



REEEC

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center
University of Illinois at Urbana - Champaign

Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

Creating your own Albanian *Qeleshe*

20 minutes prep, 30 minutes of class time

This unit is designed to allow students to learn more about the country of Albania and the *qeleshe*, a white felt hat traditionally found throughout Albania. Students will be introduced to the country of Albania and the history of the *qeleshe*, a national symbol of Albania that dates back to the Ottoman period. Albania was a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1385 until 1912, so these caps have been a part of Albanian tradition for several centuries. Students will learn about the process completed by traditional Albanian felt-makers who make the caps. They will learn about the two main types—one with a rounded top, and the other with a flat top. Students will then make their own flat-topped style *qeleshe* to take home with them.

Required Materials:

1. Albanian flag stickers to decorate the *qeleshe*
2. White felt
3. Tupperware container to help shape the cap
4. Craft glue

Preparation: Place a sheet of flag stickers at each table, along with round pieces of felt for the top of the *qeleshe* and cut out pieces to act as the body of the cap.

Lesson Plan:

1. Begin by asking the children what country we live in, and then help them locate that country on a map or globe. Then show them where the country of Albania is on a map/globe. (2 mins)
2. Use the printed images to introduce the class to Albania, showing pictures of the capital city, Tirana, and the sunny beaches found on the coast of the country. (5 mins)
3. Explain to students that throughout the country, you will find a type of traditional clothing called the *qeleshe*, which is a felt hat made by traditional felt-workers in the country. The *qeleshe* dates back to Ottoman times and is decorated with symbols of Albania, including the flag that has an eagle on it. Show students images of people wearing the *qeleshe* and closeups of the decorations found on them.
4. Explain the activity to the class (10 mins):
 - a. Each student will receive a Tupperware container to help shape their *qeleshe*. They will also find pre-cut pieces of felt that will help form the top and sides of their cap.
 - b. Using craft glue, students will attach the top of their cap to the sides and can then decorate their caps with the Albanian flag! When the *qeleshe* is dry, they can take it home with them!

