



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2006 Volume IV: Native America: Understanding the Past through Things

Native American Traditions and Identity in the Art Room

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The focus of this unit is the creation of objects that represent and explore students' concepts of identity through studies in personal history and links to the physical environment. Direct comparison to the art and historical accounts of the American Indians will form an understanding of similarities in history and models for making personally representative objects. American Indian art forms are conversation pieces, multi-tasking as personal and group markers, as well as records of the culture of the surrounding areas. Examples explored with students will form a dialogue, which can open up opportunities for inspiration. Because the local physical environment is manifested in the choice of materials used in most Indian crafts, materials used in this unit should be gathered from local and authentic sources, preferably by the students themselves.

The unit is divided into sections titled Mask, Vessel, Cloth and Path. Each section provides activities that encourage the student's developing sense of self and includes a survey of American Indian art and culture.

(Developed for Art, Visual Arts, grades 8-12; VA Studies, secondary grades; recommended for Art I-IV, grades 9-12)

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