These lessons are designed for first graders using the Standard Course of Study in North Carolina. It may be adapted to any grade level.

Christmas in the Appalachian Mountains

4 days for Art and 4 days for classroom study and field trip

Content Areas covered and NCSCS Goals

Social Studies

3.02 Describe past and present changes within local community

4.04 Trace the historical foundations of traditions of various neighborhoods and communities

5.02 Investigate key features of maps.

5.06 Compare and contrast geographic features of places within various communities.

6.07 Recognize that all families produce and consume goods and services.

Science

1.01 Investigate the needs of a variety of different plants: air, water, light, and space

1.04 Identify local environments that support the needs of common NC plants and animals.

Reading

2.03 Read and comprehend both fiction and nonfiction text appropriate for grade one using prior knowledge, summary, questions, and graphic organizers.

Writing

4.06 Compose a variety of products (letters)

Art

2.01-Become familiar with additional basic art media, techniques and processes which may include: fibers – papermaking and paper weaving.

7.01 Uses reading, writing and math in the creation of art.

8.01 Recognize the difference between manmade objects and natural objects.
Content/Cognitive Goals or Lesson Objective(s):

The learner will:

- decorate and write on a typed letter that will be attached to a Christmas Tree at a local tree farm
- be introduced to the Christmas tree farming industry of the Appalachian region
- read The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree written by an Appalachian author about life in the southern Appalachians. Point out the landscape in the book, and how others in the past would get a tree for Christmas
- compare the landscape with pictures taken off of the Blue Ridge Parkway
- create a traditional Appalachia ornament that will be attached with the letter that is put on the tree for other regions to receive
- be introduced to fiber arts as one of the rich roots of Appalachian crafts
- create handmade paper ornament from recycled paper and natural plant life
- compare/contrast handmade materials to man-made materials
- participate in a community service

Guiding Questions

- Why do we have Christmas Trees at Christmas?
- Does anyone know of someone that grows Christmas Trees?
- Why are there so many Christmas Trees in our area?
- Do the mountains help Christmas Trees grow?
- What are some traditional ornaments that originated in the Appalachian Mountains?
- Where do Christmas Trees go after they are cut?

Assessment

- Students will be assessed by doing a Story Map on The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree. They will create a story in their journal about their experience on the tree farm, why trees grow local, and compare the Blue Ridge Parkway pictures with the ones in the book. They will add to their story by sharing how they chose their tree and how it is similar/different to people in the past. They will create an ornament that originated in our area. Students will be assessed by the product they create, as well as, through informal discussions and oral questions posed to both class and individual (such as: What steps did you take to make paper? What materials did we use? Why is this important? What did you write in your letter? Why are we making ornaments? What is the importance of recycling? Etc.)
- Portfolios will also be kept on each student in order to monitor progress through out the year
Learning Connections

Brainstorm things and places they have been on the Blue Ridge Parkway prior to visiting the Tree Farm. Discuss the landscape of our area. Explain that trees are transported to other places as they are decorating their letter. Discuss customs of the mountains.

Lesson Procedure:

- The teacher will begin a discussion of Christmas Tree Farms in our area. We will discuss where trees grow, customs native to the mountain region, and where the trees go.
- Students will decorate on a pre-made letter asking buyers of their tree to write a letter letting the student know where the tree went to.
- Students will observe the Appalachian mountain chain and map the course of two significant attributes of the landscape: the Blue Ridge Parkway and Christmas tree farming.
- The teacher will guide the students in a PowerPoint presentation, focusing on images of the natural Appalachian landscape.
- The teacher will give several examples of traditional crafting in the Appalachians that are created by hand using natural, local materials (plant fibers), including spinning/weaving fabrics, basket weaving, and handmade paper.
- Teacher will give a demonstration for a pouring method of papermaking using natural plants that have been boiled down into a soft fiber.
- Students will collect recycled paper throughout the school and prepare it by sorting by color and tearing them into small pieces.
- Teacher will assist students in preparing the pulp with a blender, adding natural plants located on-site.
- Students will work as a team to create individual pieces of paper pulp poured into shaped cookie cutters.
- Students will participate in a field trip to the Christmas tree farm, where they will attach their letter/ornament to a tree. They will also visit and feast at Daniel Boone Inn to gain knowledge of “mountain dishes.”
- Students will have a traditional Appalachian story read to them. Students will discuss the story and try to explain natural occurrences, symbols that are universal to many folktales around the world, and the landscape of the southern Appalachians.
- Students will then discuss with the teacher the style of art used in the book. What types of materials are used, how the landscape is shown, and identify common plant-life and other natural resources.
- Students will share & reply to any correspondence that may result from their original letters.
Special Considerations:

Students will participate in an on-going learning of the culture of the Appalachian Mountains and may do activities such as:

- Visit Price Park and learn about different organisms
- Visit Flat Top Manor and compare past and present
- Be exposed to several attractions on the Blue Ridge Parkway
- Discuss the unique qualities of the Blue Ridge Parkway and how it is a ridge top road
- Other books to be read are: *When I was Young in the Mountains* by ; *The Rag Coat* by Lauren Mills; *Silver Packages* by Cynthia Rylant

Students will participate in follow up art activities, such as:

- landscape paintings, textile and farming industries on North Carolina
- denim & apple farming of Moses Cone, with a field trip to Flat Top Manor
- additional southern Appalachian crafting that has shaped their cultural surroundings