Objectives

To introduce students to the World Heritage site of Sukhothai and the valuable cultural heritage it represents, using the performing arts, so that they will gain appreciation for this heritage.

Activities

1. Warm-up question and answer session

Ask the students a number of questions about Sukhothai and Classical Dance to get them interested in the subject matter. For example:

• Where is Sukhothai?
• Why is it famous?
• What are the names of some of the heritage buildings in Sukhothai?
• Do you know what Thai Classical dance is?
• How does Thai Classical Dance differ from Classical Dance in other countries and regions?

Starting with what the students already know will help the students connect with the new information being provided to them.

2. Pictures and Examples

Before the class visits Sukhothai, the teacher should show the students photographs and drawings of the buildings - Wat Mahathat, San Ta Pha Daeng, etc - (and a DVD or video, if available) and discuss why Sukhothai is a heritage site. The teacher should also discuss the origins of Thai performing arts. The teacher should explain the stories that are acted out in Thai Classical Dance performances, such as the "Sukhothai
Dance” or the masked dance-drama “Khon”. The teacher should take the students to see a performance of Thai Classical Dance. While watching, the students should take note of the characters and their costumes as they will be asked to create puppets or figurines based on these characters and create stories around the characters.

3. Visiting the site and viewing a performance

When visiting the World Heritage site of Sukhothai, the students should look at all the monuments and learn more about the history of the site. While at the site they should think about places where the classical dance they have seen might have been performed in the past - such as in the palace - and examine the stone reliefs to try to find depictions of dancers.

4. Devising a story and making puppets or figurines

The teacher should divide the class into groups of 5 or 6 students and give each group materials for making puppets or figurines. Each group should devise a story (based on what they learned about the history of Sukhothai and the characters in the performance they watched). The story can even be the same as the one they watched. Each group should then make the puppets or figurines they need to act-out that story.

5. Performing the show

Each group should present their story to the rest of the class, as a kind of puppet-show.

Synthesis

After each group has presented their puppet-show, the class should discuss the story that each group presented and how it reflects what they have learned about Thai cultural heritage.

Materials

Plasticine, paper-mache, cardboard, paint, etc - to make the figurines. Colourful material (silk, cotton, etc) - for costumes.
**Historic Town of Sukhothai and Associated Historic Towns: World Heritage Site**

Sukhothai, founded in 1238, is considered to be the first Thai kingdom and is famous for both its political achievements and cultural importance. For many years Sukhothai was well-governed, with a self-sufficient agricultural economy and plentiful harvests. However, during the latter half of the fourteenth century strong states emerged further south and Sukhothai's political and economic power began to decline.

Today the ruins of Sukhothai enable visitors to gain an insight into the Sukhothai era and the material prosperity of its rulers. The monuments of Sukhothai, which illustrate the beginnings of Thai architecture, are also evidence of the great artistic talent and the devout Buddhist faith of the people.

Inscribed on the World Heritage list in 1991, Sukhothai is a place where Thailand's remarkable artistic and architectural heritage is preserved and can be experienced and appreciated by all.

**Thai Classical Dance**

During the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya dynasties, Khmer-derived music and dance was adapted and ultimately developed into a Thai national classical style.

The music and dance practices associated with the Shaivite cult of the God-King had been introduced into the Khmer court from Java as early as the ninth century (and originally derived from India). The classic epic tales of the Ramayana and Mahabharata were reworked in distinctively local ways so as to be used as theatrical source material.

It is believed that the God-King cult flourished among the Siamese ruling elite during the Sukhothai period and it is likely that the Siamese kings would have sought to match the status of the Khmer kings in every way, including in the arts. So the Siamese sought to develop their own forms of performing arts, equal to the Khmer forms. While derived from Khmer models, the Siam performances developed in their own unique way and evolved over time to suit Siamese tastes and to incorporate local details.

One kind of Thai Classical Dance is the "Sukhothai Dance" which was reconstructed from examining stone reliefs in the ancient town of Sukhothai. The costumes show their Khmer origins, with the middle-dancer wearing a Khmer-style crown and the use of collars with stylized necklaces which were possibly originally made of silver.

Another kind of traditional dance is the masked-drama dance (Khon), traditionally performed only by male actors. With its ornately decorated paper-mache masks and costumes of rich fabric, it was the Siamese version of the Khmer Khol dance-drama. It enacts episodes from the Ramayana, to the chanted narrative of a khon pak (narrator), with accompaniment by a traditional Thai orchestra.
For further information about Sukhothai and Classical Dance see the following websites

- http://www.mahidol.ac.th/thailand/sukhothai.html
- http://www.mahidol.ac.th/thailand/classical-dance.html
- http://www.mahidol.ac.th/thailand/drama.html
- http://www3.accu.or.jp/PAAP/data/C_THA.xml?mode=detail3
- http://www.thailander.com/arts/thaidance/

World Heritage in Young
Southeast Asian Hands
Second Sub-Regional Workshop: Introducing the Arts for Teaching on the Historic Environment
Heritage Education art Activity Sheets

Office of the UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, Thailand
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