

LIBERIA

Lessons for Mission Minded Kids

Lesson 7

Liberian Holidays



Liberia

Lesson 7: Liberian Holidays

Goals for Lesson 7:

- Students will compare the holidays they are familiar with to holidays celebrated in Liberia.
- Students will be reminded of the importance of personal and national independence.
- Many students will be able to recite or sing Psalm 25:4-5 from memory.

Verse for Liberia:

“Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.” Psalm 25: 4-5

Before Class:

- Read through lesson and decide how you will use the material, according to your age group and time allotted.
- Prepare the picture on the cover as a power point slide, or print it and back it with cardstock for stability.
- Read through the procedure for making a mancala game and familiarize yourself with the rules of the game. Make a copy of the rules for each student to take home. Gather one egg carton for each child, two small round plastic containers with lids for each child, and 48 marbles, small stones, or beans for each child. Gather markers or paint supplies as needed. If you will use paint, make arrangements for allowing the paint to dry, and getting the finished project home afterwards.
- If you will use the Prayer Walk, Prayer Balloons or Mamba activities, prepare your room or materials accordingly.
- Make copies of the coloring page if you will use it.

Lesson Plan:

- Open your time together with a welcome, announcements and a brief prayer. (5 min.)
- Turn the large verse poster around and see how many students can sing it or recite it perfectly from memory. You might consider a small prize or reward for those who can. Sing it in unison as a class and discuss it briefly. (5-8 min.)
- Read or tell the story part of the lesson, showing the picture as indicated. Spend some time discussing the concept of independence, both on a personal level and nationally. (15-20 min.)
- Set out the materials for the mancala craft on tables and supervise as necessary. Explain that mancala is a very popular game in Liberia and many other African nations. Children often hollow out little rows of dips in the ground, and use small pebbles for the playing pieces. Tell students that they will be making their own games today to take home and play with a parent, sibling or friend.
 - If you are using markers to decorate your games, allow time for students to divide into pairs and learn to play the game they just created. (30-40 min.)
 - If you are using paints to decorate your mancala games, set the painted items aside to dry and plan to do the Prayer Walk activity from Lesson 2, or the Prayer Balloons activity or the Mamba game from Lesson 4. (30-40 min.-alternate)
- If you have not used the Prayer Walk or Prayer Balloons game today, gather everyone together in a circle and pray together for the children of Liberia, especially those who are still suffering from the effects of the war. Pray that they would find joy and find the opportunity to play fun games together and enjoy being children. (5 min.)
- Use the coloring page as a dismissal activity if needed. (5 min.)

Story for Lesson 7: Liberian Holidays

What are some of your favorite holidays? Do you think they celebrate those same holidays in Liberia? Much like many other things in America, the Americo-Liberians celebrate similar holidays. Why do you think the holidays are similar? That's right, because the Americo-Liberians' ancestors had lived in America and took the American customs they were familiar with over to Liberia with them.

Just like America, Liberia has its own Independence Day, which is the day that The Republic of Liberia was finally considered to be its own country. That day is celebrated on July 26th. It is a very popular day in Liberia with businesses closed for the day. Everyone gets together to celebrate over a meal with their families. Children even beg their parents for presents. Do we get presents on our Independence Day? Some businesses in Liberia give gifts to their employees. Sometimes that might be something very practical, like a bag of rice. The Liberians are very grateful for this gift, because that rice means that the family has a good supply of food that will last a long time.

Liberians are very proud of their independence, and this celebration is one of the biggest of the year. Liberia was started as a brand new country based on the freedom of people who once were slaves. Now that they are rebuilding the country after so many years of fighting, independence has never been so important. The government is set up as a democracy, which means the people are allowed to vote for the candidate they want. However, the country is just now learning that national independence means that all of their citizens, regardless of their ethnic background should get to vote. They are also learning that having the freedom to worship as they choose and the freedom to keep their tribal traditions are important for all people, and that all people should be treated equally by their leaders.

In Liberia they also celebrate Thanksgiving. They celebrate it on the first Thursday of November. What do we eat on Thanksgiving? Do you think Liberians eat turkey on their Thanksgiving Day? No they don't. But they do serve their national soup. Who remembers what that is? That's right, goat soup. After they serve their meal on Thanksgiving, they serve a special coffee, which is only served on special holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thanksgiving might also be

celebrated with tribal music and dancing and singing. **(Show picture of dancer from cover of Lesson.)** This girl is dressed in tribal clothing and is performing a traditional tribal dance, but her colors of red and white and blue also honor her country's flag.

At Christmas time, many Liberian homes use a palm tree or palm branches for a Christmas tree, which is decorated with bells. On Christmas morning, people are woken up by carols. Presents such as cloth, soap, sweets, pencils, and books are exchanged. Also in the morning a church service is held in which the Nativity scene is enacted and hymns and carols are sung. Dinner is eaten outdoors with everyone sitting in a circle to share the meal of rice, goat soup and dumboy. Games are played in the afternoon, and at night fireworks light up the sky.

Now what holiday do we celebrate shortly after Christmas? That's right, New Year's Day. On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, many Liberian families celebrate with a large meal shared with family and friends. There might also be community bonfires or fireworks, as well as traditional drums, singing and tribal dancing.

Liberians also celebrate Flag Day, when they remember the day they officially adopted their flag as their national symbol, and they celebrate the birthdays of two important presidents in the history of their country. So you can see that in many ways, Liberian holidays are based on our American holidays.

Liberia is so similar to the United States that it might be easy to think that life in Liberia is similar to your life in America. The national language is English, the major religion is Christianity, and many of their holidays are patterned after those in the United States. We hope that one day the Liberian people will repair the destruction of the wars and be able to build a good road system, and a good communication system. We hope that the children in the next generation will have access to nutritional food, medical services and a good education. These things would help the people's lives to be better in many ways.

The thing that will help them the most though, would be if each person would invite Jesus to be part of the rebuilding of their own hearts and lives and nation. It is Jesus who brings true freedom and healing, both personally and nationally.

Make Your Own Mancala Game

What you'll need:

- Cardboard egg carton with top cut off (dozen size). You will use the bottom part with the twelve little cups for the actual game.
- 2 small round plastic containers with lids (like margarine or sour cream containers)
- Craft paints or Magic Markers
- Paintbrushes if using paints
- 48 Marbles, tiny rocks, beads, beans, etc.
- A copy of the game rules for each game being made. (see below)

How to make it:

1. Paint the egg carton in the color desired and let dry.
2. Paint designs on the side of the egg carton if you wish and let dry.
3. OR decorate cardboard carton with colored magic markers
4. Put 24 playing pieces in each container with lid.
5. Play your game with a friend or family member.

RULES:

Object: 2 players compete against each other to collect as many marbles as they can before one of the players clears his side of the egg carton of all its marbles.

Setting up the game: Place the egg carton between the 2 players, lengthwise. The six cups closest to you make up your side of the board. The Mancala (plastic container) to your left is yours. Place 4 marbles in each of the cups. Choose a player to go first.

Playing the game: The first player picks up all the marbles in any one of his cups. The player then starts to the first cup to the left (of the cup he just emptied) and starts dropping one marble in each. If he reaches the end of his side, he is to drop one marble in his Mancala, then continue around to the other side of the board. He is not, however, to drop a marble in his opponent's Mancala.

If the player places his last marble in his own Mancala, the player gets to play again. Example: If you start the game, a good play may be to choose the cup that is located 4th from the left. You would pick up 4 marbles, dropping one in each cup and ending in your own Mancala. This gives you an extra turn.

If the player drops his last marble on his side of the board in an empty cup, he captures all the marbles in his opponent's bin directly across from that bin. All captured marbles, plus the capturing marble, gets put directly into the player's own Mancala.

Players are not allowed to touch marbles in order to count them. If you touch your marbles, you are to play that cup.

Winning the game: The game ends when one player runs out of marbles on his side of the egg carton. When the game ends, the other player gets to take all his marbles from his side of the egg carton and place in his own Mancala. Strategy sets in by determining whether it is wiser to go out, or play longer, depending on how many marbles are in the opposing player's cups.



Tabita plays with and helps care for her siblings.