

Curriculum Title: "The Mythical Mexican Axolotl"

Time: 60min minutes Ages/Group: 5-13 Lesson Number: 4 Theme: Nature

<p>GOALS/OBJECTIVES</p>	<p>-Students will create an understanding of the significance of the Axolotl -Students will learn about the origins of the Axolotl -Students will learn about the Environmental Injustice that the Axolotls face in the home (Mexico City)</p>
<p>How do these goals preserve, create, present or promote cultural arts of Mexican Americans or other Latinx cultures? Is it socially relevant? Will your lesson address the 5 E's? (Engage, explore, explain, elaborate-extend, evaluate)</p>	<p>Besides carrying a mythological background, The axolotl is a native salamander exclusively found in the swampy remnants of Lake Xochimilco in Mexico City where this creates an understanding of the environmental injustice that occurs there. Not only will the students create ways in which they can help, but also ways of understanding why this continues to happen in Mexico City.</p>

AGENDA

TIME

<p>Introduction if Instructor/Activity: "The Mythological Mexican Axolotl": (https://youtu.be/EztxFFm604)</p>	<p>7min</p>
<p><u>Check-In/Opening Ritual:</u> Zoom expectations/etiquette After the <i>Introduction Video</i> is show,</p>	<p>5-10min</p>

Core Activity: "Axolotl Boat Activity"

1. Pass out one cardstock paper for each student followed with one foam paper.
2. Allow the students to choose which axolotl template they would like to use.
3. Instruct the students to cut out and trace the template onto the foam paper ***(optional) Use tape to hold down the template when tracing**
4. Now using a straw or two, cut one straw in half and cut out two smaller pieces of straw the same size but smaller than the half straw.
5. Space out and tape (or hot glue) the straws underneath the foam-paper axolotl. Trim the straws as needed. Each Axolotl should use at least two pieces of straw to be able to float on top of the water.
6. Give the students the option of drawing their axolotl's eyes or use googly-eyes.
7. Now for the external gills you will need to cut two small slits spaced apart between the top of the head and neck. Adjust the slit size as needed. ***For template #3 the external gills are already drawn on, So those students can skip steps 7 and 8, or they may hot-glue pipe cleaners where the external gills are drawn.**
8. Slide three pipe cleaners evenly through the slits. Now bend both ends of the pipe cleaners in a zig-zag formation to create fluffy gills. Trim as needed.
9. Now finish decorating the top of the axolotl using markers, paint, glitter etc.
10. After decoration is complete now it's time for the 'Axolotl Boat Activity'.
11. Begin by breaking the students into groups of 3 or 5 depending on class size.
12. Each group should get one bucket filled up more than halfway of water
13. Now pass out coins to each group and instruct the students to place their axolotl (one at a time) on the top of the water.
14. Now place one coin at a time on the axolotl before it floats. Keep count of how many coins were used. Now it's the next students turn. **(Optional) Hold a contest to see who's axolotl holds up the most amount of coins in each group and the winners from each group can come to one bucket.*
15. Clean-Up
16. Discussion Questions
17. Close-out activity

35-45min

Discussion Questions:

Where does the Axolotl come from? (*Mexico City*)

What are some of the problems that Axolotl's faces in its natural environment? (*Lake Xochimilco (Population(people), Run-off from waste, New predators, pollution)*)

What makes the Axolotl different from other salamanders? (*Regeneration ability, Exclusively from Mexico City, Permanently live in water, Named after an Aztec God*)

What do you think are some ways we can help save the Axolotl? (*Recycle, Spread awareness, Volunteer, Raise some Axolotl as pets*)

Vocabulary:

Spanish/Nahuatl Terms

Ajolote (Ahh-Ho-Loh-Teh): *Axolotl in spanish*

Xochimilco (Soo-Chee-Mil-Cole)

Xolotl (Sholo)

Quetzalcoatl (KET-SAL-KO-AH-TL)

Ambystoma mexicanum: Scientific name for the Axolotl

Check-Out/Closing Ritual:

“Goats in the Grass”

Instruct the students that they have to say an animal and a place using the alphabet. Start with the letter A. Example: There are ‘Ants’ in ‘Antarctica’.

PLANNING

REFLECTION

- Foam Paper (different colors)
- Card stock
- Straws
- Tape (Scotch/Duck/AV)
- Scissors
- Markers
- Paint (optional)
- Pipe Cleaners
- Googly Eyes (optional)
- Glue (Hot Glue Gun preferably)
- Coins (Quarters, nickels, dimes etc.)
- Bucket
- Water
- Rag (Wash towel, napkins, anything to dry up water)

Challenges/Successes/Notes for Coordinator:

References:

Work Cited:

Sartore, Joel, “Axolotl” *National Geographic Photo Ark*, 2016, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/amphibians/a/axolotl/>

Rehm, Jeremy, “Axolotls: The Adorable, Giant Salamanders of Mexico.” *LiveScience*, September 19, 2019, <https://www.livescience.com/axolotl-facts.html>,

Anaya, Edgar, “The Mythical Mexican Axolotl”, *Voices of Mexico*, Ecology, Revistascisan (<http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices/pdfs/4220.pdf>)

Youtube: ***“Axolotl Facts: they’re Peter Pan salamanders | Animal Fact Files”***

Youtube: ***“Axolotls Have The Cutest Yawns| The Dodo”***

Supplemental Materials:

Aztec Mythological Background on The Axolotl by Edgar Anaya:

This bactrachian's very name, from the Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, takes us immediately back to the Mesoamerican world where the axolotl was not only important; it was fundamental.

The name has been translated in different ways: "water game", "water dog", "master of the waters" among others. But the most commonly accepted translation is "monster of the waters." The Aztecs believed that the axolotl was the transfiguration of the famous god Quetzalcóatl's ("KET-SAL-KO-AH-TL's") twin, Xólotl ("Sholo"), who, to avoid being sacrificed, threw himself into the water to metamorphose into an aquatic animal: The Axolotl. It is said that when the Aztecs came to the Valley of Mexico, after several attempts at settling on the banks of the great lake system (Lake Xochimilco ("Soo-Chee-Mil-Cole")) that then existed there, they were finally forced to settle on the water, on islands. According to the chronicles, they suffered great hardships as they began to gather the building materials they needed, exchanging them for products they collected in the lagoon, among them the axolotl. No one could have imagined that we would owe the founding of Mexico City, even if only figuratively and partially, to the axolotl.

A nutritious, easy to obtain, tasty food, a delicacy for the powerful and commoner alike, it became indispensable in the diet of the inhabitants of the Mexico basin, based on aquatic agricultural products.

When the Spaniards arrived in the sixteenth century, they also took note of the axolotl. Missionary Friar Bernardino de Sahagún said of it, "There are some little animals in the water called axolotl. They have feet and hands like lizards, a tail and body like an eel; they have a very wide mouth and barbs on the neck. They are very good eating, food for lords."

-Edgar Anaya

I strongly recommend getting the book "Spike, the Mixed-up Monster" by Susan Hood. This is a great story to incorporate into the 'Check-In/Opening Ritual' section of this lesson plan by reading this book to the class.

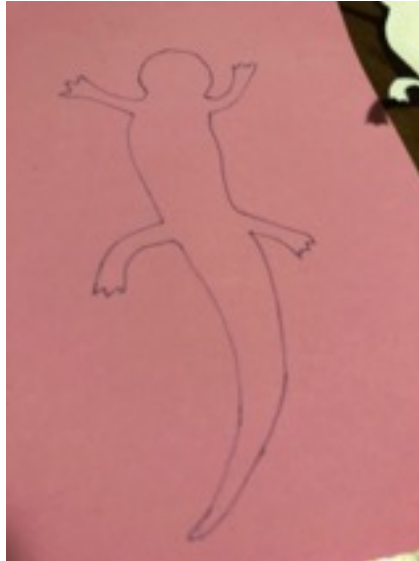


Axolotl Boat Activity Step-by-Step Process (in pictures) BELOW:

Step 1: Choose your Axolotl template and cut it out.



Step 2: Now trace it onto a piece of foam paper and cut out.



Step 3: For the external gills you can either cut 6 small strips from a pipe cleaner and hot-glue 3 pieces to each side of the axolotl's neck; followed by bending the pipe cleaners in a zig-zag fashion. OR you can cut two small slits on the neck of the axolotl and insert three pipe cleaners through the slit evenly as shown below.



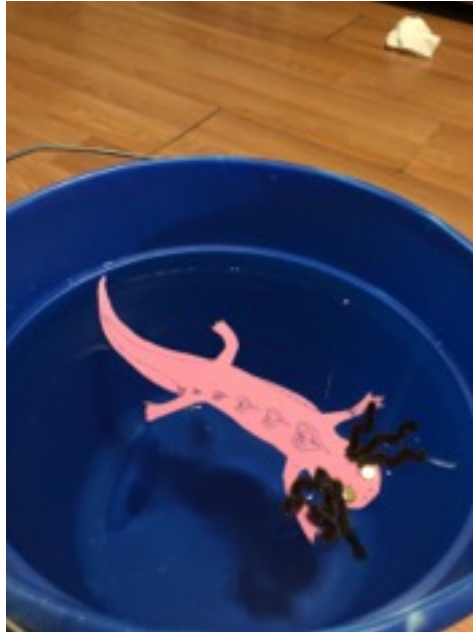
Step 3: Using one or more straws, cut the straw into halves and either tape or hot glue onto the bottom of the foam-paper axolotl. The more straws the better, for this will help your axolotl float.



Step 4: Decorate your axolotl using markers, paint, glitter, stickers, etc. Use googly-eyes or draw the facial features using a marker.



Step 5: Fill your bucket with water and gently place your axolotl onto the top of the water. (One at a time)



Step 6: Now count as you slowly place coins on top of the Axolotl until it submerges into the water.

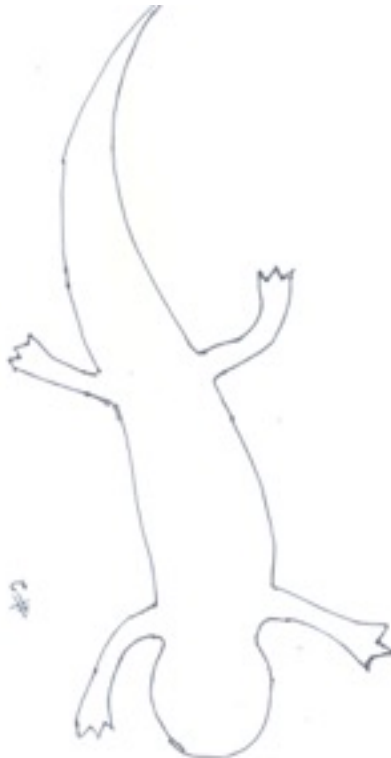


AXOLOTL TEMPLATES BELOW

Axolotl Template #1:



Axolotl Template #2



Axolotl Template #3:

