

## **Common Denominators between Primitive Art, Fine Art, Folk Art, Children's Art**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of this unit is two-fold. I first want to establish the visual connections, or common denominators, between Primitive Art, Fine Art, Folk Art and Children's Art. I wish to focus on developing lessons for my students which make a connection between these areas, and art activities that constitute a similar purpose and method. In doing so, I hope to relate to my students, on any grade level, the universality of art and how it speaks to us from all walks of life and all past civilizations. By establishing this, students will see a validity in their own expression. Students would then develop an appreciation of their work and feel successful in their attempts in painting and crafts. Grade levels will be suggested with each lesson but most lessons can be adapted to other levels.

### **Narrative**

I have been teaching art in the Pittsburgh Public Schools for 23 years. The majority of those years have been spent teaching at the elementary level. As the years passed, I began focusing more on the creative experience rather than the process itself. I couldn't help notice the ease and simplicity children display when painting or drawing. Detail was not important. Rather, honest expression, simplicity of form, and personal expression dictated the finished product. I couldn't help but notice how these small students could easily express themselves without doubt and automatically produce good design and color choices within their compositions. It was so natural to them. And when asked about their work, an honest explanation and true purpose was always expressed. Sometimes it was so amazing and I often felt a bit intimidated by this ease of expression and perfect design. Throughout my teaching years I was always amazed by this, and on reflection began to see a relationship between these elementary expressions and the expressions of the primitive artist, the folk artist and some 20th century artists. Common denominators are apparent among all of them, and therefore a statement about how man expresses himself. Because of this, after reviewing these various art periods and styles, I wanted to connect them and then utilize them together within a curriculum unit for my students. All then would learn from the other. Students would also gain confidence in their work because they will see a definite parallel between the work of well-known artists and their own work.

I want to first define each area and discuss its basic characteristics. This should help us formulate these common denominators and instruct readers about some of the connections and issues relevant to this unit. I will then outline a basic curriculum unit that can be adapted to most grade levels, drawing comparisons between the primitive artist, the folk artist, and some 20th century fine artists. This unit will produce lessons that pull from all the areas. I will use basic Folk Art themes and media to make this parallel. The production of student art should then prove, in the final comparison, a universality in subject matter as well as in the rendering of the subject .

### **Primitive Art: Art of the Third World and Early Modernism**

The term "primitive art" or the definition of primitivism has several different meanings or interpretations. According to Rubin, the word was first used in France in the 19th century and was only an art-historical term. "Artists had expanded the connotations of "primitive" to include not only the Romanesque and Byzantine but a host of non-Western art ranging from the Peruvian to the Javanese--with the sense of "primitivism" altering accordingly."(1) The term primitivism appears for the first time in Webster in 1934 as a "belief in the superiority of primitive life," which implies a "return to nature."(2) Within this expanded framework, Webster's art related definition is simply "the adherence to or reaction to that which is primitive."(3) During the beginning of the 20th century the definition changed with the discovery of African and Oceanic masks, and figure sculptures by Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck and Picasso. Primitivism then was used to refer to the tribal art

of the African and Oceanic art. Egyptian, Persian, Cambodian, and most other non-Western court styles ceased to be called Primitive and the word came to be applied primarily to tribal art. Primitive Art is then synonymous with African and Oceanic art and primitivism does not refer to the tribal arts in themselves, but to the Western interest in and reaction to them.

Gauguin is considered a starting point for the study of primitivism in modern art. He used the symbols and decorative devices of the primitive artist in his work, rather than using it as an influence in his style. Within the art of the Fauves, in the early 20th century, we see more of a synthesis of late nineteenth-century ideas rather than a radical departure in style that we see with the Cubists. The Fauves were said to have discovered African Art in 1906. They were said to have collected many tribal objects but didn't seem to directly utilize their characteristics within their art work. It was primarily with the work of Picasso and the Cubists that we see a direct tribal influence. Tribal art then became the most important influence on early 20th century art. Artists such as Picasso began collecting primitive objects and these objects became relevant to their own work.

We will continue to make reference to Rubin's book, Primitivism in the 20th Century when exploring the works of Paul Gauguin. Gauguin borrowed from the primitivism he found in the South Seas. He took much from the Polynesian Art that he viewed in museums, in photographs, and shops in Tahiti. As Rubin notes, "Gauguin saw the Tahitians both as childlike and as immemorial, as remarkably simple and direct beings who nonetheless carried themselves with a mysterious grace that suggested innate aristocracy." (4) Rubin compares Paul Gauguin's Two Figures from Ancient Culte Mahorie 1892-93, with a paddle from the Marquesas Islands, and Paul Gauguin's Wood Cylinder with Christ on the Cross 1981-1992, with an Easter Island figure. The Cylinder is said to be the richest of Gauguin's carvings and the most aggressively primitivizing.

It is said that Primitive or tribal art was discovered in 1905 by a group of Frenchman known as the Fauves. Henri Matisse is a member of this group, along with Andre Derain and Mainia Vlaminck. It was only in the early twentieth century that the characteristics of African art began increasingly to correspond to the needs and tendencies that were being felt by European artists. The Fauve style was essentially pictorial and perceptual. During the late phase of Post-Impressionism, purely optical effects were given greater emphasis than sculptural forms and color took precedence over modeling. Vlaminck claims that it was he who discovered Primitive art but this has been disputed. Matisse is said to have come upon African tribal art at about the same time, 1906, but his results were said to be much more interesting. Picasso states that it was Matisse that introduced him to African art. African art brought him to the justification of simplified forms and as Picasso states,

"Matisse really wanted to achieve at this time was the straightforward simplicity of children's art." (5)

Rubin also noted the possibility that Matisse was influenced by children's art. View Matisse's Pink Onions, 1906 "which onions are simplified and flattened like those in a child's drawing," (6) and Matisse's The Young Sailor 11, 1906 "There is something almost childlike in the straightforward simplicity of the drawing and the flat, bright planes of color." (7)

Picasso used four different types of tribal masks in his Les Demoiselles

d'Avignon, 1907. View this work in Rubin's book Primitivism in the 20th Century and note the tribal masks he associates with Picasso's work. It has not been proven that Picasso actually used these masks but scholars do say that Picasso unquestionably created these faces from his recollections of tribal art that he had seen. Also note in Rubin's text several wooden figures that Picasso collected from Africa and note how he used them in his sketches and paintings. See Figure. Baga. Guinea. Wood and Pablo Picasso, Head, Pencil 1907. Also compare Pablo Picasso's Bust of a Woman, 1960 oil on canvas with Mask, Kwakiut, British Columbia. Painted wood. Rubin makes many other comparisons in his book that can be noted.

Primitivism also plays a major role the development of Picasso's cubist style. According to Ruben, no other 20th century artist embraced the tribal style like Picasso. It was thought he had African blood in him.

"Picasso's primitivism marked a broadening of the Western language of art, erasing distinctions between high and low. It also constituted a commitment to conception and invention (that is, genius) as over and against skill and virtuosity (talent)"(8)

Rubin also discusses the connection between the art of the American Indian, Primitive Art and Fine Art. The contemporary artist, Max Earnest, was influenced by both Primitive Art and the art of the American Indian to create his own haunting and menacing forms. He collected many Kachina dolls of the Hopi and Zuni Indians. These small scale wood carvings of deities are actually children's instructional objects, representing supernatural beings. These dolls played a role in many of his sculptural pieces such as The King Playing with the Queen 1944. Rubin shows other examples with which we can make comparisons and again we will see the similarities between the art of the American Indian and Primitive Art.

In reviewing these works and Primitive Art in general, it is clear that common denominators are already evident. The comparisons are becoming evident. We see throughout, images that represent a pure and simple form, and work that is personal, honest and displays a naive charm. There is a childlike feel mentioned that is apparent in both primitive art and the work of Picasso and Matisse.

### **Children's Art and Early Modernism**

Artists other than Matisse were more explicitly influenced by children's art and some 20th century artists. Vasily Kandinsky and Gabrielle Muntzer were both collectors of children's art and Kandinsky directly uses children's art in his own work. "The child," Kandinsky wrote in 1912, "is indifferent to practical meaning since he looks at everything with fresh eyes, and still has the natural ability to absorb the thing as such.... Without exception, in each child's drawing the inner sound of the subject is revealed automatically."(9) Jonathan Fineberg states in his book Children's Art and the Modern Artist, that "Kandinsky sought in the art of the child the pushing aside of the worldly sophistication of naturalistic rendering in his art to reveal a more universal, visual language. He wanted to address a subject that transcended the materialism of his age in a form that bypassed cultural convention and resonated directly with his viewer's inner spiritual consciousness."(10) Other artists that shared this view were Paul Klee, Alexei Jawlensky and Lyonel Feininger.

Kandinsky excerpted extensively from the drawings by children in his collection for his "abstractions" of 1908 through 1914. Fineberg states that Kandinsky "altered them considerably en route to his paintings, consistently giving them an even more "childlike" appearance than the children themselves had done. His version of Elephant, (1908), for example, is considerably more primitive than the one he owned by a child."(11) Much like Picasso's and the Fauve's interest in tribal art, Kandinsky "sought common denominators in the representational syntax of children's drawings that might serve his project of constructing a universal language of art."(12) Kandinsky is also said to be the father of abstract painting. Abstract painting suggests a subject without portraying it realistically. The Innocent Eye includes Vasily Kandinsky and Gabriele Muntzer Collection of children's drawings, and how they used them in their work. For example, Kandinsky uses many of his children's drawings in his abstract painting, Improvisation 30. He borrows the handling of color, the free spatial orientation and the child-like imagery.

As noted above, Matisse was also influenced by the visual qualities of children's art. The themes of Matisse are also childlike. They reflect his favorite childhood memories such as, circuses, music halls, and faraway places. His cutout forms reflect a childlike simplicity in shape and form. He takes his themes and stories and simplifies them in an abstract form but his shapes always remind us of the object. He would also establish a pattern that would remind us of brightly colored wallpaper. This kind of patterning we will also see in Folk art as well.(13)

Again we can see the common denominators emerging within all these areas as we view the works and compare their similar traits. We have seen fine artists going back to the primitive for its simplicity of form and symbolic and decorative devices. We see them imitating children's art and actually using children's drawings

as a source. We see the use of flat areas of color, patterning and free spacial orientation emerging in all of the above areas.

## **American Folk Art**

American Folk Art has documented the American spirit and evolution. These artists captured the people, places and events that shaped this country. Through them we are given a better insight into the lives, interests and activities of our forebears. The artists today called Folk artists were self-taught or had little training. Most of the art was created for their own pleasure, to satisfy some elementary need within themselves or at the request of a patron. Religion, celebration of self, lifestyle, social injustice, history, politics, and patriotism are but a few sources that motivated these artists. A variety of art forms emerged but some generalizations can be made. Nina Fletcher Little, one of the earliest scholars in this field, describes Folk Art "as the art of the people, often anonymous or forgotten men and woman. It lives in its own world and is responsive to it's own surroundings. It was produce by amateurs who worked for their own gratification and the applause of their families and neighbor, and by artisans and craftsmen of varying degrees of skill and sensitivity who worked for pay."(14)

Folk Art is simple. Its naive, personal, and honest. The folk artist was not concerned with technical skill but rather personal and primitive in their approach to art. Some consider modern folk art "primitive" works made by self-taught artists. According to Fletcher, "The American folk artist occupies that brief interval between the invention of the simple things for their own pleasure in each household and in each village and rise of industrial production toward the end of the 19th century."(15) The production of crafts and household items were an important area for the folk artist. Quilts, woodcarvings for ship decorations, whirligigs, the weathervane and objects made from clay, are just some of the crafts of the folk artist. In addition, portrait painting, as well as landscape painting and furniture, were created by became the media of the folk artist.

Some of the characteristics of Folk Art we can parallel within the work of the fine artist and the primitive artist would be, again, simplicity of shape, incorrect anatomy, little modeling, and an emphasis on patterning. Folk Art is conceptual, naturalistic, practical, sometimes childlike, other times very sophisticated, decorative, naive, the art of the people and by the people, that addresses the lives of the people.

Edward Hicks, Grandma Moses, John Kane of Pittsburgh and Horace Pippin, one of the most celebrated black artists of the century, can be highlighted when discussing Folk art. Edward Hicks is known widely for his paintings called The Peaceable Kingdom, 1834. There are over 60 paintings of this name by Hicks. Each is different and one can see a direct development of a basic idea. Each picture contains two groups, an assortment of wild animals that seem to be mystically under the control of a child, and a group in the background that is taken from Benjamin West's Penn's Treaty with the Indians, 1771, all set within a landscape resembling the Delaware River Valley. The scene is based on the Isaiah 11:6 and foretells the coming of peace on earth. Here we see simple forms, incorrect anatomy, and a religious theme close to the lives of the people. Hicks used patterning and inscriptions in his other works especially his sign painting, for example, The Falls of Niagara, 1825.(16)

Grandma Moses didn't start painting until she was 70. She painted what she knew and went about finding ways to do it. Her work is direct, and simple. She painted many landscapes of the countryside she knew. She kept working at color and perspective. There is a naive charm in all her pictures. Hassock Falls in Winter 1944 is a good example of a landscape picture by Grandma Moses.(17)

John Kane was the first American artist to win acclaim during his lifetime in 1927. He was accepted into Pittsburgh's Carnegie International Exhibition. Kane did landscapes, portraits and self-portraits. His landscape pictures of Pittsburgh were said to be largely done from photographs and memory. Like all great landscape painters, John Kane evolved his own techniques to substitute for those he would have learned in art school. Sky Hooks: The Autobiography of John Kane, contains many of his works.(18)

Horace Pippin is a celebrated black folk artist. He once said, "My opinion of art is that a man should have love for it because my idea is that he paints from his heart and mind, a belief that is clearly reflected in his thoughtful yet emotional paintings that reach into the soul of the black experience in America." (19) The painting, Man on a Bench, 1888-1946, which was one of his last, illustrates the powerful mood and color Pippin so wonderfully exhibits. This work can be found in Folk Art in American Life by Robert Bishop and Jacqueline M. Atkins.

African American artist William Johnson also uses flat color and stylized shapes to create emotional images. Both American and African influences are reflected in the shapes Johnson used to create one of his best known works, Going to Church, 1940-41. Here again we see angular form, simple geometric shapes and contrasting color stripes, which duplicate the patterns found in African fabrics and African-American Quilts. The simple flat form recalls not only the simple forms of Matisse but this picture, in particular, resembles Folk Art. (20)

It can be noted here that many fine artists admire folk artists for their personal and primitive approach, which they saw as similar to other work they studied, such as primitive art and children's art. Today, artists still study the Folk Artist because they too want to say something about the times we live in. Many contemporary fine artists still wish to make their paintings, personal, and decorative. Interest in Folk Art has not gone away. It is popular because it goes beyond technique to say something personal to a great number of people, in a simple, forceful way. I can't help but also think here about artists like Andy Warhol and other contemporary artists whose work is solely based on a personal approach that also makes a statement about the times. This work is so simple, that when my students see it, I always hear them say, "I could do that."

### **Unit of Study**

This unit of study will contain lessons that intergrate the study of Primitive Art, Fine Art, and Folk Art which will help generate Children's Art. These lessons will mainly focus on the art of the Folk Artist in America but the common denominators of all will be intergrated.

### **Procedure**

Each lesson will contain several objectives and incorporate the content standards. Each lesson can be adapted to different grade levels and require more in depth study, the higher the grade level. Projects should also become higher level as the grade increases. All lessons should be based on lecture, with comparisons, active participation, discovery, and free expression. When lessons are finished, pieces should be and can be critiqued with comparisons made between the child's work and the primitive artist, the fine artist, and the folk artist.

The following lessons are taken from these areas of American Folk Art.

The Portrait

The House and Home

The Work of the Needle and the Loom

Sculpture; the Weathervane, the Whirligig

Clay

## Lesson 1--Portraits, Self-Portraits

### Objective

Students will view African Masks and other primitive images, they will also view Picasso's portraits and self-portraits. Students will compare the detail from Picasso's painting, Les Demoiselles d'Avignon 1907, with an African mask. Students will view other works by Picasso, such as Gertrude Stein 1906, and several self-portraits, such as, Self-Portrait with Palette, 1906 and Self-Portrait and Man with Violin, 1912.

Portraits and self-portraits by Folk Artists will also be used and compared with Picasso, including Unidentified Sea Captain, 1830, attributed to Sturtevant J. Hamblen and Woman in a Mulberry Dress, 1835 by Issac Sheffield, as well as, Self-Portrait 1860-1934 by John Kane. The African masks and other primitive images that inspired Picasso will again be compared.

Questions should be asked of students to stimulate the comparisons so that the common denominators between these styles and periods can be demonstrated.

Questions that can be asked include:

"What do you think the artist was trying to tell us about the person or persons in the pictures?"

"Describe how the artist portrays the person or persons in the picture."

"Why do you think the artists chose to represent their subjects in these particular ways?"

"For what purpose might the picture or mask have been made?"

"How are the portraits different?"

"How are the portraits similar?"

"Do the portraits show modeling and shading?"

"Do the faces and bodies show correct proportion like a photograph would, or like the portrait of Mrs. Thomas Boylston, 1766, by John Singleton Copley?" (18)

"Why do you think masks were made and what were they used for?"

Students can then choose to paint their self-portrait or do a portrait of someone else. It could be a family member or a famous person in history. They may use photos. They could pick someone in the class or they could paint each other and include something of their sitters personality within the painting.

## Procedure

Students will practice sketching out portrait first. If paint is the chosen medium materials should be decided upon, such as the type of paint and the surface the paint will be put upon. Preparing a palette of color and a discussion of the making of flesh tones will probably occur. Other objects can be put into the portraits as seen in the Folk Art portraits. The surface area will then be planned and sketched and students will begin.

## Assessment

Students will successfully complete a portrait or self-portrait in paint. Upon completion of student work, a discussion of their work as well as a comparison of it to the work of the folk artist, Picasso, and the African mask will occur. Students should describe the meaning this lesson has had for them.

This lesson will have covered all Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities.

## Lesson 2 : Landscape painting ; The House and Home

### Objective

Students will view landscape painting by folk artists. The landscape, Hoosick Falls in Winter, 1944 by Grandma Moses will be viewed and discussed. The painting,

Manchester Valley, 1914-18 by Joseph Pickett and Edward Hick's Peaceable Kingdom, 1944 will also be viewed and discussed. These works can be found in Wayne Craven's book, American Art. Some of the discussion should be centered around the characteristics found in folk art landscapes, such as the emphasis in rural life . The visual representation is not always accurate but there is a sophistication in matters of design, a creation of patterning within, and the obvious paralleling of lines going both horizontally and diagonally. Also introduced should be a landscape by John Kane such as Homestead, 1927.

Viewing some of the landscapes by Gauguin such as We Hail thee Mary, 1891, located in Rubin's Primitivism in the 20th Century will also help students to compare similarities and differences.

Questions should be asked of students to stimulate the comparisons so the common denominators between the styles and periods can be demonstrated.

Questions that can be asked:

"What's going on in this picture?"

"Does anyone else see something different?"

"How are the pictures similar and how are they different?"

"What do you think the artist was trying to tell us about this place?"

"Why do you think the artist might have made a picture like this?"

"Do you see any similarities or differences between the landscapes of Hicks and those of Gauguin?"

"Do you see any similarities or differences between the landscapes of Hicks and those Grandma Moses?"

## **Procedure**

Several different projects can come from this lesson. Students could be asked to sketch out a section of their neighborhood or street. A group can then come together if they live in the same area and sketch out a large neighborhood mural. It can be colored in with crayon or several media could be used. After completion students may want to add extras. I personally did this project with my class one year and we punched holes with clear Christmas tree lights through the background. We taped the lights to the back of the paper so the lights just came through. When lit, it looked great.

Another project related to this lesson could be that the student sketches out his own house or street and then creates a painting on cardboard, since many folk artists painted on cardboard.

If your school area is interesting or an interesting landscape can be seen from school grounds, students can go outside and sketch an area. My students love to go outside and draw and the results are usually great. They also develop an understanding of landscape drawing from this exercise. These drawings can then be translated to a painting within the classroom.

## **Assessment**

Students will successfully complete a landscape drawing and painting. There should be a better understanding of landscape drawing and the student should be knowledgeable of the characteristics of folk art landscape painting. Students will view their work against that of the folk artist.

This lesson will have covered all Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities.

This lesson can be adapted to any grade level. Media chosen will depend on the grade level. The level of discussion will also be dictated by the grade level.

## **Lesson 3: The Work of the Needle and Loom: Creating a Quilt**

### **Objective**

Begin this lesson with a discussion of the history of quilting. American women began making quilted bedcovers in the 19th century. They would piece together remnants from worn-out clothing, upholstery fabrics, and window hangings. These bedcovers became a priceless legacy of beauty for posterity. There are different types of quilts such as the whole-cloth quilts and the patchwork quilt. The whole-cloth quilt is made of two large pieces of fabric, one used on top and one beneath the stuffing. Examples such as Sunday School Picnic Quilt, 1932 by Jennie Achenbach and Baltimore Album Quilt; 1840 inscribed "Sarah Poll and Mary J. Pool". In addition, quilts such as the Sacret Bibel Quilt, (sic) 1875-1895 by Susan Arrowood should be noted because of the deep religious convictions of the maker. It depicts different stories from the Bible and labels them (in her spelling) on the quilt explaining the different scenes. All of these Quilts can be found in Folk Art in American Life by Robert Bishop and Jacqueline Marx Atkins. The "Quilting Bee" was an event which allowed the ladies both to socialize and relax as well as to make a quilt. There are quilt patterns which usually reflect regional folklore and others that represent a religious bent. About four hundred actual quilt patterns have been identified.

Questions should be asked of students to stimulate the comparisons so the common denominators between the styles and periods can be demonstrated.

Questions that can be asked:

"What similarities or differences can you see between the different kinds of quilts?"

"Do you see any connection between the patterning on a quilt and the patterns we find in other types of art?"

"What is going on in this quilt?"

"Does it tell a story?"

### **Procedure**

The class or school could discuss a theme for a quilt. The quilt could be very simple with small children or develop into something very involved and all school oriented. Choose a theme accordingly. It could be an environmental quilt, for a science class project, it could represent their city, it could represent the seasons of the year, a school activities quilt, or represent important events that have happened during a certain time frame.

Very small students could do something as simple as fabric crayons on paper and then iron on cloth. Patches could be sewn together and a border attached. Older students could do something more involved and could use a variety of materials within their patch. A lesson in sewing will be necessary.

My son's school recently celebrated their Sesquicentennial year. Since I am parent representative in charge of the art show every year, the art teacher and I decided we wanted to do something special to commemorate this event. What better way than to create a school quilt. It turned into an all school project, not only involving the students but teachers and parents. We had many a "quilting bee". Before we began, I had a professional quilter come and not only talk to the school about quilting but show examples of her work. Several teachers in the school already belonged to quilting clubs and anxiously set up. We had to borrow a special quilting loom due to the size involved.

I was amazed at how many are around, especially at churches. The theme was divided into two parts, the school's past and the school today. Each homeroom picked something or an event that happens in the school today and produced a patch. The parents and teachers sewed the patches in between which represented the past history. It took them 6 months but the result was wonderful. It was truly an all school and community project. An illustration of it can be found at the end of this lesson.

### **Assessment**

Students or others will successfully complete a quilt based on a theme. Students will understand the history of quilting and how they are made. This lesson will have covered all Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities.

This lesson can be adapted to any grade level. The level of discussion will also be dictated by the grade level.

## **Lesson 4: Sculpture; The Weathervane, The Whirligig**

### **Objective**

Discuss the purpose and history of the folk art weathervane and the whirligig. Students will learn that weathervains were not only functional pieces but works of art as well. The figure of Gabriel as seen in the

book, American Folk Art, was used time and again. Early weathervans were cut from wood and painted. The whirligig or wind toy were made simply for pleasure. They were used out of doors where the wind would catch and rotate their paddles. The weathervane represents the second great American sculptural tradition.

No one is certain when the first whirligig was made and few have survived but their whimsical point of view is characteristic of the best American folk sculpture.

Discuss other Folk Art sculpture such as the woodcarvings for ship decorations and woodcarvings of carousel horses and cigar store Indians. Show examples from American Folk Art: Expressions of a New Spirit. Compare these to sculptural works by Picasso such as Head, which is also a wood carving found in Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Several other comparisons can be made from Rubin's book such as Picasso's Caryatid Figure, 1907.

Questions should be asked of students to stimulate the comparisons, so the common denominators between the styles and periods can be demonstrated.

Questions that can be asked:

"What can we learn from looking at these Folk Art sculptures?"

"How old do you think they are?"

"Why do you think the artist uses these images in his weathervanes and whirligigs?"

"What similarities or differences do you see between Folk Art sculpture and the sculpture of Picasso?"

"What kind of image would you use on your weathervane?"

### **Procedure**

Several lessons could be generated here according to age group. Younger students, after viewing several weathervanes, could design their own. This design could be transferred onto a heavy cardboard and then cut out. Students would then paint and attach a dowel rod at the bottom, which could be made to rotate.

Older students could make a whirligig. Students could trace figure onto a piece of thin wood and cut shapes using a coping saw. Pieces could be attached by drilling holes where arm and legs attach and insert small pieces of dowel rods so the parts would move. This would then be painted and varnished.

Other lessons could be generated from this lesson. Sculptural forms could be made from clay. Students could also carve a sculpture out of a fire brick. Students would sketch form on brick and then use a file to carve out form.

Younger students can also put together, with pre-bought wooden shapes, a wooden figure. Figure could then be painted.

### **Assessment**

Students will successfully complete a weathervane, whirligig or sculpture. There should be a better understanding of this area of Folk Art. Students will view their work against that of the folk artist. Comparisons will be made.

This lesson will have covered all Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities.

All lessons can be adapted to any grade level. The level of discussion will depend on the grade level.

## **Lesson 5 : Clay**

### **Objective**

The folk artist was widely known for his utilitarian objects made from clay. Utilitarian pottery, such as bowls and storage vessels were produced in nearly every town. The potter was an important part of the community. These pieces were highly aesthetic and sometimes frivolous. Ceramic animals, such as lions, were also made and used to decorate mantels. Examples of pottery and clay sculpture can be found in [American Folk Art: Expressions of a New Spirit](#). Folk art utilitarian objects can be compared to Indian pottery. This would be an interesting comparison because there are similarities in purpose and both utilize pattern and decorative design. Both are also personal and made by a self-taught artist. I would show some Hopi-Tewa Vessels. These pots are hand made using the coil method of pottery. This is a method that can easily be taught to all students. After completing the jars and bowls, they were painted with intricate bird designs, paired figures, or feather designs. Pots were then fired. Examples of the Hopi pottery can be found through the Getty Center for Education in their Art Print series. I have this collection at my school and use it often. It's their Multicultural Art Print Series.

Questions that can be asked of students to stimulate discussion of objects and show comparisons.

"Why do you think these objects were made?"

"Why did the artist decorate them in this way?"

Compare Indian pottery to the pottery of the Folk artist.

"How are they the same, how are they different?"

"What do you think these pots were used for?"

### **Procedure**

Students will make a pot from clay using the coil slab or pinch method. Students can also throw on the wheel if available. Students will also be able to make other forms out of clay. The proper methods and techniques of using clay will be taught. The firing of the forms will also be discussed and glazing of all pieces will be required.

### **Assessment**

Students will successfully complete a piece of pottery out of clay. They will have learned the process of firing and glazing.

This lesson will have covered all Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities.

This lesson can be adapted to almost any grade level. The level of discussion will also be dictated by the grade level.

### End Notes

1. Rubin, William. Editor. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Vol. 1. Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1984. P.2.
2. Rubin, William. Editor. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Vol. 1. Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1984. P.2.
3. Rubin, William. Editor. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Vol. 1. Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1984. P.2.
4. Rubin, William. Editor. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Vol. 1. Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1984. P.191.
5. Rubin, William. Editor. Primitivism in 20th Century Art. Vol. 1. Museum of Modern Art, New York. 1984. P.224.
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## **APPENDIX**

### **Content Standards for Arts and Humanities**

The Content Standards within the area of Arts and Humanities in the Pittsburgh Public Schools will be addressed in all lessons.

They are:

1. All students describe meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form.
2. All students evaluate and respond critically to the works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand the important features of the works.
3. All students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created.
4. All students produce, perform, or exhibit their work in the visual arts, music, dance, or theater, and describe the meanings their work has for them.