

# Hawaiian Relationship to Nature

Lesson Plan for Grades 6-8

## Focus Question

How can a native species represent a person metaphorically?

## Lesson at a glance

Students, through the use of metaphor, will determine how a native plant or animal species can be used to describe a person's character.

## Key Concepts

The use of metaphor to connect nature and the human spirit is a universal concept and used widely in all forms of literature. In ancient Hawai'i, Hawaiians believe they were direct kin of the plants and animals that shared their world and that both animate and inanimate things possessed spiritual power or *mana*.

## Objectives

Students will research at least five native species listing 3-5 characteristics each. Students will list ways in which those species' characteristics can be translated to describe a person's physicality or spirit.

## Standards/Subject Areas

- Social Studies (Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Systems)
- Science (Learning and Human Behavior)
- Language Arts (Rhetoric, Diversity)
- Fine Arts (Symbols and Metaphors)

## Time

90 minutes (add two more class periods if using extended activities)

## Materials

- *Maoli Nō* DVD (specifically the Hawaiian Relationship to Nature Interlude & *Waikā, Pua 'Iliahi* songs)
- Writing materials
- *Hawaii's Birds* by the Hawai'i Audubon Society

### Teacher Background/Preparation

- Gather any literature source that exemplifies the use of nature as metaphor (eg., Annie Dillard, Walt Whitman, etc)
- Gather any resource that would familiarize a person with the image and information on the 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*), 'apapane (*Himatione sanguinea*), hāpu'u (*Cibotium* sp.), koa (*Acacia koa*), 'ōhi'a lehua (*Metrosideros polymorpha*)
- Search the Internet (eg. E. Maui Watershed Partnership, UH Manoa Botany Department websites)
- 'Ōlelo No'eau – *Hawaiian Proverbs and Poetical Sayings* by Mary Kawena Pukui (book)
- Hawaiian history books (for extended activity)

### Procedure

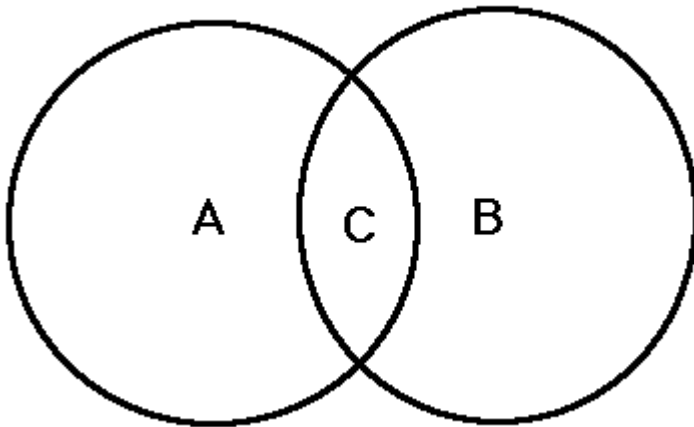
1. Begin class by giving three to four readings of literature that exemplify the concept of nature as metaphor (eg., haiku, poem, 'ōlelo).
2. Instruct students that they will research five native species: the 'i'iwi (*Vestiaria coccinea*), 'apapane (*Himatione sanguinea*), hāpu'u (*Cibotium* sp.), koa (*Acacia koa*), 'ōhi'a lehua (*Metrosideros polymorpha*). They will describe how the characteristics of those species may be used to describe a person in metaphor. They should list three to five physical characteristics per species.
3. Allow students to look through resource materials.
4. After ample time for research, gather students and introduce the *Maoli Nō* DVD which will highlight how Hawaiians viewed their relationship to nature.
5. Show Interlude #5 -- Hawaiian Relationship to Nature.  
“Ancient Hawaiians believed they were direct kin of the plants and animals that shared their world, and that both animate and inanimate things possessed spiritual power, or mana. They believed that beings with great mana could take on the form of other plants and animals, and that one’s spirit might cycle through other living things after human death. In such a world, you could talk directly to the winds and rains and expect a response, or have as your ancestral guardian the ‘io, or Hawaiian hawk, watching over you from his perch in the forest. As the youngest descendents among living family, humans had the role of caretakers, while the plants and animals, as the older siblings of the ‘āina, provided guidance. The saying goes: Heali‘i nō ka ‘āina, he kauwā wale ke kanaka. The land is chief, the human is but a servant.”
6. Now show “*Waikā*” and “*Pua 'Iliahi*” songs from the DVD, instructing students to watch for the species they selected.
7. After showing DVD, ask for a show a hands if they recognized the species they researched.
8. Give students time to list a description of how the native species characteristics can also describe a person - drawing from the book *'Ōlelo No'eau* if students need concrete examples.

### Extended Activities

Research a historical figure from Hawaii's history (god, king, chief, missionary, etc), list personality traits for that person and create a Venn Diagram that demonstrates how the person could be described by a particular native species.

### Venn Diagram

The Venn Diagram is made up of two or more overlapping circles. It is often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets. In language arts instruction, Venn Diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences in characters, stories, poems, etc. It is frequently used as a prewriting activity to enable students to organize thoughts or textual quotations prior to writing a compare/contrast essay. This activity enables students to organize similarities and differences visually.



(From the San Diego County Office of Education website --  
<http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/tvenn.htm>)