

Lesson Plan: The Art of Telling A Story

Compelling Question Can you create art to tell a story?

Grade Level/Course

3rd

Estimated Time 30-minute Social Studies Block

Suggested Unit Unit 3, Where We Were Part 1

Objectives

- 3.H.1.1 Explain how the experiences and achievements of women, indigenous, religious, and racial groups have contributed to the development of the local community.
- 3.H.1.3 Use primary and secondary sources to compare multiple interpretations of various historical symbols and events in local communities.

Background Knowledge

The Jim Crow Era happened post-Civil War and Reconstruction period. During the Jim Crow Era, African Americans were denied equal rights and institutionally excluded from many privileges in southern states. During this era, the Reynolds and Babcock families provided work and living arrangements for African American workers in the Reynolda Village and Reynolda House. Five Row was a tight-knit community built to house African American workers and their families who worked on the Reynolda estate. This community was once located across from Silas Creek Parkway, consisting of two rows of five houses and a school house used for school and church. The homes were made of a wood structure with four rooms. There was no running water or electricity in the homes. Families had to use kerosene lanterns, coal heaters and well or outside piped water for their home amenities. Flora Pledger and Harvey Miller both worked in the Reynoldses' house and were residents of the Five Row community. Flora cleaned, did the laundry, and cooked. Harvey Miller served as the majordomo, or head butler.

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About Reynolda

Completed in 1917, Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina was originally the home of Katharine Smith and R.J. Reynolds, founder of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. Promising a healthier lifestyle, the more than 34,000-square-foot historic home was the centerpiece of a 1,067-acre estate and model farm. Over 100 people worked at Reynolda in the early 20th century. The model farm used modern technology to grow crops and raise animals. In the 1960s, Reynolda became a museum of American art and today it connects people to the beauty and complexity of the American story through its history and collections.

The museum holds more than 6,000 historic objects along with its collection of world-renowned American art on view in the historic house and special exhibitions in the Babcock Gallery. Spanning 250 years, the collection is a chronology of American art, and features artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe, Frederic Edwin Church, Alexander Calder, Romare Bearden, Lee Krasner, Stuart Davis, Martin Johnson Heade, Jacob Lawrence, John Singer Sargent, Andy Warhol and Grant Wood. Works rotate throughout the historic house frequently, and the Museum keeps [a listing of current works of American art on view here](#). View [a listing of decorative arts on view here](#).

Vocabulary

domestic servant- a person hired to work in another person’s home

tenant- a person who occupies land or property owned by another person

Five Row Community- A small community with two rows of five homes occupied by African American farm workers and their families for the Reynolda Village and Reynolda House.

Jim Crow Laws- federal laws that legalized and enforced racial segregation after the Civil War and during Reconstruction. While there were some initial gains of rights of African Americans immediately following the Civil War, Jim Crow Laws marginalized African Americans in the United States and denied rights based on skin color.

Materials

- [“Can you find the story” slides](#)
- [3- 2 -1 graphic organizer](#)
- [Flora Pledger and Harvey Miller slides](#) using sources 5,6, and 7
- [Excerpt from Oral History interview with Flora Pledger](#), Servant at the Reynolda House and resident of the Five Row Community, Interview given June 26, 1980, Interviewed by LuAnn Jones
- [Excerpt from Oral History Interview with Harvey Miller](#), Head Butler at the Reynolda House and resident of Five Row, June 7, 1980, Interviewed by LuAnn Jones
- **Source 1:** About Five Row Video <https://reynolda.org/videos/about-five-row/>

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- **Source 2:** Jacob Lawrence, *Builders No. 2*, 1968. Gouache and tempera with graphite underdrawing on paper. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, 1984.2.13. <https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/112>
- **Source 3:** Romare Bearden, *Moonlight Express*, 1978. Collage on paper. Promised gift of Barbara B. Millhouse, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, IL2020.1.2 <https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/2454/moonlight-express?ctx=cf304d11f192f2f4f2acdc21f3304e70e8ba9b23&idx=0>

Student Scaffolding (optional)

Share the following video to support students background knowledge

[Video: About Five Row](#)

Lesson Procedures

1. Introduce the lesson by Staging the Question: “How Can Art Tell A Story?” Have them compare and contrast two artworks by Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden.
2. To give students more insight, share and briefly discuss the [Video: About Five Row](#)
3. Pose the question: What do we find in a story? How can art help us tell a story? Think about the video, how can art be used to tell the story of Five Row?
4. Explain and share with students two excerpts from interviews given by Flora Pledger and Harvey Miller.
5. Complete the Formative Assessment by having students choose one of the interviews and complete a 3-2-1 graphic organizer.
6. Pose the argument: Art can be a visual tool to tell a story. Ask students to share out and explain if they agree or disagree with this statement.
7. Have them complete the Summative Assessment by drawing their vision of life in Five Row based on what they have learned.
8. Hang the drawings up around the room and have students complete a gallery walk to view their classmate's artwork. Based on their own knowledge about Five Row, have them think about the story each drawing is telling.
9. Have students stand by their drawing and share out about their drawing and why they chose to represent life in Five Row the way they did.

Staging the Question

Compare and Contrast the artwork by Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden using the [“Can you find the story” slides](#). Ask the following questions: Can you find “a” story in their artwork? What do you see in each artwork? How does it make you feel? What are you thinking? What are you wondering? Complete a venn diagram as a whole class. Then ask the question: How can you use art to tell a story?

Lesson Steps:

1. Use the “Can you see the story?” slides to discuss the artwork of Jacob

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Lawrence and Romare Bearden. Facilitate a See, Think, Wonder strategy to discuss each artwork. Then use the venn diagram to compare and contrast both artworks.

2. Use the video [About Five Row](#) to give students background information about this community to help reflect on their understanding. Facilitate a brief discussion on the video to reflect what they understand.
3. Use the Flora Pledger and Harvey Miller slides to display as visuals as you share the excerpts from their interviews. Have students complete the 3-2-1 graphic organizer to help them reflect on their thoughts and understanding.
4. Discuss how art can visually tell a story. Refer back to the Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden painting and collage and briefly discuss how artists tell stories visually.
5. Have students draw pictures to represent what they have read about life in Five Row in the excerpts.
6. After students finish their drawings display them and have students discuss their drawings with the group.

Guiding Questions

What do we find in a story? How can art help us tell a story? How can art be used to tell the story of the Five Row community at Reynolda?

Formative Performance Task

Have students complete a [3- 2 -1 graphic organizer](#) about the former Reynolda workers. What do you notice about their story. Tell three things you notice; Two important thing they said; One thing that makes you wonder about life living in Five Rows.

Summative Performance Task

Have students complete a drawing to tell the story of either Flora Pledger or Harvey Miller. Have them complete 2-3 sentences about their drawing and how it connects to Harvey or Flora Pledger. Display students' art pieces around the room and have them complete a gallery walk to view their classmate's work. Have students stand by their artwork to share and explain their vision of life for Five Row workers. *** Students can take notes to figure out what story each drawing tells using sticky notes or a graphic organizer.


Enrichment Resources


Plan a field trip to the Reynolda House for a tour to learn more about the Reynolds and Babcock families and to see the *Still I Rise* exhibit.

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Sources

Source 1	Citation: Reynolda House Museum of American Art, <i>About Five Row</i> , YouTube video, 3:12, August 6, 2021, https://reynolda.org/videos/about-five-row/
	Video: About Five Row

Source 2	Citation: Jacob Lawrence, <i>Builders No. 2</i> , 1968. Gouache and tempera with graphite underdrawing on paper. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, 1984.2.13. https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/112
	 A painting by Jacob Lawrence titled 'Builders No. 2'. It depicts three men in a workshop or construction site. One man in the foreground is wearing a blue shirt and light-colored pants, leaning over a workbench. Another man in a blue shirt and dark pants is standing behind him, and a third man in a blue shirt and dark pants is standing to the right. They are surrounded by various tools and materials, including a large wooden beam. The style is characteristic of the Black Struggle series, with bold colors and a focus on the human form.

Source 3	Citation: Romare Bearden, <i>Moonlight Express</i> , 1978. Collage on paper. Promised gift of Barbara B. Millhouse, Reynolda House Museum of American Art, IL2020.1.2 https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/2454/moonlight-express?ctx=cf304d11f192f2f4f2acdc21f3304e70e8ba9b23&idx=0
	 A collage by Romare Bearden titled 'Moonlight Express'. It depicts a tropical scene with a man sitting on a checkered blanket on a sandy beach. There are palm trees, a full moon in a dark blue sky, and various tropical plants and animals. The style is characteristic of Bearden's work, with a focus on the human form and a rich, layered composition.

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Source 4	<p>Citation: <i>Ellis and Flora Pledger near a building in Five Row</i>, circa 1915. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, 20-1111-01. Flora Pledger worked at Reynolda from 1935-1962, serving as a laundress and later a cook; she was also a resident of Five Row. https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/1530/ellis-and-flora-pledger-near-a-building-in-five-row?ctx=8670ab098ec8843155dda9cfe7709abfd5302f1b&idx=0</p>
	

Source 5	<p>Citation: <i>Harvey Miller was raised in Five Row and succeeded John Carter as majordomo, or head butler</i>, circa 1950. Photograph. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, 20-1118-07 Harvey Miller was the head Butler at Reynolda when Mary and Charlie Babcock lived there; he also grew up in Five Row, https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/1545/harvey-miller-was-raised-in-five-row-and-succeeded-john-carter</p> <p>And</p> <p><i>Harvey Miller in garden in front of sun porch</i>, circa 1970. Photograph. Reynolda House Museum of American Art, 20-1105-03 https://reynoldahouse.emuseum.com/objects/1542/harvey-miller-in-garden-in-front-of-sun-porch?ctx=60004cd187b1ed8c313990150fdb5b11d3ea8560&idx=0</p>
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Images of Harvey Miller, Head Butler at Reynolda House