Water, Wind, Breath: Southwest Native Art in Community

An exhibition at the Barnes Foundation, February 20–May 15, 2022

Resources for Teachers and Students

This teacher resource contains recommended books, videos, and guiding questions, as well as brief introductions to some of the major contemporary artists featured in the Barnes Foundation exhibition Water, Wind, Breath: Southwest Native Art in Community. In this exhibition, students will see work by Native artists of different backgrounds and practices. The exhibition highlights aspects of Indigenous history, including the Pueblo Revolt and the Long Walk of the Navajo, and living traditions that promote individual and community well-being. This teacher resource expands on these themes in order to guide meaningful discussions among students.

Curriculum Standards

Pennsylvania Core Standards: English Language Arts

- CC.1.2: Reading Informational Text: Students read, understand, and respond to informational text—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.
- CC.1.5: Speaking and Listening: Students present appropriately in formal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.

National Visual Arts Standards

- Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning
- Connecting: relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context

C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries
- Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools
Read

**BOOKS FOR PRE-K – 1:**

- **Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story** by Kevin Noble Maillard
  This book, vibrantly illustrated by Pura Belpre Award winner and Caldecott Honoree Juana Martinez-Neal, depicts a modern Native American family.
  

- **When the Shadbush Blooms** by Carla Messinger and Susan Katz
  This story is about a young Lenape girl who observes and reflects on the ways her family and ancestors celebrate the seasons.
  
  [http://www.whenestheshadbushblooms.net/home.html](http://www.whenestheshadbushblooms.net/home.html)

**BOOKS FOR GRADES 2 – 4:**

- **Greet the Dawn: The Lakota Way** by S. D. Nelson
  This book offers young readers a joyous way of appreciating their culture and surroundings. The author draws inspiration from traditional stories and creates artwork that fuses modern and traditional elements.
  

- **We Are Still Here! Native American Truths Everyone Should Know** by Traci Sorell
  Twelve Native American kids present historical and contemporary laws, policies, struggles, and victories in Native life, each with a powerful refrain: “We are still here!”
  
  [https://www.tracisorell.com/we-are-still-here](https://www.tracisorell.com/we-are-still-here)

**BOOKS FOR GRADES 5 – 8:**

- **Children of Clay: A Family of Pueblo Potters** by Rina Swentzell
  This book follows a Pueblo family as they carry on the Pueblo pottery tradition.
  

- **The People Shall Continue** by Simon J. Ortiz
  Told in the rhythms of traditional oral narrative, this is a powerful history of the Indigenous peoples of North America.
  
  [https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-people-shall-continue)

- **What the Eagle Sees: Indigenous Stories of Rebellion and Renewal** by by Eldon Yellowhorn and Kathy Lowinger
  This book shares accounts of the people, places, and events that have mattered in Indigenous history from their own vastly underrepresented perspective.
  
BOOKS FOR GRADES 9 – 12:

- **Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices** by Lisa Charleyboy & Mary Beth Leatherdale
  This is a powerful and visually stunning anthology from some of the most groundbreaking Native artists working in North America today.

- **#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women** by Lisa Charleyboy & Mary Beth Leatherdale
  #NotYourPrincess presents an eclectic collection of poems, essays, interviews, and art that express the experience of being a Native woman.

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**Ask**

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

- How does art help marginalized people to share their stories?
- What are the ways in which we use art to talk about challenges in our society?
- How does art contribute to our wellness and overall well-being?
- Can we use art to keep traditions alive?

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**Watch**

- **Craft in America: Navajo Weavers Barbara Teller Ornelas & Lynda Teller Pete as Teachers (11m 45s)** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axGeXfOPU84](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axGeXfOPU84)

- **Craft in America: Cochiti Pueblo potter Diego Romero on Identity (12m 5s)** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEH2fp1HJzl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEH2fp1HJzl)
**Research**

**Navajo: Teachers/Students (Grades 5 and up)**

1) [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navajo-people](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Navajo-people): This website gives a brief overview of Navajo culture, religion, and history.

2) [https://serc.carleton.edu/research_education/nativelands/navajo/culture.html](https://serc.carleton.edu/research_education/nativelands/navajo/culture.html): This website goes more in depth of the environment of the Navajo nation, complete with information about climate and geology.

3) [https://kids.kiddle.co/Navajo_people#Visual_arts](https://kids.kiddle.co/Navajo_people#Visual_arts): This website provides more information about Navajo culture, with a focus on visual arts such as silverwork and weaving.

4) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Tj4lr8i_k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Tj4lr8i_k): *Beauty before Me*, a short film that explores the spiritual traditions of weaving and tells the story of the mythological Spider Woman and her influence on the tradition.

5) [https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/long-walk/long-walk.cshtml](https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360/navajo/long-walk/long-walk.cshtml): This source details the Navajo Long Walk using maps, images, and firsthand accounts.

**Navajo: Students**

1) [https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Navajo/353520](https://kids.britannica.com/kids/article/Navajo/353520): This short article provides some easier to read information for students and is useful for a short reading activity.

**Pueblo: Teachers/Students (Grades 5 and up)**

1) [https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pueblo-Indians](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Pueblo-Indians): This website gives a brief overview of Pueblo culture, religion, and history.

2) [https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pueblo_Indians](https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Pueblo_Indians): This website delves further into Pueblo history, religion, and present-day Pueblo peoples.

3) [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/06/travel/ancestral-puebloans-us-southwest.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/06/travel/ancestral-puebloans-us-southwest.html): This article gives a fascinating insight into a man who toured the ancient Pueblo ruins, and it includes stunning pictures of the architecture.

4) [https://www.britannica.com/art/Pueblo-pottery](https://www.britannica.com/art/Pueblo-pottery): This article details the history, styles, and techniques of Pueblo pottery and shows some imagery of the artform.

5) [https://www.wnpa.org/hubbell-trading-post/](https://www.wnpa.org/hubbell-trading-post/): Read about the Hubbell Trading Post in Arizona, the oldest continuously operating trading post in the American Southwest. It was here that Dr. Barnes purchased Navajo textiles and other Native American art.

6) [https://indianpueblo.org/a-brief-history-of-the-pueblo-revolt/](https://indianpueblo.org/a-brief-history-of-the-pueblo-revolt/): This website details the events surrounding the Pueblo Revolt.
Pueblo: Students

1) https://www.crowcanyon.org/EducationProducts/pueblo_history_kids/timeline.asp: This website is tailored for younger students. It provides pictures, timelines, and descriptions of the different Pueblo time periods.

Article

1) https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520316775-009: “Pueblo and Navajo Weaving Traditions and the Western World”: This article explores the history of these native artforms, which have Western influence.

Useful Books/Videos:

1) https://www.pbs.org/video/kued-documentaries-we-shall-remain-navajo-culture/: This video provides context on Navajo culture and aspects of legacy.
2) https://youtu.be/kf_1YoNORrU: Hear a traditional Navajo greeting.
3) https://youtu.be/HkAggO4D8Og: Loom with a View: This video looks at modern Navajo weavers.
4) https://youtu.be/ZlgY3p2kXVw: Master Artist Workshop: This short video details a weaving workshop by Navajo artists.
15) [link]: Catholic Health Initiative video on Navajo weaver Lynda Teller Pete.

16) [link]: Curator Velma Kee Craig on the Heard Museum exhibition *All at Once: The Gift of Navajo Weaving*.

17) [link]: *How the Stars Fell into the Sky* is a retelling of a Navajo folktale that details how First Woman tried to write the laws of the land using stars in the sky, only to be thwarted by the trickster Coyote. Ages 4–7. ($7.99)

18) [link]: *Pueblo Indian Wisdom: Native American Legends and Mythology* explores Pueblo traditions, customs, and religion. ($16.95)

19) [link]: This resource provides a more in-depth look at learning within the context of culture.
Roxanne Swentzell is a Santa Clara Pueblo sculptor, ceramic artist, activist, and gallerist. She is a descendant of a long line of Santa Clara Pueblo potters. After watching her mother, Swentzell began to experiment with clay as a child. As a speech impediment made it difficult for her to communicate, clay sculptures became her primary means of communication to express her inner emotions.

“You clay people who dance through my soul, dance right on through me... Like children out in the world I send you and hope you find love out there.”

—Roxanne Swentzel

Swentzell’s work addresses personal and social themes including respect for family, for cultural heritage, and for the Earth. For each piece, she forms clay into thick coils to create the walls of the hollow figures, a process which takes two to four days.

Ask

- What do you think we can know about an artist through their sculptures?
- How might clay sculptures show a variety of emotions?
Virgil Ortiz is a Cochito Pueblo visual artist known for his pottery and fashion design. The youngest of six children, Ortiz grew up in a creative environment in which storytelling, collecting clay, gathering wild plants, and producing figurative pottery was part of his everyday life. First and foremost a potter, Ortiz mentions that clay is at the core of all of his creations. He transforms Cochito pottery traditions into contemporary visions that merge Pueblo history and culture with contemporary themes like science fiction.

“It’s important to recognize that Pueblo communities are very much alive and have a level of vitality that speaks to generations of strength, persistence, brilliance, and thriving energy.”
— Virgil Ortiz

After a successful collaboration project with designer Donna Karan, creator of DKNY, Ortiz launched his own fashion and accessory lines. With captivating, provocative, and edgy designs, his fashion pieces also echo the motifs of Pueblo pottery and the richness of Indigenous high fashion.

Ask

- Why do you think an artist would mix traditional and modern styles in their works?
- What do you think our clothing choices say about us?

Ortiz’s Blind Archer, 2020

Ortiz’s Venutian Soldiers Quest, 2020
DIEGO ROMERO

(b. 1964)

Diego Romero is a Cochito Pueblo potter who makes art that transcends his heritage by combining traditional materials, techniques, and forms of ancient Mimbres, Anasazi, and Greek pottery with comic book–inspired imagery to address contemporary issues. His comic narratives often venture themes of politics, environment, racism, alcoholism, love, life, and loss.

“I consider myself a chronologist on the absurdity of human nature.”
—Diego Romero

Romero thinks of his work as a collaboration between himself and the pot. He lets the pot speak to him in order to understand how it wants to be shaped. His love for comic books has influenced his passion for pottery significantly. His trademark “Chongo Brothers” series connects his work to Pop Art, inviting the viewer to look at Native pottery in a new way.

Ask

- How do you think we can use art to address contemporary issues?

Romero’s The Thinker, c. 2008

Romero’s Lest Tyranny Triumph, 2016 and Pueb Fiction, 2020
CARA ROMERO

(b. 1977)

Cara Romero was raised between the rural Chemehuevi Reservation in the Mojave Desert in California and the urban sprawl of Houston, Texas. She is an enrolled citizen of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe. Romero’s work depicts a blend of fine art and editorial photography, shaped by years of study and a visceral approach to representing Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural memory, collective history, and lived experiences from a Native American female perspective.

“As an Indigenous photographer, I embrace photography as my tool to resist Eurocentric narratives and as a means for opening audiences’ perspectives to the fascinating diversity of living Indigenous peoples.”
—Cara Romero

Using vibrant colors, experimental lighting, and photo-illustration, Romero explores ideas of how the supernatural world overlaps with everyday life. She actively collaborates with her models—who are her friends and relatives. Together they stage photographs to tell stories that they feel are important and give back to their Native community.

Ask

- How do you think we can tell a story using photography? What stories would you want to tell?

- How do you think movements like dances are captured using photography?
MELISSA CODY

(b. 1983)

Melissa Cody is a fourth-generation Navajo weaver known for textile art, Navajo weaving, and the Germantown Revival style (movement named after the government wool from Germantown, Pennsylvania, which was supplied to the Navajo during the era of the Long Walk). Germantown Revival is characterized by a complex interaction of traditional and historical considerations: Vivid commercial dyes were available and new economic pressures prompted enterprising Navajo weavers to adapt and create bold new textiles.

“I’m a child of ‘80s video game culture: Pac-Man, Frogger, Nintendo ... I grew up with this world of pixilation.”
—Melissa Cody

Working on a traditional Navajo loom, Cody works traditional patterns into sophisticated geometric overlays and color schemes.

Ask

- What unique qualities do you notice in Navajo weavings?

- Why do you think the artist chose these colors in her work?
Verma Nequatewa is a Hopi artist and jeweler working primarily in 18-karat gold and precious stones. She is recognized as a leading Native American lapidary artists. Nequatewa has signed her distinctive work with the Hopi feminine word for beauty, Sonwai, since 1989. It complements her uncle’s name, which was the masculine word with the same meaning.

"My life and my jewelry have been greatly influenced by two things. The first is by my good fortune to have grown up and to continue to live on the Hopi Reservation ... The second major influence is that of my uncle, Charles Loloma."
—Verma Nequatewa

By incorporating a variety of inlays and metalworking techniques, Nequatewa creates her elegant contemporary masterworks for private collectors and museums worldwide.

**Ask**

- What do you think jewelry means to us in our own cultures?
CHARLES LOLOMA

(1921–1991)

Charles Loloma was a Hopi Pueblo artist who worked in pottery, painting, printmaking, and especially jewelry design. He is considered one of the most influential jewelry designers in the Native American style. Loloma excelled in painting throughout his youth, however, after opening a pottery shop, he discovered his passion for jewelry making.

“I wish to create a relationship between the earth and myself. Sometimes we do not realize what we are kicking over. I want to make the soul come out.”
—Charles Loloma

Loloma is known for using “inner gems”—stones set into his pieces—because he believed that everyone has their own “inner gem.” His work is often compared to that of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian due to his use of linear and rectangular shapes that create a uniquely abstract texture and feeling.

Ask

- What do you think is a person’s “inner gem”?
- Do you think beauty can be just for ourselves?
BARBARA TELLER ORNELAS

(b. 1954)

Barbara Teller Ornelas is a fifth-generation Master Navajo weaver who specializes in the Two Grey Hills style. Her father worked at Two Grey Hills Trading Post in New Mexico, where she was raised with her two sisters and two brothers. The Two Grey Hills style is identified primarily by a double-diamond layout with intricate geometric design and the use of natural colored, hard-carded, and hand-spun wool. Ornelas chooses her designs based on those of her mother and grandmother. Each rug tells a story and she considers weaving a living thing.

“I feel a responsibility of carrying on our family’s tradition by teaching my family and mentoring others to help preserve this cultural legacy.”
—Barbara Teller Ornelas

Ornelas runs Navajo weaving classes to help teach the process to those who are interested in order to ensure the continuation of this art for generations to come.

Ask

- Where do you think weavers get inspiration for their works?

- What do you think the patterns on these weavings symbolize? What can we hypothesize?
GAIL BIRD AND YAZZIE JOHNSON

(Bird: b. 1949) (Johnson: b. 1946)

Gail Bird and Yazzie Johnson are Pueblo and Navajo artists, respectively, who have known each other since they were children. They have collaborated in designing and fabricating jewelry since 1972. They use non-traditional stones, which often resemble landscapes, and uncommon juxtapositions of materials like pearls, opals, and dinosaur bones.

Their designs center around high-quality gemstones. The inspiration for the majority of their pieces can be found within the designs of prehistoric Indigenous Americans. Bird and Johnson’s designs not only echo the past, but also display an exquisite modernity.

Ask

- Why do you think people wear jewelry?
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