

THE MAASAI: CURRICULUM INTEGRATION GUIDE

Saskatchewan Curriculum Alignment, Hands-On Activities, and Full Lesson Plan
Designed for *The Maasai: A Glimpse into Life, Traditions and Culture* by Judith Silverthorne

Overview of Suggested Classroom Activities

The following activities link the text directly to the specific Saskatchewan Ministry of Education outcomes and indicators.

Grade 3 Social Studies: Global Communities

- **Activity 1: The 'Daily Life' Comparison Journal (Outcome IN3.1):** Students write split-page journal entries comparing a day in the life of a Maasai child (housing, chores, routines) with their own lives in Saskatchewan.
- **Activity 2: The Land and the Manyatta Shelter Build (Outcomes DR3.2 & RW3.1):** Students create architectural scale-models of traditional Maasai structures using clay, twigs, and grasses to learn how environment dictates housing.
- **Activity 3: Wisdom and Storytelling Circles (Outcome IN3.2):** Setting the classroom in a traditional circle to read aloud and map how oral heritage preserves vital cultural histories across generations.

Grade 5 Social Studies: Parallel Perspectives on Stewardship

- **Activity 4: Comparative Worldviews on Stewardship (Outcome DR5.1):** A deep cross-cultural comparison between the Maasai's holistic pastoral ecosystem stewardship and Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis traditional relationships to the land.
- **Activity 5: The Global Citizenship 'Living Library' (Outcome IN5.2):** Students connect with local multicultural councils to discover East African diaspora contributions within contemporary Canadian multicultural frameworks.

English Language Arts (ELA) Foundations (Grades 3–7)

- **Activity 6: Deconstructing Non-Fiction (CR Strand):** Utilizing the book as a rich informational mentor text to map out structural text features including subtitles, photographic evidence, and cultural glossaries.
- **Activity 7: Capturing Voices Oral History Project (CC Strand):** Students conduct oral history profiles or record micro-podcasts capturing an elder or family tradition within their own local communities.

Complete Printable Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: The Land and the Manyatta – Architecture of Interdependence

Target Grade Levels: Grade 3 or Grade 5 (Social Studies / Science / Practical Arts)

Estimated Duration: 2 Blocks (Approx. 90–120 minutes total)

Saskatchewan Curriculum Mapping

- **Grade 3 Social Studies Outcome DR3.2:** Assess the degree to which geography, environment, and climate influence ways of living on and with the land.
- **Grade 3 Social Studies Outcome RW3.1:** Appraise the ways communities meet their needs.
- **Grade 5 Social Studies Outcome DR5.1:** Analyze the historic and contemporary relationship of people to the land.
- **Cross-Curricular ELA (CR3.1 / CR5.1):** View, listen to, and read non-fiction texts to comprehend foundational global concepts.

Essential Inquiry Questions

1. How does the natural environment dictate the types of homes people construct and the way communities live?
2. What can traditional practices teach us about sustainability and ecological balance?

Required Materials & Preparation

- Primary Text: *The Maasai: A Glimpse into Life, Traditions and Culture* by Judith Silverthorne.
- Natural crafting materials: Twigs, craft sticks, modeling clay or playdough, dried raffia/grasses, small cardboard structural bases, and non-toxic school glue.
- Graphic Organizer: 'Ecosystem & Architecture' T-Chart or Venn Diagram.

Lesson Phase 1: Shared Reading & Visualization (25 Minutes)

1. Gather students in a shared space. Introduce the author and the context of the book across the plains of East Africa.
2. Read aloud the specific text sections highlighting the construction of the *Manyatta* (traditional home) and the pastoral lifestyle of the Maasai people. Draw close visual attention to the book's authentic photographs.
3. Lead a brief class brainstorm: *Why are these shelters structured this way? What raw materials are accessible on the savanna plains? How does a semi-nomadic lifestyle shape how permanent a home needs to be?*

Lesson Phase 2: Design & Model Prototyping (50 Minutes)

1. Task students, working in pairs or individually, with planning and engineering a small-scale prototype of a traditional *Manyatta* structure using only the natural crafting elements provided.
2. Guidance: Students use cardboard squares as a stable base, shape the framework utilizing pliable twigs/sticks, coat structure walls with modeling clay (simulating mud/manure), and overlay the roof with fine grasses/twigs.
3. Circumstantial Challenge: As they build, encourage students to discuss the physics and environmental adaptations of the round shape (e.g., heat management, aerodynamic resistance to plain winds).

Lesson Phase 3: Comparative Analysis & Reflection (30 Minutes)

1. Once models are situated, distribute the 'Ecosystem & Architecture' comparison organizer.
2. **For Grade 3 Frameworks:** Students map out differences and similarities between a Manyatta house and a typical urban/rural house built in contemporary Saskatchewan.
3. **For Grade 5 Frameworks:** Prompt a deeper comparative essay-style connection. How does the traditional Maasai building ethos align conceptually with the traditional First Nations construction of portable Tipi structures or sustainable winter Lodges utilizing regional elements?
4. Conclude with a 'Gallery Walk' where students assess peer designs using constructive positive feedback tags.

Assessment Rubric: Ecosystem & Architecture Project

This rubric is fully aligned with Saskatchewan provincial assessment scales, designed to evaluate criteria across social studies context knowledge, inquiry analysis, and practical cross-curricular application.

Criteria	Level 1 Beginning (1)	Level 2 Developing (2)	Level 3 Proficient (3)	Level 4 Mastery (4)
Understanding Culture & Environment (SK Outcomes DR3.2 / DR5.1)	Demonstrates minimal awareness of how environment influences Maasai living or housing choices.	Identifies basic natural materials used by the Maasai but struggles to explain why they are utilized.	Accurately details how geography, climate, and lifestyle dictate Maasai building materials and structural designs.	Provides a sophisticated analysis connecting global geographic realities to traditional architecture and cultural longevity.
Comparative Analysis (SK Outcomes RW3.1 / DR5.1)	Struggles to see parallels between Maasai housing and Saskatchewan context examples.	Identifies surface-level similarities (e.g., roofs, doors) but lacks depth in environmental connection.	Successfully maps logical environmental similarities and lifestyle parallels across regional communities.	Formulates perceptive, insightful cross-cultural comparisons detailing the philosophy of living sustainably with the land.
Informational Literacy (ELA Text Synthesis)	Recalls few details from text; relies purely on imagination rather than documented textual evidence.	Recalls generalized facts from the book but misses key vocabulary or text features.	Extracts and applies specific vocabulary, physical descriptions, and data directly out of the text.	Independently synthesizes multifaceted concepts from the text, interpreting visual photographic evidence flawlessly.
Execution & Engagement (Practical Application)	Model is incomplete or does not utilize elements reflecting the textual descriptions.	Model displays partial structural completion; uses materials with limited alignment to historical realities.	Constructs a complete, well-thought-out physical model accurately showcasing elements of a Manyatta.	Demonstrates exceptional engineering ingenuity, historical accuracy, craftsmanship, and leadership in collaborative loops.