3: Flying High

Flying kites is a popular activity once the weather gets warmer and the wind starts to pick up. Green fields, parks, and beaches are large open spaces that permit kites to freely fly; filling up the sky with various colors, shapes, and sizes! While flying kites can be a leisurely activity, in the country of Afghanistan the game of Kite Fighting, is a cultural competition that captivates the eyes of many. Kite Fighting is a game in which kite holders compete against each other by trying to cut off the opponents’ kite. The game can be played between teams or as an individual game. The Kite Flyer’s job is to maneuver the kite through the air and try to cut other peoples kites; while a Kite Runner is someone who runs after a cut kite as it falls from the sky. Once a kite has been caught by someone, it is theirs to keep! The game is quite dangerous as it results in many accidents due to the sharpness of the kite line, but despite this, many continue to partake in the game. The last kite flying in the sky is deemed the winner! While this activity does not involve Kite Fighting or dangerous kite lines, you can create your own kite and attempt to fly it in the summer skies.

Reading Recommendations:

Children

1. *A Kite for Moon* by Jane Yolen
2. *Emperor and the Kite* by Jane Yolen
3. *Kite* by Mary Packard
4. *Curious George Flies a Kite* by H.A. Rey
5. *What Can You Do in the Wind* by Anna Grossnickle Hines

Juniors

1. *The Kite Rider* by Geraldine McCaughrean
2. *Kites, Kites, Kites* by Bruce H. Mitton
3. *Kites on the Wind* by Emery J. Kelly
Teens
1. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
2. *Kiteworks* by Maxwell Eden
3. *Setting Free the Kites* by Alex George

Activity:

Materials
- plastic bag (garbage bag)
- string
- ribbon
- two sticks (one your sticks can be garden stakes, dowels, straight twigs, or simple skewers)
- scissors

Procedure
With your material ready to go, it’s time to start making a kite suitable for flying high in the sky!

1. Take your two sticks and and make a “†” shape with the sticks crossing over each other, so the cross stick should be tied about one third of the way along the the main stick. Using a piece of string tie the two sticks together.
2. To tie the sticks together, wrap the string around the back of the main stick and cross the string across the front of the cross stick. Then wrap the ends of the string back around the back of the main stick and make a single knot. Then wrap each end of the string one around either side of the front of the cross stick and back again around the back of the main stick. Then make a double knot. Know your kite frame is complete!
3. Now it is time to cut your sail and attach it to the frame. Take the plastic bag and cut the bag so it fits the frame of the kite. Tie the ends of the bag to the stick frame. No need to use glue or tape. Just keep the knots tight!
4. With the bag secure and attached to the frame, next you shall attack the flying string.
5. First, tie a piece of string from one side of the cross stick to the other, leaving some slack so the string can be pulled slightly down to form a triangle.
6. Then, tie the end of a BIG BALL of string to the bottom portion of the main stick, loop under the slack cross string and tie a simple knot at the intersection of the two strings (so it forms a triangular pyramid shape).
7. With the flying rope attached to the frame of the kite, you can now decorate the kite. Tie lovely ribbons to the end of the kite in order to help balance it. You can even attach a small weight, like a washer, if the ribbons don't seem hefty enough for your kite. Draw images or paint designs on the kite sail.
8. Everything is now set for you to fly in the sky! Search for a windy day and release your kite into the sky, but be sure to hold on to the end of the string to navigate and direct your kite as it takes flight. Note: the best way to launch the kite is to have friend hold it while you back up slowly into the wind. Have your friend let the kite go and let the string out. OR, you can just hold it and run wildly into the wind! Either way works.
Dive Deeper:
After reading and/or completing the activities, does this topic peak your interest?

Check out these websites to further explore the topic of kites:
1. In Kabul, Kite Flying is More Than a Sport — https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2009/06/in_kabul_kite_flying_is_more_t.html

Check out these videos and films to visually learn more:
2. Afghan Kite Runners — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TrOSfp0m50U
3. Let’s Make a Kite! — https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mc3AUuuj9_1
4. The Kite Runner (2007 Film)

To stimulate the brain and engage in active learning, ask these questions:

Looking to build upon writing skills? Share your responses to these questions in a personal journal or brief paragraph essay.
Looking to build upon verbal communication and discussion based skills? Share your responses around the dinner table at night with family members; each person can contributes to the conversation with their own perspectives.
Looking to visually demonstrate your ideas? Share your responses by drawing and labeling a diagram, creating a storyboard with pictures, construct a 3D model, or acting out a scene.

1. What is the cultural significance of flying kites? Is kite flying only a cultural sport in Afghanistan? How do other cultures make or use kites?

2. If you could partake in the sport of Kite Fighting, what position would you want and why… the Kite Flyer, Kite Runner, or mere spectator?

3. What happens when you try to fly a kite and it is not windy? Why does this happen? Is there a certain science or method behind successful kite flying?