



ALLIGATOR WRESTLING:

Danger. Entertainment. Tradition.

4th Grade Curricula

2020



Introduction

“Alligator Wrestling: Danger. Entertainment. Tradition” is an exhibit at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on display from December 2019 through November 2020.

The exhibit explores the deep roots of the Seminole’s relationship to alligators. Traditionally Seminole ancestors hunted gators. By the early 1900s as settlers encroached on Seminole lands, they had had to change their ways. Seminoles traded them live gators and gator hides that were made into luxury goods. As more tourists came to the state, Seminoles worked in tourist villages where they demonstrated traditional life ways, sold crafts, and wrestled gators in order to support their families. Since the 1990s, many have stopped wrestling gators, but some Seminoles continue the tradition.

The exhibit features historic artifacts, gator skin and teeth to touch, oral histories from alligator wrestlers, film of gator wrestling moves, and many interactives.

This curricula was developed to enhance a Museum visit or as a stand alone lesson plan so that students can learn about the Seminole tradition of alligator wrestling.



Description

Students will learn about Seminole alligator wrestling traditions by completing different activities. They will listen to a traditional legend “The Alligator and the Eagle” and draw out the story. Students will learn about the history Seminoles have with alligators by trying to put different images in order in a timeline. They will watch alligator wrestling and learn about the dangers involved. To share their new knowledge, they will create a trivia game which they can take home to play with their friends and family.

Main Message: Seminoles have had a long and unique relationship with alligators.

Time: 45 minutes

Group Size: 20-30 students

Age Group: 4th grade, can be

Supplies Needed:

- Printouts of activity materials
- Projector/Smart board with audio capabilities
- Pencils
- Coloring pencils

FL Standards:

SS.4.A.1.1: Analyze primary and secondary resources to identify significant individuals and events throughout Florida history.

SS.4.A.3.2: Describe causes and effects of European colonization on the Native American tribes of Florida.

SS.4.A.9.1: Utilize timelines to sequence key events in Florida history.

WL.K12.NM.5.7: Draw pictures in sequence to demonstrate a story plot.



Activity

5 Minutes: Introduce students to alligator wrestling. Begin by asking students who Seminole people are. Explain that Seminoles are Native Americans of Florida. They fought bravely during the Seminole Wars and never officially signed a peace treaty so that they could continue to maintain their traditions. Today, the Tribe has several reservations in Southern Florida. They have adapted to thrive in the western world while maintaining their culture.

The Everglades are the home of the Seminole people and they have many traditions involving alligators. Today students will learn about those traditions.

Split students into smaller groups.

10 Minutes: Have class listen to Legends of the Alligator and the Eagle (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmJpris2x4szoNhnBTCPOkw>). Students can also read the story while listening which can be found on page 5. Have students draw out the story in 2-4 images. Worksheets can be found on pages 6-7.

10 Minutes: Seminoles have a long history of alligator wrestling. Give students a series of images which can be found on pages 8-9. Have them keep the images face up and see if they can put the images in order from oldest to newest. Once they think they have them in the right order, have them flip over the cards to see if they are right. As a class, read the information on the back of each card from the oldest to the newest.

10 Minutes: Explain that there are different moves that alligator wrestlers do. Review the different moves on page 10. Next have students watch “Alligator Wrestlers in Action” <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmJpris2x4szoNhnBTCPOkw>). When they see the different moves, they should check them off.

5 Minutes: Read about the different dangers of alligator wrestling as a class on pages 11-12. Then, in small groups, have students answer the questions so that they can learn how to stay safe on page 13.

10 Minutes: To conclude and reflect on what they have learned, have students come up with their trivia questions. They can complete a set for themselves to take home or complete a set as a group. Remind students not to try wrestling gators and to respect gators by keeping their distance from them.



The Alligator and the Eagle Legend

(Read the legend of the **Alligator and the Eagle** as told by Billie Stuart of Brighton Reservation (1940) and narrated by Samuel Tommie)

Many legends are told about the alligator which has long been a favorite animal with the Seminoles. Nearly every Indian hut today has an alligator pen near it. The story the Indians tell about the loud "Ah-ah-ah!" the alligator makes when he is surprised is perhaps the favorite one.

When the world first began, according to legend, nothing but birds and animals lived on the earth. All of them could talk. One day the birds set a date to play ball. The birds, large and small, gathered on the day arranged. One large, strong bird threw the ball higher than anyone else had. An old alligator was lying in the sun watching the birds play. He was angry because he was not invited to play with them. When he saw the ball go high into the air, he made magic and kept it in mid air. All the birds flew about trying to bring the ball back to earth, but it could not come down.

After a long time, the alligator let the ball drop, and caught it in his mouth. The birds tried in vain to pry his mouth open. A wise cunning eagle sat on a rock and watched the weak, helpless little birds fluttering around the great reptile, begging him to return their ball. Finally he decided to help. He flew down and pinched the alligator's back with his sharp claws. The alligator was so surprised his mouth flew wide open and he hissed "Ah-ah-ah!" at the eagle. As he hissed, the ball dropped out of his mouth, the birds quickly seized it and flew away. That is the reason the alligator opens his mouth and hisses "Ah-ah-ah!" to this day when he is surprised.



Mission 1: Listen and Learn

Listen to the Legend of the Alligator.

As a group, draw 2-4 pictures showing the story.



Mission 1: Listen and Learn

Listen to the Legend of the Alligator.

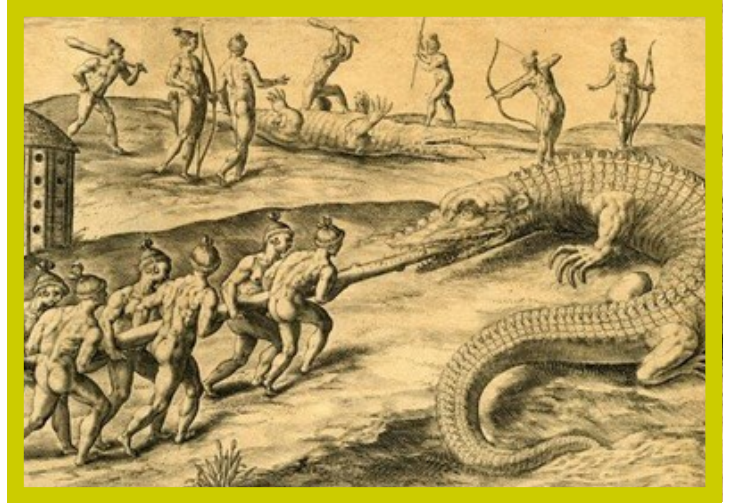
As a group, draw 2-4 pictures showing the story.



Mission 2: Putting things in order

Can you put these pictures in order from oldest to most recent?

Keep them face up! Once you think you have it right, flip the cards over and read about each image. You'll know you were correct, if it spell out a word.



G

Carved Alligator Head

Seminole ancestors called the Calusa carved this alligator 500-1500 years ago. It was found on Key Marco Island.

A

Timucua Drawing

Theodor de Bry, a Dutch engraver, drew this image of the Timucua peoples (Seminole ancestors) in 1591. It shows how warriors would hunt the gator in groups using a wooden pole to force the gator onto its back in order to strike its underbelly.

T

Alligator Farms

By the early 1900s, settlers encroached on Seminole lands and Seminoles had to change their ways. Seminoles traded live gators and gator hides which were turned into luxury items.

O

Alligator Wrestling

As more tourists came to Florida, Seminoles worked in tourist camps, demonstrating traditional life, selling crafts, and wrestling gators to support their families.

R

Deep Water Alligator Wrestling

In the 1960s, Okalee Village opened on the Hollywood Reservation. Deep water alligator wrestling attracted both locals and visitors.

S

Alligator Wrestling Today

Since the 1990s, many have stopped wrestling alligators. Alligator wrestling is changing again. Seminole brothers James and Clinton Holt organized the first Freestyle Alligator Wrestling Competition (FAWC) in 2009.



Mission 3: Watch and Wrestle

Watch and Name that move!

Watch gator wrestling to see the different moves. See how many moves you can spot and check them off.



The Florida Smile



The Face Off



Rolling the Gator on its back



Bull Dogging



Front Catch



Mission 4: Stay Safe!

How will you stay safe?

Wrestling alligators is very dangerous. Find out more by reading below. Use this information to answer questions on the next page about how you can stay safe.

They're always on the lookout!



Alligators get stressed easily, no matter their size. They fight back when threatened. So you've got to move slowly. An error can cost you.

They're sensitive!



The lightest graze of one of their 80 teeth, a drop of a grain of sand, or a bead of sweat will cause their steel-trap jaws to snap shut with roughly 2500 lbs. of biting pressure. This could spell D-I-S-A-S-T-E-R.

Alligators are fast!



You might think gators are sluggish, but they can move quickly.

Did we say they're sensitive!



Some of our Seminole wrestlers believe the alligator can sense your mood and will react. It's important you live a good, healthy life, you aren't too forceful or try to take short-cuts because you'll likely be bitten.



Mission 4: Stay Safe!

How will you stay safe?

Wrestling alligators is very dangerous. Find out more by reading below. Use this information to answer questions on the next page about how you can stay safe.

They can infect you!



**THERE'S
LOTS OF
BACTERIA IN
A GATOR'S
MOUTH**

Watch out for bacteria that can easily enter a cut. The alligator's mouth carries lots of bacteria from previously ingested prey.

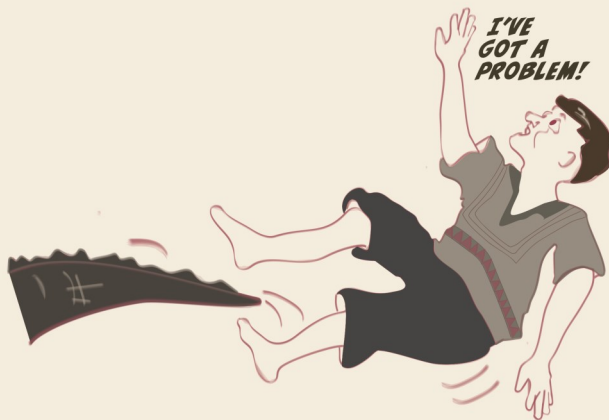
Keep your hair tied back so you can clearly see the alligator!

Place your body where he can't see you!



Keep those jeans rolled up to your knees!

They're strong!



Be careful. Their tails are the strongest muscle in their body. When they whip around, they can knock you off your feet. If he did that, he would want to pick you up with his mouth!

Being smart about what you wear in the pit is one way to keep safe. Today, wrestlers wear short-sleeve patchwork shirts, vests with a t-shirt underneath, shorts or jeans, and go barefoot. Close-fitting clothing prevents a gator from getting hold of you with their teeth. Also pick clothes that allow you to move easily. Many wrestlers' shirts are made of cotton which helps to keep them cool, is easy to wash, and lasts for a long time.

Final word of advice:



Be sure to keep EMS on speed dial.



Mission 4: Stay Safe!

How will you stay safe?

Wrestling alligators is very dangerous. It's important to understand gators and to make good choices. What choices would you make to stay safe?

You see an alligator. Should you move quickly or very slowly and carefully? Quickly Slowly

You are having a bad day. Should you try to wrestle an alligator? Yes No

You've wrestled many gators before. Should you try to take short cuts? Yes No

You've been bit! Should you go to the doctor? Yes No

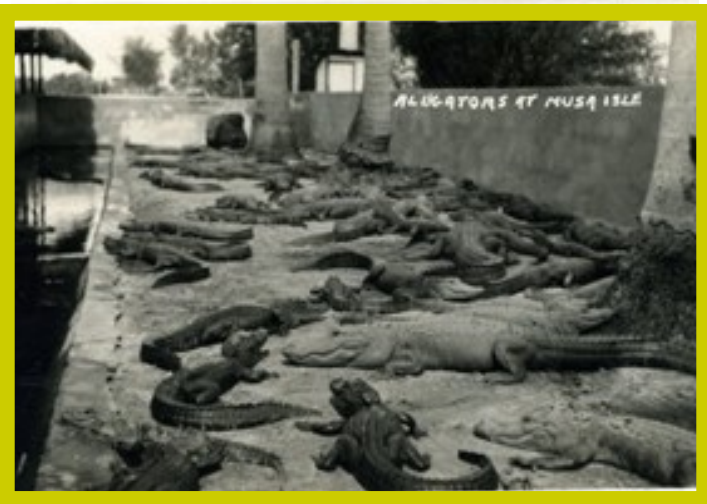
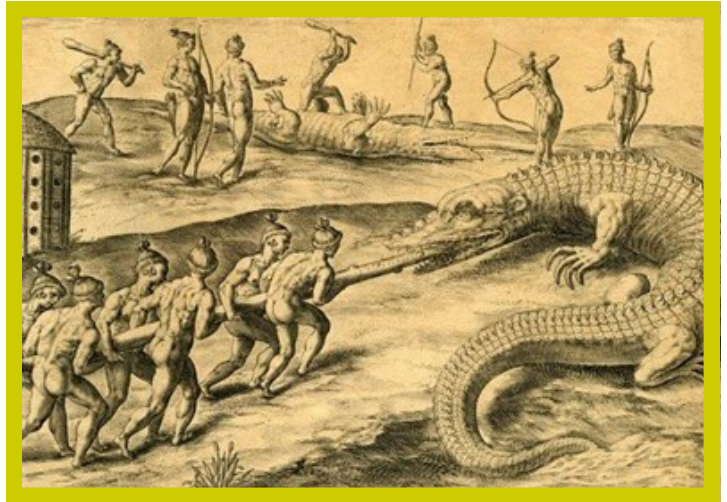
What should you wear? Draw a picture.



Mission 5: Make your own trivia game!

Share your knowledge!

You have learned a lot about Seminole alligator traditions. Now it's time to share what you've learned. Write a trivia question with several answer options on the back. Take it home and play with your family. Read the question and answer and have them guess the answers.



Indian Boy Wrestling Alligator at Mena Isle Indian Village, Miami, Fla.—51-D-6



Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer:

Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer:

Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer:

Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer:

Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer:

Question:

- A.
- B.
- C.

Answer: