

# NATIVE AMERICAN EDUCATION FOR ALL RESOURCES

Partnership of IllumiNative and the National Indian Education Association



ILLUMINATIVE



Grade Level

3-5

Subject

Social Studies  
& Physical Ed.

Lesson Title

Learn to Dance like an  
Ojibwe Jingle Dancer

**Activity Description:** Jingle dancing and the Jingle dress are traditional dances performed by girls and women by many northern Native American tribes. The dance originated with the Ojibwe but can now be seen at various pow wows and ceremonies across different regions. The origin story of the jingle dance names it a dance of healing and a representation of life's journey. This activity features a story and learning activity about jingle dancing as well as a video lesson on how to jingle dance.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- WiFi (required)\*\*
- Shoes and clothes comfortable for dance exercise
- YouTube video [Read Aloud: The Jingle Dancer](#) by Cynthia Leitich Smith
- YouTube video [PowWowSweat: Jingle Dress](#)

\*\*All links for the main activity are from YouTube. This activity can be done on a smartphone or tablet if WiFi/data is available.

## STEPS

The Jingle Dress Dance came from the Ojibwe tribe in the north in the early 1900s. Many people tell the story that the dress came to a medicine man in a dream when his granddaughter was very sick. The spirits told him to make a Jingle dress for her to dance in and she would be healed. The Jingle Dress is named because of the rows of small metal cones called *ziibaaska'iganan*. They are sewed on the dress close together to make the jingle sound as the girls and ladies dance. The dancers must remember to keep their feet moving slightly to make the cones jingle then stop when the drum beat stops. Most dances will move in a zigzag pattern because it represents life's journey. Learn more about the Jingle Dance and then learn to do the dance yourself.

### Activity Steps:

1. First, listen to a [read aloud of the story Jingle Dancer](#) by Cynthia Leitich Smith on YouTube.
  - a. Why did Jenna only borrow one row of jingles from each person she visited?
  - b. Who did Jenna dance for?
  - c. Why does the author use different sounds in the story? What do those sounds represent?
2. Watch these dancers in this video "[Jingle Special - 2016 Gathering of Nations Pow Wow](#) in Albuquerque New Mexico" from PowWows.com
3. In *Jingle Dancer* the author uses a type of figurative language called *personification*. This means making something that is not human seem to come alive and behave in a human way. Watch this [YouTube video "What is Personification?"](#) for more examples.
  - a. In the story, the author uses personification when she is describing the time of day. Can you find these examples of personification?
  - b. Create your own examples of personification to describe the different seasons of the year. For example, in the spring the butterflies kiss the flowers and dance away.
4. Now, ask your friends and family to join you. Put on comfortable shoes and exercise clothes and learn to jingle dance with [PowWowSweat:Jingle Dress on YouTube](#).

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## HELPFUL TIPS

**Parents and caregivers:** Many families attend pow wows each year as an important part of their daily lives. These gatherings give time for communities to visit with each other and share their traditional foods and dances. Encourage your children to practice the dances from your tribe or community to participate in the pow wows. For more information on powwows and events near your community, visit <https://www.powwows.com/>

For parents who are completing these activities with their children, here is a guide for teaching this book at home. Reading is Fundamental provides a [support guide with activities](#) and additional information.

## WANT TO LEARN MORE?

**Families and educators:** The Jingle Dance is shared across many tribes and is a featured dance for ladies of all ages at pow wows. This lesson shows the regalia that is used for dresses and ceremonies like these and can create additional learning opportunities. For other instructional resources, visit these sites:

- Cynthia Leitch Smith offers [support for teaching this book](#) in class or at home on her official website.
- Minneapolis Public Schools offers a [lesson support guide for Jingle Dress Teachings](#)
- To learn more about the Ojibwe, access [these lessons from the National Endowment for the Humanities](#)

### Activity Resources:

- "Read Aloud: *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Leitch Smith" on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JoZFAgDoRQ>
- "Jingle Special - 2016 Gathering of Nations Pow Wow in Albuquerque New Mexico" on YouTube by PowWows.com <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGfA82hTwGw>
- "What is Personification?" YouTube posted by GrammarSongsbyMelissa <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhleJRpyb-Y>
- "PowWowSweat: Jingle Dress" on YouTube posted by the StyleHorse Collective <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS9-ZIX7KE8>

### Additional Resources:

- *Jingle Dancer* guide by Reading is Fundamental <https://fnmresources.weebly.com/uploads/4/0/1/3/40137599/jingle-dancer-pdf.pdf>
- *Jingle Dancer* Teacher Guide by Cynthia Leitch Smith [https://cynthialeitchsmith.com/kidbooks/kids\\_index/jingle/guide\\_to\\_jingle/](https://cynthialeitchsmith.com/kidbooks/kids_index/jingle/guide_to_jingle/)
- "Anishinabe/Ojibwe/Chippewa: Culture of an Indian Nation" lessons by the National Endowment for the Humanities <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/anishinabeojibwechippewa-culture-indian-nation>