

Corals and Climate Change

Village Role Playing Exercise: Samoan Version

Overview:

Students play the role of villagers in a traditional Pacific Island culture, working together to create a plan to efficiently and sustainably procure provisions from the environment.

Grade level:

7th – 12th

Materials:

- Poster paper (one for each group of 5-7 students) plus one more
- Colored pens or pencils
- Tape
- Images that can be taped onto poster sheets (fishponds, taro patches, walls, etc.)
- Name tags filled out with student roles

Time required:

35-45 min plus more for reflection

Objectives

- Students will demonstrate cooperation by working together.
- Students will be able to describe some of the sources of food and building materials for their selected culture.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the sustainability of ancient villages with modern towns that use imported food and building materials.
- Students will demonstrate respect for the social structure in traditional villages.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast the social structure of traditional villages and towns today.

National Science Education Standards

9-12 Standard F: Science in Personal and Social Perspectives

- Natural Resources
- Science and Technology in Local, National, and Global Challenges

Exercise Summary

In traditional Pacific cultures, villages or family groups provided all the things its people required for survival. Traditional cultures also had rules and social roles that facilitated the correct use of resources and encouraged sustainable practices to ensure future availability of plants and animals for harvest. In this exercise, students are assigned roles in a traditional culture and work with their peers to provide food, water, and shelter for everyone in the village. Below is the Samoan version of the exercise, which incorporates Samoan traditions and vocabulary.

O le ala i le pule, o le tautua
The pathway to leadership is through service
-Samoan Proverb

Traditionally in Samoa, the land was divided into nu'u (villages). Each nu'u had most of the necessary resources for survival. The rules and social roles were regulated by the matai (chief) system. Fa'asamoa describes the customs of the culture. A full glossary of terms is provided below.

Procedure

1. Before class draw a picture of the island. Divide the island into several villages one for each group of students. Also draw the outline of each group's nu'u on a separate sheet of paper. Draw in features such as mountains, rivers and the ocean. Leave space on the side for the group to list what they need to survive in their nu'u. Leave space on the bottom to name their nu'u.
2. To begin the activity, review the concept of Samoan nu'u, matai, and fa'asamoa. Introduce some of the plants that were grown and the fishing techniques that would have been used. If you have access to traditional style fishing or farming instruments these would be great examples to show the students. See the Samoan Glossary for more information.



National Park Service
www.nps.gov/index.htm



Pacific Island Network Inventory & Monitoring Program
National Park Service
www.science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/pacn/



Integration & Application Network (IAN)
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
www.ian.umces.edu

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3. Divide class into groups of 5 to 7 students and assign each student a role. You can randomly assign roles or selectively choose what role to give to each student. For each group there will be one Matai (chief), one Manaia (village prince), one Taupou (village princess) and everyone else will be the Aumaga (common or untitled men in the village).
4. Review the objectives of the game: Each group will
 - Name their nu'u.
 - List the resources they need to survive.
 - Draw the resources on the nu'u.
 - The Matai will create three rules to manage the village resources.
5. Review the social rules with the students (roles of each character for this game).
 - Much of the Samoan social system is based on status, such as whose fale has the highest roof. The matai or head of the family lives in this fale and holds the highest rank. For this activity, the matai decides on three rules for the village (such as setting up curfew).
 - Only the village leaders can address the matai, like the village mayor (pulenu'u). They must assist the matai in drawing the nu'u.
 - Matai gets to decide on what kind of resources are used and allowed in the village. The aumaga cannot talk to the matai and must do what they are told.
6. Let each group work together for 20 minutes to design and draw their nu'u. Each group will have to discuss what they need, list the items, and then draw the items onto the picture. Groups need to consider where they will get resources to build their houses, cook food, grow food, raise animals, make clothes.
7. After 20 minutes, announce that the Fono (council) is meeting. All the Matai will present the picture of the nu'u and describe what resources they included and explain the three rules. Discuss if the nu'u includes everything necessary for the group to survive.
8. Lead a class discussion of the activity. Ask the students:
 - What happened?
 - How were decisions made?
 - Was the nu'u successful, was there food, water and shelter for everyone?
 - Was the Matai compassionate or mean-tempered?
 - What roles did you play and what was it like for you? Was it difficult to communicate?
 - If any group members did not carry out their roles correctly, this can be discussed. In ancient times what would have happened if the Aumaga did not follow the rules of the Matai?
9. Have the students write a reflection about their experience. Here are some ideas:
 - What would it feel like to be a chief or a commoner in ancient Samoa and how would you have been treated?
 - How is the traditional Samoan class structure similar to or different from today's society? Are the roles and responsibilities similar or different?
 - How did traditional Samoans get all their resources? How did the people have to work together?
 - What would happen today if ships stopped bringing in food and we had to produce everything we eat, wear or use on the island? Do you have grandparents who still know how to farm or fish? Can you ask them to teach you?
 - How can we protect the cultural knowledge and archeological resources of Samoa's past?

Additional Resources

- A changing fa'amatai and implications for governance. Afamasaga Toleafoa: <http://www.clg.uts.edu.au/pdfs/Toleafoa.pdf>

Village Role Playing Exercise: Samoan Glossary of Terms

Traditional Samoan Social Roles

- Matai: Village chief.
- Nu'u: Village
- Fa'asamoa: The Samoan way of life.
- Matai: The chief system.
- Fono: Council.
- Manaia: Head of the male youth group.
- Taupou: Princess of the village.
- Aiga: Family.
- Aumaga: The common or untitled men in a village.
- Aualuma: The common or untitled women in a village.
- Fale Tapua'i: Church.
- Fale: House.
- Ie toga: Fine mat.
- Taulele'a: Young men

Typical Food Sources

- Niu: Coconut. Fruit is eaten and the leaves are used to make baskets
- Fa'i: Banana. Fruit is cooked eaten.
- Talo: Taro. Root is cooked and eaten.
- Ufi: Yam. Root is cooked and eaten.
- Ulu: Breadfruit. Fruit is cooked and eaten.
- Umala: Sweet potato. Root is cooked and eaten.
- Pua'a: Pig.
- Moa: Chicken.
- I'a: Fish.
- Laumei: Turtle.
- Malie: Shark.
- Ava: Kava. Root is used to make a drink.
- Umu: Outdoor kitchen.