

St. Martin on a white horse



Age
3 to 6

Context:

- This activity takes place in a Czech-English kindergarten following the Czech Preschool Curriculum. Children come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The languages of schooling are English and Czech. Narratives about history, legends and stories belonging to different cultures are often used to integrate children from different cultural backgrounds and to support language learning as a natural part of the child's development (→ holistic language learning).

Reasons for choosing this activity:

- In the Czech Republic, during the month of November, a variety of traditions relate to the biblical story of St. Martin, who, coming on a white horse, brings not only the first snow, but also generosity, friendship, understanding for the poorest and help to those who need it. The reason for choosing the activity, besides language learning, is to make children aware of traditions, to show them how important it is to share, to be creative, to spend pleasant, harmonious time together etc. (→ meaningful language learning).

Description (1):

- To start with, teacher and children talk about the St. Martin's traditions which are kept alive in their families. Some children remember the proverb that Martin comes on a white horse and brings snow. Some talk about traditional meals which their mother prepares on that day.

The teacher then tells them the story of St. Martin in Czech using flashcards prepared in English and actively relying on their knowledge and experiences. They discuss the point of the story.

- *“When St. Martin was a young man, he was a soldier. When he was coming back home, one day in the winter, riding his horse, he came upon a beggar, sitting in front of the town gate, barely clothed and almost frozen. Martin did not wait for anything, took out his sword and cut his cloak in half. He gave one-half to the poor man for warmth. The poor man was very happy, thanked Martin and covered himself in the warm piece of the cloak.”*

Then the children are offered, through instruction in English, a range of activities from various learning areas supporting not only the development of language competences, but knowledge and skills in many different areas (→ active and holistic language learning).

- **A portrait of St. Martin:** They imagine and paint St. Martin as they remember him from the story. They then describe their pictures and explain the way in which they display the story.
- **Sound games:** They imitate the sound of horses riding, of horseshoes (with the tongue), the whining of the horse (by vibration of lips), urging the horse (giddy-up, go on, whoa) etc.

Description (2):

- **Hurdles for horses:** “Martin’s horse had to overcome many barriers while travelling and we will try to do the same”. Children walk barefoot over chest-nuts, rope, and fabric; they jump over, crawl under, run around, step over etc.
- **Circle game ‘Martin’s Horse’:** Children sit in a circle, one child is a white horse circling around while the others recite the rhyme:
*How I love St. Martin’s horse,
I will brush him very well, of course,
I will comb his hair and mane
And go riding out again.*
- **Horse jumping over the hill (motor skills and language):** With use of a big piece of paper or some other hurdles, children imitate a horse jumping over the hill. At that, they recited a simple poem:
*Jumping horse can jump so high,
Not only in warm July,
Jumping horse can jump so low,
Horse can jump for joy, you know.
Join him in a jumping game
When you jump you call his name.*
- To end with, gingerbread horseshoes are shared by the children which reminds them of the story of St. Martin, the poor and how they shared a cloak.



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