

Holidays and Seasons

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Margita Haberlen
Language:	German
Grade:	3
School:	Austin Elementary School, Dunwoody, Georgia
Lesson Date:	March 28
Class Size:	23
Schedule:	30 minutes daily

Video Summary

In this lesson, students review the months, seasons, and German holidays. They practice vocabulary and develop oral and written comprehension while singing songs, solving riddles, and participating in other activities. They also use a Venn diagram to compare the German holiday *Fasching* with Halloween.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal
- Cultures: Practices, Products
- Connections: Making Connections
- Comparisons: Cultural Comparisons

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- authentic materials
- Foreign Language in the Elementary School (FLES)
- information gap
- thematic units
- Venn diagram

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Profile

“When you start speaking to students in a target language from kindergarten on, they’re really trained to take all of this language in. Even if they only understand a certain percentage, that’s okay. The next time, they’ll grasp more by constructing the meaning themselves. It’s important that the student feels, ‘It’s okay if I don’t understand everything.’” —Margita Haberlen

School Profile

Margita Haberlen teaches grades 2–5 German at Austin Elementary School in Dunwoody, Georgia. The school, which serves 560 students in grades preK–5, is one of the founding members of the Georgia Elementary School Foreign Languages Model Program (ESFL). In 1991, the school began German instruction for kindergarten students. Each year the program has added another grade, so that currently each K–5 student receives 30 minutes of German instruction daily. Austin students are graded on participation rather than on test performance in German class. Teachers also monitor and evaluate students’ progress by correcting their work and helping them learn from their mistakes.

Lesson Design

The Georgia ESFL Model Program defines the foreign language curriculum and vocabulary guides for each language studied in grades K–5. Using this curriculum as their guide, teachers can design individual lessons according to their needs. Ms. Haberlen designs lessons by webbing topics in the ESFL curriculum to see which general curriculum areas she can reinforce. For example, she often incorporates math into stories that she tells or connects to drama through fairy tales drawn from the target culture. Ms. Haberlen considers music to be an integral part of teaching a foreign language. She believes that songs can motivate students, extend learning, and stimulate movement and dance, all necessary elements for teaching young students.

The Lesson

The videotaped lesson was a culminating activity for the unit on the year, months, seasons, and holidays. At the end of the lesson, Ms. Haberlen expected students to be able to name the months of the year and identify holidays in the target culture. She also expected them to be able to describe the holidays and associate each with a particular product. Students next moved on to a weather unit, which connected to their science curriculum.

Key Teaching Strategies

- Information Gap Activities: The teacher uses questions or prompts to get students to respond with facts or opinions that inform or convey meaning from their personal perspective.
- Manipulating Language Structures: The teacher helps students develop an awareness of how the language is structured by engaging them in reading activities that involve rearranging sentence fragments to change meaning.
- Theme-Based Curriculum: The teacher chooses themes as the organizing principle for a series of instructional activities in a unit.

Year at a Glance

My School

- School rules, supplies, and subjects
- Schedules and time
- **The year, months, seasons, and holidays**
- Weather

All About Me

- Family members and helping/chores
- Family members in fairy tales
- Healthy eating/food pyramid
- Pet care

The Wide, Wide World

- German-speaking countries (location, flags, and geography)
- Cardinal directions
- Holidays/festivals of Germany
- The planets

My Community

- Exploring my neighborhood (stores/jobs)
- Career day at school/professions

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- How do teachers work with the shorter attention span of younger learners?
- What strategies do elementary school teachers use to communicate with their students solely in the target language? Should they always communicate solely in the target language?
- What are some ways of reviewing or practicing vocabulary with young learners, ways that differ from the initial learning?

Watch the Video

As you watch “Holidays and Seasons,” take notes on Ms. Haberlen’s instructional strategies, particularly how she structures the lesson for her young students. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How does Ms. Haberlen organize her lessons, given that she has no permanent classroom? What opportunities and limitations does this present?
- How does Ms. Haberlen scaffold activities so that students take more responsibility throughout the lesson? How does she involve all students in the activities?
- How do students respond to each other’s language performances? How does this benefit individual student performance?

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Haberlen’s class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Solving Riddles

You’ll find this segment approximately 9 minutes into the video. Watch for about 3 minutes.

Students guess the answers to riddles posed by their classmates about the months.

- What modifications to the model riddle do students make when they create their own riddles? How is this an “information gap” activity?
- What evidence demonstrates that students who are listening understand?
- What is the role of the teacher during this activity? What is the role of students?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Making Cultural Comparisons

You'll find this segment approximately 18 minutes into the video. Watch for about 4 minutes.

Students use a Venn diagram to compare the holidays of *Fasching* and Halloween.

- What cultural practices are explored in this activity? What cultural products are explored?
- How does the Venn diagram help students compare the cultural practices and products of Germany and the U.S.?
- How is the cultural lesson integrated with the overall theme of the lesson, which is the year, months, seasons, and holidays?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- If you were teaching this class, what content might you introduce in the next two lessons in this theme?
- What other thematic units might you teach to beginning students? What cultural concepts could you integrate into those themes?
- How do you keep all students, particularly young learners, involved in a lesson?
- How do you integrate songs that are appropriate and appealing to the age of your students? How else besides singing do you integrate music into your lessons?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K-12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you've just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

"Daily Routines" (Japanese) and "Mapping Planet Earth" (French) illustrate multiple activities with young students and feature teachers without permanent classrooms.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- To prepare a thematic lesson, brainstorm on your own or with a colleague. Many teachers find that creating a concept map (a web) helps them see the many paths a theme may take. Choose and organize the topics under a theme so that each new one builds on or is directly related to the one before it. For example, Ms. Haberlen taught the year, then months, then seasons, and finally holidays. You can identify new themes by looking at what your students are studying in their other classes. For example, in science they may be studying planets, in social studies they may be studying how communities work, and in art they may be making collages. These same themes can be incorporated into a foreign language class to draw upon student knowledge and reinforce the content areas. For example, students can look at different communities in a country where people speak your target language, or students can make collages using authentic materials and incorporate elements of the target culture into the collage.
- Try to conduct your class entirely in the target language. All beginners, regardless of age, are primarily learning concrete vocabulary and basic structures. Speak at a rate that feels comfortable to your students, and check frequently for understanding by observing and listening to students. To help get your meaning across, use visuals, graphic organizers, and written models. In Ms. Haberlen's class, students always had something to look at—for example, words, pictures, and Venn diagrams. Teachers of older students can use more sophisticated visuals while relying on students' background knowledge. Let beginning learners know early on that the target language is the language of the classroom. And remember that once you fall back on using English, it is hard to get students to stop.
- Review a unit that you recently taught to see how you could integrate cultural content. Consider how Ms. Haberlen built culture into her lesson at her students' language competency level: She used a Venn diagram to show the cultural similarities and differences between a German holiday and its American counterpart. Ms. Haberlen's lesson clearly meets the Cultures standards—Practices (marching in parades, wearing masks) and Products (masks, foods)—even though she does not address the religious traditions behind *Fasching* or Halloween, perspectives which older students might explore.
- Include songs as a regular part of your classes. The songs should be appropriate to your students' language level and appeal to their age group, as well as be representative of authentic culture. Consider how you might include songs that connect to thematic units. For example, Ms. Haberlen's class sang a song about the seasons. Students can also write their own songs or make up new lyrics to familiar tunes.

Resources

Curriculum References

Georgia Elementary School Foreign Languages (ESFL) Model Program
<http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/qcc/ancill/fl/int-fl26.htm>

Margita Haberlen's Recommendations

Web Resources:

Goethe Institute
<http://www.goethe.de>

Teaching materials, courses, and seminars on German language, geography, and culture (available in English and German)

Standards

National Standards for Foreign Language Learning

Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century defines what students should know and be able to do in foreign language education. This lesson correlates to the following standards:

Communication: Communicate in Languages Other Than English

Standard 1.1: Interpersonal Communication

Students engage in conversations, provide and obtain information, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions.

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures

Standard 2.1: Practices of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.

Standard 2.2: Products of Culture

Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.

Connections: Connect With Other Disciplines and Acquire Information

Standard 3.1: Making Connections

Students reinforce and further their knowledge of other disciplines through the foreign language.

Comparisons: Develop Insight Into the Nature of Language and Culture

Standard 4.2: Cultural Comparisons

Students demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.