

Pre-Kindergarten Curriculum

Making your own Slovak Dough Animals

20 minutes prep, 30 minutes of class time

This unit is designed to introduce students to the country of Slovakia and the tradition of making animals out of dough (or clay) at the end of the year to bring good things in the new year. Students will learn about the symbolism of each animal and be able to design one of their own.

Required Materials:

1. Individually wrapped model clay
2. Utensils or other tools to create impressions in clay (optional)
3. Paint to decorate once dried (optional)

Preparation: Place a clay packet at each student's seat. Prepare a space for the animals to dry once created. Once dry, students may decorate their animals with paint, but this step is optional!



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 Slovakia is on a map/globe. (2 mins)
2. Use the printed images to introduce the class to Slovakia, showing a picture of the capital city, Bratislava. Take students through a short picture tour of Bratislava, showing them pictures of the old town, colorful buildings, and winter markets. Explain to students that crafting is particularly important in December and January, as people prepare to welcome the new year. Two popular crafts are creating dolls out of corn husks (images provided) and making animals out of a special dough. (3 mins)
3. Tell students that today they will be learning about the dough animals and making their own. Typically, the animal figures would be made out of a special dough made of flour, salt, and water, but today they will be using an easier clay to work with. The original dough is very sticky and hard to work with! Students may choose what animal they create, but we suggest choosing from the following, for all of these animals have a special meaning attached to them: a dove, which symbolizes love and peace; a frog, which brings clean water; or a fish, which reminds us of the importance of silence. These animals are displayed in homes at the end of December and help welcome the new year and bring good luck to their creators! (5 mins)
4. Explain the activity to the class (10 mins):
 - a. First, each student will make their way to their seat, where they will find their package of clay.
 - b. Carefully, they can begin creating their animal. Reference photos will be available in the PowerPoint for students to use as inspiration, but everyone has their own way of making the animals! If you so choose, you can provide students with utensils or other tools to create designs on their animals.
 - c. When they are finished, their animals must be set aside to dry overnight.
 - d. Once they have dried completely, students can decorate their animals with paint (optional).