SĀMOA:
MAKING SIAPO TAPA CLOTH

Teacher notes

Context:
- Cuisine
- Seasons

Learning Areas:
- Visual Arts
- Social Studies;
- Mathematics and Statistics.

New Zealand Curriculum Objectives:

Visual Arts
Students will:
Understanding the Visual Arts in Context
Level 2: Share ideas about how and why their own and others' works are made and their purpose, value, and context;
Level 3: Investigate the purpose of objects and images from past and present cultures and identify the contexts in which they were or are made, viewed, and valued.

Developing Practical Knowledge
Level 2: Explore a variety of materials and tools and discover elements and selected principles;
Level 3: Explore and use art-making conventions, applying knowledge of elements and selected principles through the use of materials and processes.

Developing Ideas
Level 2: Investigate and develop visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination;
Level 3: Develop and revisit visual ideas, in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination, supported by the study of artists' works.

Communicating and Interpreting
Level 2: Share the ideas, feelings, and stories communicated by their own and others' objects and images;
Level 3: Explore and describe ways in which meanings can be communicated and interpreted in their own and others' work.

Social Studies
Level 2: Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs,
traditions and values;
**Level 3:** Understand how the movement of people affects cultural diversity and interaction in New Zealand.

- **Mathematics and Statistics**
  - **Geometry and Measurement**
  - **Level 2:** Predict and communicate the results of translations, reflections, and rotations on plane shapes;
  - **Level 3:** Describe the transformations (reflection, rotation, translation, or enlargement) that have mapped one object onto another.

**Key competencies:**
- **Using Language**
- **Symbols and Texts**
- **Participating and Contributing**
Introduction
This unit plan explores the traditional Sāmoan art of making siapo. It explores several methods of production that are suitable for the classroom, depending on what objectives need to be covered and what resources are available.

Siapo is the Sāmoan name for tapa or bark cloth made in the islands of Sāmoa and many of the islands of the Pacific. It is made from the bark of the paper mulberry tree, *Broussonetia papyrifera*. Tapa is decorated by stencilling, stamping, rubbing, dyeing or even smoking.

Siapo are usually made in a grid of squares where stylised pictures are repeated to make a pattern. They usually depict elements of nature including flowers and leaves, animals and fish. Traditionally they are made using brown and black dyes, but other colours are used in some modern versions.

Captain Cook first traded tapa cloth for other goods in the Pacific and introduced them to the rest of the world. Siapo are used as room dividers, wall decorations, blankets and burial shrouds as well as to make clothing (especially for formal occasions).

Suggested prior knowledge
There is no necessary prior knowledge for this unit but it would link well with Sāmoan Language Week or as part of another cultural celebration that is relevant to your school. Some working knowledge of 2D shapes, rotation and reflection.

Links to school journals
*A Vanishing Art and Tomorrow’s Tapa*, Connected Level 3, 2007
This article explores how to make tapa cloth, using modern methods. The author uses trial and error to find the best kind of paper and the best way of making different dyes and paints.

A maths activity using traditional Māori patterns and fitting shapes together into tessellations. Figure It Out, Level 2 Geometry – *Tricky Triangles*.
https://nzmaths.co.nz/sites/default/files/TrickyTriangles.pdf

Some other MOE Sāmoan resources:
An adaptation of the story of the *Enormous Turnip* about pulling up a taro.

*Making the Team*, School Journal, Part 1 Number 2, 2011
A girl needs to eat healthily and get fit to get into the rugby team.

*White Sunday in Samoa*, Ready to Read Turquoise, Learning Media 2003

Weblinks
Fatu Feu’u and Michael Tuffery
https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/2315

Islandize
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BP1bZjQmRo&list=PLv7PGC1golIQlORIVJnwCADnsWffH2GeHQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kizLEb6fc
SĀMOA: MAKING SIAPO TAPA CLOTH

Teacher Notes

Downloads from Garden to Table Resources Portal

- MBIE Samoan language week poster – includes greetings and kitchen words
- Country factfile

Links to other GTT lesson plans

- Diwali – this lesson links nicely to the Diwali lesson plan which follows a similar process but with a different outcome. You may wish to link them in some way, such as celebrating the different cultures of our classroom, school or country.
The Lesson

Show your class lots of pictures of siapo, including various levels of complexity. https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/topic/2315 Point out the main features, the repeating shapes, the stylised pictures, the rotation, reflection and symmetry, as well as the traditional colours and grid format. How many of your students have seen siapo before. Do any of them have one at home? They have different names throughout the Pacific. Does anyone use a different name for them?

Show students pictures of the production process of to u’a – the canvas for traditional siapo. There are step-by-step photos and explanations at http://www.siapo.com/bark-cloth.html

Explain to the class that there are two types of siapo with different methods of production:

- Siapo mamanu is painted freehand onto the bark cloth.
- Siapo ‘elei is printed or rubbed onto the bark cloth.

Making siapo ‘elei – printmaking with polystyrene

Practice your designs: study the pictures of siapo and write a list of the various repeated pictures. What are they depicting? Make the link to nature. Get students to practice drawing stylised shapes of leaves, flowers, turtles, shells, fish, nets and birds – perhaps they could include taro leaves and bananas to link to the GTT gardening suggestions?

Prepare your design: Use squares of paper to practice drawing various designs that you will print. Choose your best two.

Draw your designs: Explain to students that they will be printing in relief, so that where they draw a line on the polystyrene, that part will remain white on their print and the undrawn parts of their polystyrene will pick up the ink and be coloured on their final design. Using one square of polystyrene draw your design outline using a biro. Ask students not to colour in their design but just draw the outline using the biro. Repeat using your second design.

View the ‘Elei Process on www.siapo.com before you print.

Printing your designs: Using a lino printing roller and printing ink, roll ink to cover your polystyrene square. Turn over and press onto brown paper or a colour of your choice to make your print in space A. Re-ink and repeat in space C. Using the same colour or a different one, ink your second design and print into space B and D.

Depending on your colour choices you can embellish the printed designs using black permanent marker.

If polystyrene squares are not available (clean meat trays from some supermarkets work fine) you could glue string and cardboard patterns onto stiff card to make your prints from.
Making siapo 2 – drawing and dyeing
Practice your designs: study the pictures of siapo and write a list of the various repeated pictures. What are they depicting? Make the link to nature. This link describes the meaning of many of the siapo symbols: [http://www.siapo.com/design-elements.html](http://www.siapo.com/design-elements.html)
Compare the symbols to the art of Fetu Feu'u. See weblinks below. Get students to practice drawing stylised shapes of turtles, leaves, flowers, fish, nets and birds.

Prepare your paper: Fold your paper square into halves horizontally and vertically to make four squares. Unfold and fold the paper diagonally in half in both directions to make 4 triangles. These folds will help create the symmetry and repetition of shapes.

**Fold your paper to give symmetry in your design.**

Draw your designs: Choose your favourite designs or shapes. Decide how you will arrange them on your paper. Draw the outline of your shapes on your paper and fill in with pattern. Make sure your crayon marks are thick with wax.

**Draw your outlines with thick crayon and fill in spaces with pattern.**

Distressing your design: When your design is complete, screw up your paper into a tight ball. Undo and repeat until your paper is wrinkled and pliable. Flatten out your paper and paint with Indian ink or dye. Allow to dry.
Screw up your paper to wrinkle like barkcloth. Unfold.

Wash with brown dye.

Options:

Are you using traditional colours of brown and black or are you making a modern version? If you are using traditional colours you could use brown paper and draw with black permanent marker, using brown paint or dye to fill in spaces, or put out a variety of shades of brown crayon and dye using Indian ink or black dye. If you choose a modern version, the colour palette is up to you.

Permanent marker on brown paper. Edges torn to resemble bark cloth.
You could experiment with natural dyes to make your siapo. You could use tea bags or onion skins to make the background colour. What else in your vegetable garden or school environment might be suitable to make dyes?

You can make a class siapo for display by joining each square together in a patchwork formation. You may wish to restrict the patterns used or insist that each student includes one square depicting, for example, the stylised 4-petal frangipani flower to give a sense of unity throughout.

Make new symbols that represent the lives of your students in a similar stylised way. Can you use Garden to Table elements in your designs? If you choose to do this, your Programme Coordinator would LOVE to see it!

You could use this unit to explore another theme relevant to your class. It could be symbols of sport, characters from a myth or legend you have been reading, things that your students are good at or that represents their home culture.

Could you print onto fabric to make a longer-lasting version? You could choose to do both so that students have something to take home and something collaborative to display at school.

If you wanted to extend the print making process you could use this unit as a lead in to lino cutting.

Share and celebrate your creations.

Use the YouTube channel Islandize to follow Laki and Lani and learn some Sāmoan language – e.g. greetings and kitchen words
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPJbmZj9mRo&list=PLv7PGCI9oI0L0R1VJnwCAdnsWfH2GeHQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74kizLEb6tc

Early finishers could complete the country factfile for Sāmoa. They will need books or weblinks to research Sāmoan culture and history. These can be completed as part of other GTT units, e.g. Diwali, Potatoes, Feijoas and used as a source for comparison of the cultures around the world.

Learning Goal: I am learning to make my own siapo patterns.
Success Criteria: I can use 2D shapes to make a pattern;
I can make a design using reflection;
I can make a design using rotation.

Extending the task

Maths: Use simple siapo patterns to explore symmetry, reflection and rotation.

You could visit http://www.wicked.org.nz/Interactives/Pasifica/Pasifica-Patterns to explore symmetry and then create your own siapo pattern to print.

Compare and contrast the artwork of New Zealand artists Dame Robin White, Michael Tuffery and Fatu Feu'u in the Te Papa digital art collections https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz

There is a variety of works of art by these artists of varying complexity but there is a lot of repetition of shape and colour that is useful for a comparison study. You could use a Venn diagram to show your ideas.
SĀMOA: MAKING SIAPO TAPA CLOTH
Teacher Notes

There is a great summary of Sāmoan history, culture and art, including profiles of some other Sāmoan artists at https://www.pataka.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/SAMOA_CONTEMPORARY_teacher_notes-11.pdf

Compare the tapa cloths of all of the Pacific nations. They all have different names, symbols and there are various ways of printing them. There is a great unit on Fijian masi at https://www.pataka.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Fijian_Masi_Teachers_Notes_pdf_2-11.pdf to start you off.

Listen to the Radio New Zealand article about making Māori tapa cloth or aute. http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/nz-society/20151120

Investigate other ways of making paper around the world. Have a go at making your own using recycled materials. Can you include some elements from your GTT garden?

Homework tasks

Make a factfile about Sāmoa: using the download sheet as a starting point, include a map, population size, food, religions, festivals, population and culture. You could follow this up with a student peer- or self-assessment task about being critical of sources on the internet, why the information is all different and how to extract relevant facts.

Write a travel diary or ship’s log of life as an early European explorer arriving in Sāmoa. What do you see? How is life different from what you are used to?

Make maps showing which countries were ‘owned’ or colonised by other countries. Colour-code them. Reflect upon the concept of ‘owning’ a country.


Study the work of anthropologist Margaret Mead.

Research coastal erosion and sea level rise in the Pacific. What impact will it have? What can we do about it?