



Lesson Plan: *American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawai'i*
Perpetuating Indigenous Cultural Traditions in Diaspora

Grade Level:

10-12

Subjects:

History, Social Studies, Language Arts, Multicultural Music and Dance Appreciation

Estimated Time of Completion:

3 – 4 class periods, plus outside homework and/or research preparation. Teachers may wish to allow up to two weeks to obtain ancillary sound recordings or videotapes for use with this Lesson Plan.

Overview:

Native Hawaiians, the indigenous descendants of Hawai'i's original settlers, have struggled to maintain their cultural traditions, particularly over the past two centuries of tremendous social transformation. The performance traditions of Hawaiian music and dance, widely recognized as iconic symbols of Hawai'i and Hawaiians, have survived varying—and even contradictory—forces, including suppression by Christians, revival by nativists, westernization by twentieth-century Hawaiians, and commodification by the tourism industry. The present fluorescence of the hula tradition owes its energy to a vibrant cultural renaissance that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, because indigenous traditions (including some esoteric practices related to indigenous religious beliefs) now coexist alongside highly commodified entertainment, hula's history has left the Hawaiian community deeply divided over issues of definition, cultural authority, and identity politics.

"American Aloha" follows yet another chapter in hula's existence, that of its practice within communities of Native Hawaiians who have moved away from Hawai'i. Through a focus on three *kumu hula* (master instructors) who direct three hula schools based in California, the film explores the challenges of these groups to perpetuate hula faithfully outside of Hawai'i. Each of the *kumu hula* articulates not only how being away from Hawai'i impacts how they teach students, but also how they must deal with attitudes coming from Hawai'i that regard their efforts as less authentic because of where they are—i.e., outside Hawai'i.

Through class discussion, guided activities, and writing tasks, students will be able to learn about conducting dialogue and debate in the highly contested arena of the politics of culture.

Objectives:

Students will:

1. Understand how Hawai'i's history of colonization has led to the massive decline of native Hawaiian people and cultural traditions throughout the 19th century.
2. Understand the distinction between indigenous Hawaiian people who are descendants of Hawai'i's aboriginal settlers, and other residents of Hawai'i who are not Native Hawaiian.
3. Understand issues of cultural identity at stake for Native Hawaiians.
4. Understand issues of authority and authenticity at stake for Native Hawaiians practicing Hawaiian cultural traditions while living away from Hawai'i.
5. Discuss the contesting stakes for Native Hawaiians in Hawai'i who assert claims to authority by virtue of being in Hawai'i, as opposed to the frustration of Native Hawaiians outside Hawai'i who resent their efforts being invalidated.
6. Explore the potentially sensitive issue of whether non-Native Hawaiians can be agents of perpetuating hula, in Hawai'i as well as outside of Hawai'i.

Materials Needed

1. VCR, monitor, and videotape of the P.O.V./PBS program "*American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawai'i*"
2. Computers with Internet access.
3. Library access to printed reference sources.
4. Note taking materials.
5. Optional materials for visual presentation aids.

Procedures

A. Introduce the film's central thesis:

"*American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawai'i*" explores the challenges of three Native Hawaiian *kumu hula* (master instructors of hula) who reside in California, yet perpetuate hula and other indigenous Hawaiian cultural practices. For example, most Americans associate hula with grass skirts and coconut bras. For Native Hawaiians, however, the hula is a way of life, a living tradition that tells of the rich history and spirituality of Hawai'i through music, language, and dance. The present fluorescence of hula owes its energy to a vibrant cultural renaissance that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet because indigenous traditions (including some esoteric practices related to indigenous religious beliefs) now coexist alongside highly commodified entertainment, hula's history has left the Hawaiian community divided over issues of definition, cultural authority, and identity politics.

"*American Aloha: Hula Beyond Hawai'i*" follows yet another chapter in hula's existence, that of its practice within communities of Native Hawaiians who have moved away from Hawai'i. Through a focus on three *kumu hula* who direct hula schools based in California, the film explores how these groups struggle not only to perpetuate hula, but to extend its artistic boundaries as well. The hula styles of these three groups range from very traditional repertoire to new compositions that relate contemporary concerns. "*American Aloha*" is a witness to the power of claiming tradition for communities creating a home away from home.

If there are time constraints, the discussion and assignment activities developed below may be adapted even if only one or two of the film's three segments are screened in class.

B. Introduce Hawai'i's history of colonization and the demise of the Native Hawaiian population and culture.

HAWAII TIMELINE

2000 BP Initial settlement of Hawaiian islands by seafaring people from the south
1778 Arrival of British Captain James Cook opens the islands to contact from outside

1820 American Protestant missionaries begin converting Hawaiians to Christianity

1840s Reform of land tenure system begins to disrupt traditional patterns of residence and access to resources

1874-1891 Reign of King David Kalakaua, who encouraged a revival of hula and other indigenous traditions nearly decimated after decades of missionary-inspired censure

1893 A group of American businessmen seize control of the government

1894 A Republic of Hawai'i is declared

1898 Hawai'i is annexed to the United States

1921 U.S. Congress passes the Hawaiian Homes Act

1941 Pearl Harbor is bombed, launching the United States into World War II

1959 Hawai'i is granted statehood

1970s Vigorous renaissance of Hawaiian cultural traditions during a movement to assert ethnic identity as a positive rather than negative force

1993 President Bill Clinton issues a formal apology for the overthrow of Hawai'i's monarchy by American businessmen

C. Introduce the hula performance tradition.

A hula dance is a choreographed interpretation of a poetic text, combining pictorial hand and arm gestures, and rhythmic lower-body patterns, all of which are named. The poetic text, called *mele*, is at the heart of hula performance; without a poetic text, there is no basis for choreographed movement interpretation.

The hula tradition is far more than just dancing. In the indigenous Hawaiian culture, the hula was dedicated to Laka, goddess of hula. Religious rituals dedicated to Laka surrounded the training of dancers. The plants used on the hula altar are also the basis for the *lei* adornments worn by dancers during the performance.

After the missionaries converted Hawaiians to Christianity in the 1820s, the rituals of hula were maintained only in secret by very few performers. The hula itself survived because its adherents maintained it underground, out of the sphere of missionary censure and suppression. In the 1870s, King David Kalakaua encouraged a revival of hula. From this revival, the transformation of hula into general entertainment coincided with the rise of tourism. A new form of song that incorporated stringed instrument accompaniment and tuneful melodies, and subsequently the adoption of English-language lyrics, eclipsed in popularity the older chanted tunes accompanied solely by indigenous percussive instruments. After Hawai'i's annexation to the United States in 1898, Hawaiian traditions waned, as Hawai'i's population pursued assimilation to a perceived American "norm." The roots-inspired revival of hula in the 1970s has brought about a coexistence of an older indigenous style of hula, now called *hula kahiko*, and the widely-recognized westernized style of hula now called *hula 'auana*.

Teachers should drill students in hearing recognition of *hula kahiko* and *hula 'auana*.

Hula Kahiko	Hula 'Auana
"ancient"	"modern"
indigenous performance style	westernized performance style
tunes are chanted	tunes are sung
tunes are often not very melodious	tunes are melodious
multiple voices chant in unison	multiple voices harmonize
accompaniment is by indigenous percussive instruments	accompaniment is by string instruments such as guitar, 'ukulele, piano, bass, etc
movement style of dance is vigorous	movement style is softer, fluid, languid
costuming is indigenous; may also imitate late 19 th -century photographs that show traditional skirts over western attire	costuming is often western apparel

Recommended video examples:

Sissy Ka'io's segment: "Ka Nani o Waimea" chanted by Ka'ai DeoCampo (in kitchen)	* "Ala Pikake" – includes subtitled translation onscreen
* Mark Ho'omalulu's segment: "Wai'oli" – includes subtitled translation onscreen	"Kuilima Hula"
* Patrick Makuakane's segment: "Kaulilua i ke anu Wai'ale'ale" – includes subtitled translation onscreen	* "Everytime"

* available on www.pbs.org/pov/americanaloha/

D. Understanding terminology: have students define the following terms before viewing the film:

1. English terms, concepts

culture

indigenous

colonization

westernization

authenticity

cultural authority

2. Hawaiian terms

hula

mele

hula kahiko

hula 'auana

halau

kumu hula

E. Conducting Class Discussion

At issue is the following question: Are Native Hawaiians who live away from Hawai'i somehow less authentic in their practice of Hawaiian culture generally, and hula specifically? To explore this question, it is recommended that teachers begin with class discussion based on students' responses to the film, and to use the responses as the basis for follow-up assignments that delve deeper into relevant issues of identity, authenticity, and Hawai'i's colonial legacy as manifested in hula. The following suggestions present four discussion points that could form the basis for research projects and follow-up student presentations. Moreover, these points can be considered even if students only see one or two segments of the film.

First, begin by asking students, whether they prefer the ancient-style (i.e., indigenous) *hula kahiko* or the modern (i.e., westernized) *hula 'auana*. Then ask them to ponder what they think the preferences of the three *kumu hula* are, and why.

Second, to move the discussion into the realm of contestation, have students consider whether *hula kahiko* and *hula 'auana* are equally traditional, or whether one style might be considered more or less traditional than the other. Have students articulate the criteria by which they might base a decision. Then ask them what they think they should know about hula before they could make any determination on the traditionality of either *hula kahiko* or *hula 'auana*.

Third, many people unfamiliar with hula tend to find the *hula 'auana* to be too westernized, especially given the sound of the accompanying stringed instruments, and some of the costumes worn by the dancers. Ask students how they think westernized costumes and musical instruments came into hula, and what they think they should know

about Hawai'i's history that might help them understand how a supposedly indigenous performance could have such western components associated with it. On what grounds might a Native Hawaiian dancer prefer hula 'auana to hula kahiko? *Kumu hula* Mark Ho'omalulu says "Today is complex, so hula is complex too. And anybody who wants to stop that is not perpetuating hula. They're preserving the past and the past belongs to the past. You can honor it, and review it. But if you are going to live there, let me get my shovel 'cause I need to bury you where you belong." Do the students agree or disagree?

Fourth, move into the domain of identity politics and its stakes for contemporary Native Hawaiians, including those who now live outside Hawai'i. Who gets to say whether a particular performance or a style of hula is "traditional" or "authentic," and by what criteria? Who has authority to make pronouncements regarding cultural practices such as hula? On what basis might authority be called into question? What do the *kumu hula* in the film say about how their work is regarded in Hawai'i? Do you think assessments of their work are warranted? Do you think this is a dialogue that anyone can engage in, or is it a dialogue that should be restricted to Native Hawaiians, since the hula is part of the Hawaiian culture?

F. Project Activities:

1. Who is a Native Hawaiian?

To consider this question, have students consult U.S. Census reports online to find out how Native Hawaiians are defined and counted. Native Hawaiians are considered to be descendants of Hawai'i's aboriginal settlers over two thousand years ago. Settlement by outsiders since European arrival in the islands in the 1700s, and inter-ethnic marriage in the islands among Native Hawaiians and non-natives, have resulted in a multi-ethnic population among Hawai'i's people, as well as the multi-generational residence of families in Hawai'i who are not Native Hawaiian.

Also, students may be directed to explore websites devoted to the contemporary movement for Native Hawaiian sovereignty. What are the differing claims about who can be considered Hawaiian?

Resources:

U.S. Census Bureau, Asian and Pacific Islander Populations

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/race/api.html>

The Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Population 2000

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-14.pdf>

Find out about the Hawaiian Federal Recognition Bill in Congress:

<http://www.nativehawaiians.com/>

Discussion questions:

- a) Is anyone who lives in Hawai'i a Native Hawaiian?
- b) Can someone who moves from your town to Hawai'i claim to be a Native Hawaiian?

- c) Can a person who lives away from Hawai'i be a Native Hawaiian?
- d) How are Native Hawaiians counted? How are part Hawaiians counted?
How are "mixed-race" Americans counted?

2. *How did Hawai'i become a part of the United States? Was the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 by American businessmen good or bad for the Native Hawaiian people? Was annexation of the former kingdom in 1898 good or bad for the Native Hawaiian people? Was statehood in 1959 good or bad for the Native Hawaiian people?*

On this topic, four resources could provide the basis for lively debate, as well as an opportunity to underscore how writing history is not a neutral endeavor, but in fact reflects the biases and agendas of the author.

- a) Primary texts from the 1890s arguing for and against the annexation of Hawai'i may be found on BoondocksNet.com (http://www.boondocksnet.com/moa/moa_hawaii.html).
- b) The complete text of Queen Lili'uokalani's autobiography, *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* is available on the A Celebration of Women Writers website, at <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/liliuokalani/hawaii/hawaii.html>.
- c) The complete text of the Blount Report, the report of the congressional into the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom that recommended restoring the Queen to the throne, is available on "The Annexation of Hawai'i: A Collection of Documents" posted by the University of Hawai'i Library Special Collections, at <http://libweb.hawaii.edu/libdept/hawaiian/annexation/annexation.html>
- d) The extraordinary discovery of anti-annexation petitions signed by thousands of Native Hawaiians in 1897 in the National Archives have suddenly substantiated claims that Native Hawaiians were opposed to annexation. Scans of the petitions may be viewed at the University of Hawai'i Library Special Collections page cited above.

3. *What is "traditional" Hawaiian culture? Is Hawaiian culture something that is still alive, or is it a relic of times past?*

The ethnological collections of Honolulu's Bishop Museum may now be viewed online at www.bishopmuseum.org (click on the "Research and Collections" tab, select "Online Databases," then click on "Ethnology Collection." Have students explore the artifacts. Do these artifacts have a place in contemporary life or are they relics from the past? Are there artifacts in the database that students recall seeing in the film? Are contemporary Hawaiians somehow inauthentic if they no longer use the kinds of artifacts shown in the Bishop Museum's collection?

Have students select traditional artifacts and propose modern substitutes. For this, students will need to ascertain whether the function of a traditional artifact is still relevant, and what material form of contemporary implements/tools/objects can fulfill those traditional functions.

Discussion questions:

- a) What kinds of relationships do we have to museum displays of historical artifacts?
 - b) What kinds of relationships do the objects we use in everyday life have to museum artifacts that are set aside and valued for their antiquity?
- 4. *Is it possible to perpetuate traditional Hawaiian culture only in Hawai'i, or can it be perpetuated away from Hawai'i as well?***

Here students will consider the relation of location, people, and cultural practice. What challenges do Hawaiians in California face in trying to perpetuate hula there? How are they meeting the challenges? Are they successful or not? How can such success be measured? How important is Hawai'i's environment to the hula?

In Sissy Kaio's segment, the *halau* is shown at a beach in Los Angeles' south bay area. The group has "adopted" the beach, and gave it a Hawaiian name—*Palama*. In doing so, the group has established a relationship to a place accessible to them, and which they can incorporate into their interpretation of imagery in hula performance. Have students identify a local site that could be made meaningful to a hula troupe based in your community. In order to do this, students must research places in Hawai'i that are important to hula performance, locate visual images of those places in Hawai'i, then figure out how they would translate those environmental attributes to the local environment.

- 5. *Citizenship: How are Hawaiians in California similar to other immigrant groups to the United States? How are Hawaiians in California unlike other immigrant groups to the United States?***

Have students explore what challenges immigrant groups face in their attempt to hold onto their cultural traditions in the United States. Can performance traditions such as music and dance thrive especially if the second and subsequent generations do not learn to speak their ancestral language?

- 6. *Debunking stereotypes about hula.***

The hula shown in the film "American Aloha" contrasts greatly with stereotyped images and caricatures that have circulated in the media. Have students explore the components of hula to understand it better:

"Hula Costumes and Adornments," by Jan Kahoku Yoneda:

http://www.worldhula.com/costumes_&_adornments.htm

Hula Implements: <http://www.hulapreservation.org/implements.asp>

Hula Plants: http://www.worldhula.com/plants_of_hula.htm

Greenery for the Hula Altar: <http://www.geocities.com/~olelo/o-h-greenery.html>

Cultivating Hula Plants: <http://starbulletin.com/2003/04/11/features/story2.html#jump>

The Lost Art of Lei Making: <http://www.angelfire.com/hi/crafthold/lost.html>

Making a Lei: <http://www.hawaiian-luau.com/html/leimaking.html>

Photos and links to stories about the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival:

<http://www.kalena.com/merriemonarch/2003/index.html>

Compare these images to stereotyped caricatures. Some online resources are:

Images of Hawai'i on Sheet Music Covers: http://www.hulapages.com/covers_1.htm

Thumbnail images of LP record covers: <http://www.hakushouse.com/hawaii.html>

Vintage art print reproductions: http://hawaiiandays.com/sets/set_categories.htm

After students have researched one or more of these topics outside class, and reported their findings in either written essays or oral presentations, it is recommended to view the film—or one or two of the film's three segments—again. Have students discuss how subsequent research and discussion has altered how they view the film – and how they view hula.

Activities:

a) Ancillary components of dance performance: Have students create a costume for a dance dedicated to Pele, the volcano goddess. For this activity, students must research the epic cycle of legends associated with Pele, together with conventions of hula costuming. Since a vital part of hula costuming is the use of native plants in head, neck and ankle *lei* adornments worn by the dancer, students must research botanical resources, and instructional resources on *lei*-making, then figure out what available local botanical resources can be substituted for the native plant species.

b) Choreographing hula: Assign groups of students to work with one song.. Provide students with the Hawaiian-language text, an English translation, and a sound recording. Each group should choreograph the hand and arm gestures that illustrate key aspects of the poetic text, in time to the music recording. Invite another teacher to serve as a judge, to simulate the conditions of a hula competition. Following the presentations and announcements of winners, conduct a discussion about the winners' elation and losers' disappointment and/or frustration.

G. Written essay assignment: Are Native Hawaiians who live away from Hawai'i somehow less authentic in their practice of Hawaiian culture generally, and hula specifically? Explain.

OR

Can Native Hawaiians who live away from Hawai'i be creative authoritatively? Explain. Teachers may consider using Mark Ho'omalulu's contributions to Disney's animated feature film *Lilo and Stitch* (2002).

Evaluating Students:

1. Have students evaluated the credibility of information gathered on websites? Have they taken initiative to follow up in reference sources, and in printed books and articles?
2. Have students presented multiple perspectives in an objective way?
3. Have students made a persuasive case for why they favor any one perspective over others?
4. Have students included explicit criteria in their presentation or written assignments for the basis of their stand on any given issue?
5. Have students demonstrated an awareness of the competing claims that different people or groups can make on an issue?
6. Have students demonstrated an awareness of the stakes involved in disagreements about issues relating to cultural authority and ethnic identity?

Standards:

This lesson unit addresses the following national content standards for Level 4 (Gr 9-12) established by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) at <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

Arts Connection Standard 1: Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines

3. Understands how elements, materials, technologies, artistic processes (e.g., imagination, craftsmanship), and organizational principles (e.g., unity and variety, repetition and contrast) are used in similar and distinctive ways in the various art forms

Historical Understanding Standard 2: Understands the Historical Perspective

2. Analyzes the influences specific ideas and beliefs had on a period of history and specifies how events might have been different in the absence of those ideas and beliefs.
6. Understands that change and continuity are equally probable and natural
9. Analyzes how specific historical events would be interpreted differently based on newly uncovered records and/or information
11. Knows how to perceive past events with historical empathy.
13. Evaluates the validity and credibility of different historical interpretations.

Behavioral Studies Standard 2: Understands various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function

3. Understands how the diverse elements that contribute to the development and transmission of culture (e.g., language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs, values, behavior patterns) function as an integrated whole
4. Understands that groups have patterns for preserving and transmitting culture even as they adapt to environmental and/or social change
5. Understands that social groups may have patterns of behavior, values, beliefs, and attitudes that can help or hinder cross-cultural understanding

Dance Standard 3: Understands dance as a way to create and communicate meaning.

1. Understands how movement choices are used to communicate abstract ideas and themes in dance (e.g., isolation, relationships, poverty, the environment)
2. Understands how interpretation of dance can be influenced by personal experience

Dance Standard 4: Applies critical and creative thinking skills in dance.

1. Establishes a set of aesthetic criteria and applies it in evaluating one's own work and that of others
2. Formulates and answers one's own aesthetic questions (e.g., knows what makes a particular dance unique, how much one can change a dance before it becomes a different dance)