

Exploring Our State Through Art

A FLORIDA GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK UNIT

The goal of this unit is to allow students to observe the world around them and use their creativity to share their impressions of what they see, smell and feel. They will explore how folk art can be a great way to express their unique personal sense of culture and community. Ultimately, we will ask you to share your students work and story with us and we will create an interactive map site where they can see other students work for comparisons. While we recognize that there are differences, they will find many similarities with other students in differing regions of Florida that bring them together as Floridians. This will spark conversations about regions, art and what it means to be a student in Florida.

Getting started: Encouraging good observations and critical thinking through art

Before we get started with our own expressions of community through folk art, we need to think about how we define folk art.

FOLK ART encompasses a range of utilitarian and decorative media, including cloth, wood, paper, clay, metal and more. FOLK ART is made by individuals whose creative skills convey their community's authentic cultural identity, rather than an individual or idiosyncratic artistic identity. Folk Art can be described as **art that is of the people, for the people and by the people**. These artists are interested in making art that tells stories about daily life or the culture of their community. <https://folkartmarket.org/what-is-folk-art/>

The key take away is the idea that the artist is using their creative process to share how they see their community and culture.

Thus, if we want students to use their creative senses to share their understanding of their immediate surroundings, they need to make some observations and think about what they see and what it means to them and their community before setting out to create a piece of art whether it is drawing, painting, wood work, hand crafts, music, dance or a story.

Asking good guiding questions: Encourage students to look for details.

What does the world around them look like? Pay attention to colors, shapes, natural and people made objects they see. Encourage students to use a critical eye; they may be surprised by what they see. Looking from different vantage points can change the feeling they may have about what they see. For example, if you are looking at a live oak in north Florida as you walk down a canopy road, it looks very different than if you sit down under the same tree look up through its branches. It is the same tree but a very different view.

How do you feel in that place? Is there a breeze? Calm air? Warm sun? Does it make you think about a specific time or place that is important to you or your community? Many times we act,

react or do things because of where we are, a site, sound or smell can bring about emotions that we can use to inform our art.

What would you like your folk art to express about your community and about yourself?

Once students have a sense of what they want to do and have made some observations about the community they live in, it's time to select the type of art they want to create and what aspect of their community they want to highlight. Encourage them to select a topic that is meaningful to them. Some students focus their sense of community around school or how they are educated. Others focus on family and friends while others tend to focus on activities or what they do for fun. No matter which lens they select, they should think carefully about how best to portray what they want to highlight. Will they draw their observations? Paint? Sculpt? Photograph? Write about it? Sing? Remind them that this is their opportunity to share their community from their unique perspective.

Next, encourage students to write a description of that they are going to portray and why they consider it is important to share this idea through folk art. Remind them that this process should result in an original piece of art with their story of where it is, what it represents and why it is a representation of the culture of their community.

Then comes the fun part, make the art! Using whatever medium is appropriate let them soar! There are no right or wrong answers just unique creative examples of how they are interpreting an aspect of their community.

The final activity is to add the students' work to the FGA's map/site. Take a photo of the work of folk art (a copy of the text if it is a written work, an audio file if it is musical or spoken, etc.) and email it to flgeoalliance@gmail.com. Our team will upload it to the map and return your email with a link to present and share with your students.

Each work of art should include a description of the work in the following format:

Title of work:

Medium used to create the work:

Name of the artist:

Region or city in Florida it represents:

Short Description of the place it represents, what the student would want the observer to understand about their work and their community culture:

Check back regularly to see what students have been adding to the state map. Have students review the different pieces of folk art represented on the map. Ask them to discuss the similarities and differences they see represented. Encourage students develop a sense of Florida and its unique cultural identity based on the art students have shared.

Rubric for Grading:

Holistic Rating Scale

Level 4

Very effective

- Demonstrates the assigned topic in an interesting and imaginative way
- Demonstrates complete understanding of the content, methods, and skills required in a clear and concise manner
- Demonstrates a logical plan of organization and coherence in the development of ideas
- Develops ideas fully through the use of support material (examples, reasons, details, explanations, etc.) that is relevant and appropriate
- Shows skillful use of written or spoken English and the definition of folk art
- Uses specific appropriate language to describe the art project
- Makes few or no mechanical and or technical errors

Level 3

Above average

- Develops the assigned topic using an acceptable plan of organization
- Demonstrates satisfactory development of ideas through the use of adequate support material
- Demonstrates a good understanding of the content, methods, and skills required to complete the project
- Uses some sentence variety
- Uses appropriate ideas consistent with the definition of folk art
- Makes mechanical or technical errors which do not interfere with communication of the description of the art

Level 2

Average

- Attempts to develop the assigned topic but demonstrates weakness in organization and may include digressions
- Demonstrates basic understanding of the content, methods, and skills required to complete the project
- Demonstrates satisfactory development of ideas through the use of adequate support material
- Demonstrates sentence sense but has little sentence variety
- Occasionally uses inappropriate or incorrect ideas consistent with the definition of folk art

- Makes mechanical or technical errors which have minor interference with communication of the description of the art

Level 1

Below average

- Minimally addresses the assigned topic but lacks a plan of organization
- Does not use support material in the development of ideas or uses irrelevant material
- Lacks understanding of the content, methods, and skills required to complete the project
- Demonstrates unsatisfactory development of ideas through the use of adequate support material
- Poor sentence structure and selection
- Uses inappropriate or incorrect ideas consistent with the definition of folk art
- Makes mechanical or technical errors which interfere with communication



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