask a grown up to help you research this. Then, draw what you think two animals might look like if they mated. Also, make up some funny names for them. Maybe a pig and a cow could be called a pow!

III. Prayer Flags

Discuss: Prayer flags are important to the Nepalese and Tibetan people. They are strung along mountain ridges and peaks high up in the Himalayas. Nepalese and Tibetans believe they bless their surroundings. Each flag has a special meaning. They believe that when they are balanced, there is peace and harmony. The flags come in a set of 5 colors in a precise order starting with blue then white, red, green and ending with yellow. The five colors represent the earth's elements. Blue symbolizes the sky and space, white symbolizes the air and wind, red symbolizes fire, green symbolizes water and yellow symbolizes the earth.

Explore: Go outside and look around you. Can you find the earth's five elements? Point to them and talk about them with a partner.

Create: Make your own prayer flags with things that you think represent health and harmony in your life. Use your own colors and draw a picture or words on each flag. String them together and hang them in your house to show balance in your life.

You can also draw and label each of the elements on paper.

