

Passport to Thailand
By Frantzie Cadet

Title: Passport to Thailand

Grade Level: 4th

Summary:

Many students that I work with are unfamiliar with the Thai Culture with the exception of students of Asian descent. This unit will provide all students with a basic understanding of Thai culture, geography, foods, national symbols, and language. It is meant as a springboard into a deeper study of Thailand. The lessons that I chose, highlight Virginia state and local learning objectives for all fourth grade students. Therefore, lessons may have to be modified to satisfy one's own state guidelines.

This unit also will provide students with concrete learning experiences. My hope is that these learning experiences will allow students to better understand abstract concepts. At the end of this unit, students will have constructed an actual passport with each page dedicated to different topics related to culture, food and language.

Background Knowledge:

Geography

Thailand, roughly the size of Texas, is located in Southeast Asia. This territory which is 198,114 square miles is bordered by Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar to the north. Cambodia and the Gulf of Thailand lay east while Malaysia is to the south. Myanmar and the Indian Ocean can be found on its western boundaries.

Thailand is comprised of four regions: Northern, Northeastern, Central, and Southern Regions. Each section has unique populations, natural resources, geographical features, and social and economic developments.

Northern Region contains dense forests of teak and other economically useful hardwoods. This area also contains numerous rivers, hills valleys, and mountains. The Northern district is the source of most of Thailand's water.

Northeastern District has low rolling hills, poor soil, heavy flooding, a and long dry season. All these elements combined make this area an unattractive region for supporting agriculture.

Central Region is considered "the rice bowl of Asia" because its fertile lowlands and well developed irrigation system supports rice production and the farming of other products. This Chao Phraya River and its tributaries dominate this area.

Southern Region is covered with a rolling, mountainous terrain and does not have any large rivers. Rubber production and rice cultivation is the basis for its economy.

Climate

Thailand is a humid tropical country and is frequented by monsoons. Temperatures can range from 40 degrees Fahrenheit to a high of 100 degrees. There are three main seasons: the cool season (November to February), the hot season (March to May), and the rainy season (June to October).

Government

The Kingdom of Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. There are four branches of government. The King is the Head of State; the Parliament is the legislative branch, followed by the Cabinet who hold executive powers, and the judicial branch which consists of the courts.

The current monarch, His Majesty King Bhumibol, ascended to the throne in 1946 and is the longest reigning Thai monarch. He is the upholder of all religions and helps protect all forms of worship in all Thai communities. He makes numerous contributions to Buddhist and other religious institutions. His Majesty has played a significant force in rural development. His initiatives seek to relieve problems caused by deforestation. These programs include reforestation, improvement of existing farmland, planting of commercial fruit orchards, public service activities which educate the public on the importance of preserving forests and protecting the environment. In the 1990's he introduced the philosophy of the "Sufficiency Economy". This belief encourages individuals to lead a reasonably comfortable life without excess or overindulgence in luxury. His Majesty urges all Thais to practice moderation, self-reliance, honesty and to live their lives with high integrity.

His wife, Queen Sirikit has also worked tirelessly to create programs that encourage employment by teaching people indigenous handicrafts such as basketry, clay figure making, silk weaving, cotton weaving, pottery making, ceramics, and wood carving. She and her family are deeply revered by all Thais. Their pictures can be found on bill boards, restaurants, schools, stamps, currency and homes throughout the country.

Economy

Thais adhere to the principal of free enterprise economic system. However, the government does monitor rice and gasoline prices. Thailand is primarily an agricultural society who boasts producing much of the world's rice. Although rice remains its most important crop, Thailand also produces maize, sugar cane, cassava, rubber, pineapple, longan, orchids, peanuts, tobacco, soybeans, cottonseed, mangoes, durians, and coconuts for export. Thailand also mines tin, iron, lead, gold, tungsten, coal, and precious stones.

Language

The official language spoken in Thailand is called Thai. It is spoken by 100 percent of the people although other tongues such as Chinese and Malay are unusually spoken by ethnic groups. English is a mandatory language taught in all schools. In most Thai cities especially Bangkok, English is understood.

Linguists believe that Thai belongs to a Chinese-Thai branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. It is a tonal language that is monosyllabic. However, many of the polysyllabic words are borrowed from other languages such as Khmer.

The Thai alphabet has forty-four consonants and twenty-eight consonant sounds. There are thirty-two vowels with four intonation symbols, including diphthongs, triphthongs, longs and short vowels.

There aren't any capital letters and punctuation in Thai. However, a writer may elect to allow breaks between words. Finally, Thai writing and reading are from left to right.

Education

In the early period of Thai society, only the elite and the royal family were allowed to be educated. However, Thai education system was reformed by King Rama V. He is credited with establishing the first public schools, opening up language institutes, producing textbooks, and creating a Ministry of Education to supervise reforms. Today Thailand continues to reform its educational system and provide quality schools for its 14.7 million students. As to date, there are twenty four state universities, fifty seven private institutions, and forty one teacher training colleges.

Day #1 Visualization of Thailand

Time allotment: 30 minutes

Materials: Construction paper, crayons, colored pencils and a picture which depicts a Thai landscape.. You might want to make a recording of your description so that students who need to hear it again may do so.

Standards:

- Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas
- Students understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art
- Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum
- Students understand the physical and human characteristics of places.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the geography of Thailand.
- Locate Thailand and bordering countries.
- Describe the basic features of Thailand's climate.

Essential Questions:

- How does Thai's climate affect its landscape or vegetation?
- Where is Thailand?
- What is the difference between climate and weather?

Procedure:

1. Find a picture which depicts a Thai landscape.
2. Do not show it to the students but, describe it in great detail to your students. Remember to be as specific as possible. Then, have students draw a picture of what they visualized in their mind's eye. Try not to reveal the country's name or location.
3. Next, lead a discussion that encourages students to understand the difference between weather and climate.
4. Ask students to explain what type of climate might be found in your mystery country. After they have made some guesses, reveal the country.
5. Locate it on the map. Remember it is important that students' can distinguish between a country's weather and its climate.

This will be the first page in the students' passport.

Follow up activity-Using books, the internet, and reference materials, encourage students to locate a landscape picture of Thailand. Then students should write a descriptive paragraph and exchange their work with a peer. The other student will draw a picture to match the paragraph. Afterwards, they should match their picture to the original photograph.

Day #2 Product Map

Time allotment: 45 minutes

Note that at the commencement of each lesson, students should greet each in Thai. A website containing Thai words can be found at the end of this unit

Material: A map of Southeast Asia for each student, a globe & world map

Standard:

- Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data
- Understand the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface.
- Estimate distances and calculate scale

Objectives:

- Locate and identify water and land features important to the history of Thailand.
- Identify many of the plants and animals that live in Thailand and explain the relationship between Thai's climate and its plants.

Essential Questions:

- What countries border Thailand?
- How far is Thailand from your hometown?
- What types of landforms can be found in Thailand?
- What types of bodies of water can be found in and around Thailand?

Procedure:

1. Students will examine a map of Thailand.
2. Highlight the country's capital, neighboring countries, and its land and water features.
3. Have students calculate the distance needed to travel from their state to Thailand.
4. Explain the changes in time zones too.

This map will be page 2 in their passport.

Follow up activity-Give each student a map of their own state. Students should locate its capital, bordering states, landform(s), water feature(s), and discuss the various time zones found in the United States.

Students could also track their local daily temperature and Thai daily weather. At the end of one week, students should create a double bar graph to compare weather patterns.

Day #3 What's the weather like in Thailand?

Time allotment: 45 minutes

Standard:

- Students will develop the ability necessary to do scientific inquiry.
- Students will develop the ability to distinguish between natural objects and objects made by humans.

Objective:

- Interpreting data by comparing and contrasting Virginia's and Thai's weather patterns.
- Comparing and contrasting products grown in Thai and in Virginia.
- Understanding the difference between climate and weather.

Essential Questions:

- What types of products are grown and produced in Thailand?
- How different is Thai's climate to my Virginia's?
- How does climate affect agriculture?

Procedure:

1. Display laminated pictures of the various products produced in Thailand.
2. Students will then place each product in the area(s) in which they are produced.
3. Encourage students to create a legend.

Follow up activity-Students should make a product map of their own state.

Day#4 Writing your name in Thai.

Time allotment: 40 minutes

Materials: A photocopy of the Thai alphabet. (A website address has been provided for you. It's at the end of this unit.)

Standard:

Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

Objectives:

Students will learn about the differences between languages.

Essential Question:

How different is Thai's alphabet to my own?

Procedure:

1. Provide students with a photocopy of the Thai alphabet.
2. Have students trace each letter.
3. Next students will write their name in Thai.

This exercise will be placed on page 3 in their passport.

Follow up activity - Students write the numbers 0-9 in Thai.

Day #5 Lifestyle of a Thai Pupil

Time allotment: 45 minutes

Standard:

Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Objectives:

- Students will compare their lifestyles to their peers in other societies.

Essential Questions:

- What is a typical day for a Thai student?
- What do students in Thai learn?

Procedures:

1. Using pictures and books to discuss with students the life of a typical Thai student.
2. Students will then create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast their experience as an American child to that of their peers in Thailand.

This graph will be page 4 in their passport.

Follow up activity -Students write each comparison in paragraphs forms.

Day #6 A Thai Folktale

Time allotment: 50 minutes

Standards:

- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Objectives:

- Students will enjoy a Thai folktale.

Essential Questions:

- What are folktales?
- How unique are Thai folktales?

Procedures:

1. Brainstorm with students their definition of a folktale.
2. Define the elements of a folktale.
3. Following the tradition of oral history, recount a Thai folktale to students.
4. Students will make a comic strip which retells the story.

This retelling will be the 5th page.

Follow up activity - Dramatic interpretation - Students create puppets of the characters and use the puppets in a dramatic retell of the tale.

Day #7 The Royal Family

Time allotment 60 minutes

Standard:

- Give examples and explain how governments attempt to achieve their stated ideals at home and abroad.
- **Students understand the basic values, principles, and operation of various forms of government.**

Objective:

- List the contribution of contemporary individuals to Thai's well-being

Essential Questions:

- What is the importance of political leadership and public service?
- What role does the Royal family play in Thailand?
- Why do the Thai people love the royal family so much?

Procedure:

1. Explain to students the impact of the Royal family on Thai society.
2. Highlight the various Royal Initiatives instituted by the family in the various towns and cities.
3. Next students will design a "stamp" to honor the royal family.

This artwork will be the 6th page.

Follow up activity-Students write a descriptive paragraph of their hero.

Day #8 Thai cooking and dancing

Time allotment: 60 minutes

Standard:

- Students identify by genre or style aural examples of music from various historical periods and cultures
- Students describe in simple terms how elements of music are used in music examples from various cultures of the world.
- Apply appropriate techniques, tools, and formulas to determine measurements

Objectives:

Students will cook a Thai meal.

Students will view a Thai traditional dance.

Students will listen to traditional Thai music.

Essential Questions:

- What does Thai food taste like?
- How unique is Thai dancing?

Procedure:

As a culminating activity cook Pad Thai with the class and invite local dancers to perform. If dancers cannot be found have students listen to Thai music when they begin eating their meal. Afterwards, students should view a video of traditional Thai dances.

PAD THAI

- 6 oz flat rice noodles
- 2 fl oz groundnut oil
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ tsp dried chili flakes
- about ½ lb raw prawns, squid or scallops
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2-3 tbsps Thai fish sauce
- 2-3 tbsps tamarind water
- 1 tbsp palm sugar or light muscovado
- 1 tbsp dried shrimps, coarsely chopped
- ½ tbsp Thai pickled radish
- 4 hpd tbsps roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped
- 4 spring onions cut in 2" shreds
- 2 oz fresh bean sprouts
- 2 tbsps roughly chopped coriander

Instructions...

1. Soak the noodles in cold water for an hour then drain and set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a wok over a high heat. Add the garlic, chili flakes and prawns and stir fry for 2-3 minutes until the prawns are just cooked.
3. Pour in the beaten eggs and stir fry for a few seconds, until they just start to look scrambled.
4. Lower the heat and add the noodles, fish sauce, tamarind and sugar and toss together for 1-2 minutes until the noodles are tender.
5. Add the dried shrimps, pickled radish, half the peanuts, half the bean sprouts, half the spring onions and all the coriander and toss for another minute

6. Serve sprinkled with the remaining peanuts, spring onions and bean sprouts

Final page in passport should include a photo of the student enjoying food and the fine arts of Thailand.

Follow up activity – Teach students a simple Thai dance.

Assessment

The passport that students complete will be the final form of evaluation of the unit. Students can also write a letter to their parents describing what they learned about Thailand. All letters should be mailed home.

Additional Resources

Breath of the Dragon by Gail Giles, New York: August House, 1998.

Thai Tales by Supaporn Vathaprida, Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1994.

Cooking the Thai Way, by Supenn Harrison, Minneapolis: Learner Publications, 1986.

Magic Lotus by H.H. Prince Prem Purachatatra, Thailand: Kurusapa Ladprao Press, 2000.

Thailand by Kristin Thoennes, Mankato, Minnesota: Bridgestone Books, 1999.

Thailand by Alex Ericson, Minneapolis: The Child's World, 2002.

Southeast Asia by Jonathan Rigg, Austin, Texas: Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishers, 1995.

Helpful websites

Learn how to say words in Thai:

<http://www.travlang.com/languages/>

(Then be sure to click on the word "Thai")

Find recipes for many different Thai dishes:

<http://www.tat.or.th/food/index.htm>

To find pictures of fruits in Thailand:

<http://www.hotelthailand.com/thailand/fruits.html>

Information on the Royal Family:

<http://welcome-to.chiangmai-chiangrai.com/01royalfamily.htm>

Information on agriculture and much more:

<http://countrystudies.us/>

Thai Dancing

CD entitled Festivals of Thailand by the Ministry of Culture, Thailand.

Thai Alphabet

http://www.fedu.uec.ac.jp/Zz_Thai/thai

http://www.fact-index.com/t/th/thai_alphabet

References

Thailand in Brief 2004 by Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Thailand: NESDB Welfare Fund, 2004.

Thailand by Alex Ericson, Minneapolis: The Child's World, 2002.

Information on Thailand and Thai Culture prepared by the Ministry of Culture Thailand

ABC Country Book of Thailand

http://www.theodora.com/wfb/thailand_geography.html

Welcome to Thailand

<http://www.asiatour.com/thailand/content1.htm>