

# COMPASS

## FOLK ART IN FOUR DIRECTIONS

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*An Educators' Resource*



AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM  
NEW YORK

Education Department  
2012



Published in conjunction with the American Folk Art Museum exhibition “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions,” on view at the South Street Seaport Museum, New York, June 20, 2012–February 3, 2013.

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# CREDITS

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Dear Educator,

Thank you for your interest in the American Folk Art Museum and the “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions” curriculum guide. This educators’ resource was developed by the museum’s education team in conjunction with the special, temporary exhibition “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions,” organized by the American Folk Art Museum and on view at the South Street Seaport Museum from June 20, 2012, through February 3, 2013.

This multidisciplinary tool was designed to inspire and support teachers of all grade levels, with the objective of enhancing subject areas already being studied in your classroom—relating a rich cross-section of topics to the uniqueness and breadth of folk art. Folk art resonates with children from a range of cultural identities, abilities, and backgrounds. Our aim is to help support the individual expression of every young learner, laying the foundation for a lifetime of critical thinking and appreciation of the arts.

The American Folk Art Museum is the premier institution devoted to the aesthetic appreciation of traditional folk art and creative expressions of contemporary self-taught artists from the United States and abroad. The museum preserves, conserves, and interprets a comprehensive collection of the highest quality, with objects dating from the eighteenth century to present. Its collection includes more than five thousand artworks spanning three centuries of American visual expression, from compelling portraits and dazzling quilts to powerful works by contemporary self-taught artists in a variety of mediums. The museum serves as an important source of vital information and scholarship in the field and is committed to making the study of folk art a vital part of the curriculum for New York City schools and beyond. The mission of the American Folk Art Museum—our task, and our passion—is to engage you in the process of looking at works of art. The American Folk Art Museum provides opportunities for you to discover not only the meaning of what you are looking at but also the power.

Welcome to the world of folk art!

Sincerely,



Dr. Anne-Imelda Radice  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



Dear Educator,

New York City has a rich history tied to its thriving harbor, which drove the development of its urban environment. The exhibition “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions” responds to this context through a lively sampling of artworks from the collection of the American Folk Art Museum that speaks to both the romanticism and the gritty realism of the seaport district. “Compass” is installed in four galleries of Schermerhorn Row, the mercantile block that was developed between 1810 and 1812 by Peter Schermerhorn, scion of a family of shipmasters and chandlers. Six counting houses were built on landfill with the intention of serving the ship trade, the market economy, and compatible small business of the time. Throughout its history the Row experienced and survived the major expansion of the seaport district in both architecture and importance as a major trading and commercial center. The Row housed various concerns throughout the nineteenth century in addition to counting houses, such as mercantile and fancy goods businesses, coffeehouses, restaurants, and hotels for locals and travelers. The American Folk Art Museum exhibition celebrates this history through four themes—Exploration; Social Networking; Shopping; and Wind, Water, and Weather—that instigate a visual dialogue about moments in the life of Schermerhorn Row and the seaport.

Sincerely,



Stacy C. Hollander

**CHIEF CURATOR & DIRECTOR OF EXHIBITIONS**



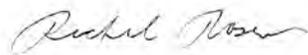
Dear Educator,

From the education team at the American Folk Art Museum—thank you very much for your interest in the museum and the “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions” curriculum guide. This resource tool was developed expressly with you and your students in mind!

The mission of the education department is aligned with that of the museum as a whole—our constant goal is to ensure that individuals of every age and background make their own meaning from these compelling works of art. To learn about collective and individual histories from a single object is an empowering act, and something that has the potential to stay with children for a lifetime of critical thinking and appreciation of visual art and cultural production. It is our hope that as your students are introduced to these carefully selected examples of folk art, they access a unique portal to American history and culture.

The American Folk Art Museum remains dedicated to serving the community by acting as a resource for teachers, students, and administrators alike—for those here in New York City and far beyond. We are here as your partner in learning and enhancing instruction. More information on our changing special exhibitions, traveling shows, and school and educator programs can be found on the museum’s website at [www.folkartmuseum.org](http://www.folkartmuseum.org). To receive a copy of the current school programs literature, please be in touch at [grouptours@folkartmuseum.org](mailto:grouptours@folkartmuseum.org). We look forward to sharing the museum with you and your students in the future.

All my best,



Rachel Rosen

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE



Featuring objects from the American Folk Art Museum that reflect American history and culture, this curriculum guide is designed to be readily adapted by educators teaching pre-K through high school levels. While classroom teachers across the city, state, and nation often teach similar content to their students, each educator has a distinct approach to engaging their learners in the material. In response to this, the American Folk Art Museum’s education team has created a guide that we hope you will feel free to borrow from and build on to meet the needs of your specific classroom environment and teaching style.

There are multiple objectives in using this curriculum guide, designed in conjunction with the temporary exhibition “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions.” One goal is to empower educators working with students from across grade levels and with varying abilities to teach from collection images presented here, and to encourage the teaching of American history through an exploration of works of folk art. Another is to encourage students to ask critical questions when investigating visual art as a primary source. We hope that this material will support dynamic learning in your classroom and help your students draw parallels with subjects they are already studying.

The images and content included in this guide complement topics and subject areas relevant to students from pre-K through high school. After the introductory lesson plan—an introduction to folk art—the curriculum guide continues with nine additional lesson plans that follow the thematic organization of the exhibition: **Exploration** (lessons 2–5), **Social Networking** (lessons 6 and 7), **Shopping** (lesson 8), and **Wind, Water, and Weather** (lessons 9 and 10). You will find that some lessons are centered on just one object, while others focus on two objects working in tandem.

For each work of art in this curriculum guide, you will find an accompanying color reproduction, background information on the object and its creator, and a list of resources that help illuminate the work. In addition, each lesson plan contains questions to spark discussion as well as suggestions for related activities and projects for students meant to extend their learning even further. The questions section is separated into three categories: **Questions for Careful Looking** ask students to observe each object in great detail and then work together to decode what they see, **Questions for Further Discussion** tie in threads of background information on the objects to further the looking process, and **Questions for Context** help students identify and understand the cultural climate in which the object was created. Unlike the Questions for Careful Looking, they encourage students to consider their responses independent of the artwork. Depending on the contextual information your students already have about the originating time and place of the object, you might want to ask these questions before or after students discuss what they see in the image.

Whether you are in the museum or your own classroom, we are certain that you will discover new and inspiring ways to integrate folk art into your teaching to make American history and culture come alive for your students!

# TEACHING FROM IMAGES AND OBJECTS

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Object-based learning, particularly from museum collections, activates students' powers of observation, interpretation, and analysis. At the American Folk Art Museum, our teaching methodology is inquiry-based and conversational. Through facilitated discussions about objects, students construct their own interpretations of the works, thus establishing ownership of their ideas and cultivating confidence and pride in learning. As students link their observations and interpretations to those of their peers and bring their prior knowledge into the conversation, the class develops a collective body of knowledge, while individuals hone their critical-thinking skills.

We recommend a few techniques that will help you guide students through the meaning-making process as you facilitate discussions about works of art:

## **Invite students to look carefully.**

Start by asking students to take a minute to look silently at the work of art. This process might at first be uncomfortable for students not accustomed to silent looking, but it will become easier with each new image. This invitation to look is essential; we are rarely encouraged to slow down to make observations. By spending a few moments together examining the image, students will start the lesson with a shared experience.

## **Use repetition in your Questions for Careful Looking.**

Repeat questions you have posed to your students with different objects so they can anticipate the questions and feel comfortable responding. Repetition will not only help students better understand questions they might not have understood the first time, it will also provide them with a series of useful starting-point questions for when they approach an image on their own.

## **Engage students through open-ended questions.**

Open-ended questions create space for multiple viewpoints and more than one "right" answer. In addition, open-ended questions encourage discussion as opposed to single-word answers. When asked to respond to an open-ended question, students are in effect invited to participate and share their ideas without fear of giving the "wrong" answer.

## **Paraphrase all students' comments.**

As students offer their ideas and interpretations, paraphrase their comments, thus ensuring that the whole group has heard each student's ideas. In addition, by voicing a student's comment in different words, you validate that comment and let the student know that not only have you heard the idea, you have understood it. Be sure to paraphrase all comments in a way that does not suggest that one comment is more valuable than another.



**Introduce new vocabulary in authentic ways.**

As you paraphrase student comments, attempt to balance vocabulary that students already have with new words. Vocabulary is best acquired when presented in context, and a discussion about a work of art in which everyone is focused on a shared stationary image provides a perfect opportunity for this experience.

**Ask students to support all observations and interpretations.**

Ask students to back up their inferences and ideas with evidence from the work of art, thus legitimizing their interpretations. Ask for visual evidence even when an interpretation seems obvious.

**Point to elements of the image to which students refer.**

If you have the opportunity to project the images, point to areas of the picture that students address in their comments. This helps ground each comment and ensures that all students can see the element being discussed.

**Weave background information into the discussion in appropriate and authentic ways.**

As students develop their interpretations about the work of art, you might want to share threads of background information with the group. Information about the object should further the looking process, contextualize the artwork for students, or appropriately challenge the group to push the limits of their thinking.

At the beginning of each lesson, you will find Questions for Careful Looking. At times these questions relate specifically to details in the work of art, while in other instances they have a more general scope—and may appear in multiple lessons in this curriculum guide. Both types of questions are equally important in the discussion, but the latter—the more general question—is critical in order for all possible observations to be heard. However, if a general discussion seems to have tapered off, simply asking for further detailed observations can revitalize conversation and allow students who haven't yet shared ideas to find new layers and meaning in the object and lead the group in new directions.

By beginning your discussion of an artwork with concrete observations, you ensure that all students have the same starting point. As the discussion progresses, students will naturally apply a historical context to the work; with markedly increasing ease, they will piece together what they see with what they know. At the same time, they will gain confidence in asking questions about what they see and seeking the information to answer them. As a result, students will use what they have taken from the conversation and apply it to the ensuing project. In the process, students will also gain experience scrutinizing primary sources and works of art in general, while at the same time cultivating their visual literacy and critical-thinking skills.



## AN INTRODUCTION TO FOLK ART

# LESSON PLAN 1

## *Noah's Ark & Funeral for Titanic*

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### **NOAH'S ARK**

Artist unidentified

Probably England

1790–1814

Bone and wood with iron, pigment,  
paper, and nails

8 1/2 x 14 x 9 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Jane, Steven, and Eric Lang and

Jacqueline Loewe Fowler in memory

of Robert Lang, 1999.14.1

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This ark was carved in a prison kitchen around the time that Schermerhorn Row at New York City's seaport district was developed. The architectural details suggest that it may have been made in Norman Cross, an English prisoner-of-war camp. Thousands of seamen, primarily French, were imprisoned in England after the end of the Napoleonic wars, many of them from the French port city of Dieppe, a center of trade with the Ivory Coast that was known for ivory carving and ship modeling. Prisoners with carving skills found a ready market for items created from animal bones recycled from prison kitchens. Aside from bone, the only supplies needed were a knife, a small amount of dye, and glue made from boiled fish bones.

### **RESOURCES**

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

McNab, Chris. *Armies of the Napoleonic Wars: An Illustrated History*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2011.

An introductory text that takes the reader through the two-decade period of battles when Napoleon led his Grande Armée and his allies against almost every European nation. Includes period illustrations and original artwork.



NOAH'S ARK





## **FUNERAL FOR TITANIC**

George Widener (b. 1962)

Ohio

2007

Ink on paper napkin

48 x 68 1/8"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of the artist, 2007.18.1

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912. A self-described high-functioning calendar savant, George Widener started collecting notable dates in a notebook as a child and finding patterns within the numbers. He had long been fascinated by the *Titanic*'s history and knew many mathematical facts about the ship. Widener became absorbed with the notion that the ship sank on a Monday and was "mourned on Tuesday." In this drawing, he has captured that Tuesday mourning in writing, starting on April 16, 1912, and going forward every Tuesday for seven hundred years. The number of Tuesdays approximately corresponds to the number of people who were rescued from the sinking ship. The monumental drawing is on white paper napkins, a material Widener started using at a time when he could not afford traditional artmaking materials. He discovered that he liked the texture of the napkins and pieces them onto larger substrates, sometimes staining them with coffee and tea.

## **RESOURCES**

"Titanic Interactive," The History Channel, [www.history.com/interactives/titanic-interactive](http://www.history.com/interactives/titanic-interactive).

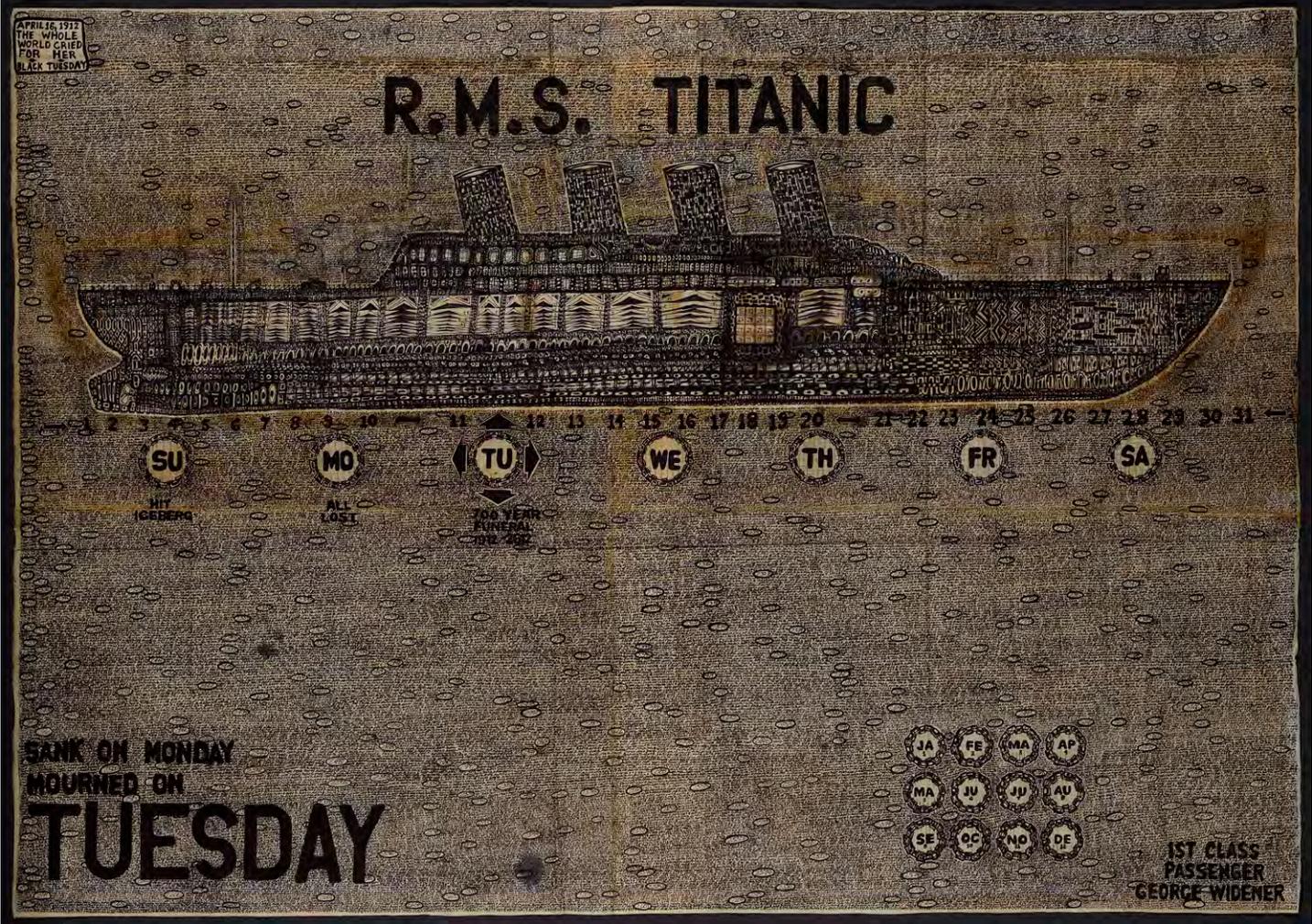
An interactive history of the *Titanic* and its sinking—complete with video, images, and key details that marked the tragic incident.

H

Ricco/Maresca Gallery website, [www.riccomaresca.com/press/widenerIslandsEnglish.htm](http://www.riccomaresca.com/press/widenerIslandsEnglish.htm).

An article that discusses George Widener's artwork and what it means to be a savant.

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FUNERAL FOR TITANIC



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### INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- Is anyone familiar with the term “folk art?”
- Who are folks?
- What other phrases use the word “folk” in them? What do folk music, folk tales, folk dance, etc., have in common?
- When you hear the term “folk art,” what kind of artwork do you expect to see?
- Let students know they will be looking at two examples of folk art that were installed in the show “Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions” at the South Street Seaport Museum. After looking, they will try to come up with a more complete picture of what “folk art” might mean.

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## Noah’s Ark

### MATERIALS

Post-its and writing utensils

### QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What do you see?
- Is this object two dimensional or three dimensional? How can you tell?
- What colors do you see?
- What materials could the artist have used to make this?
- List the different elements that make up this sculpture. What do they remind you of?
- What do you think the handle is for? Let the students know that part of the artwork rotates when the handle is cranked.
- Use the handle to think about scale. How big do you think this sculpture is?

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Share background information that the artist was a prisoner of war and carved *Noah’s Ark* in a prison kitchen. Does that give the students a clue as to what the sculpture is made from?
- Why would the artist have used bone to carve rather than wood or stone?
- Share the background information that this object is called *Noah’s Ark*. What parts of the sculpture tell that story?
- Let students know that the buildings closely resemble the Norman Cross, where the artist was likely detained after the Napoleonic War. This information helps us date the object to between 1790 and 1814. Why might people in the circumstances like those of this artist create art?
- Where else can one learn to become an artist? Do you think this artist went to art school?

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

Pass out a Post-it to each student and ask them to write down one word that helps define folk art based on their conversation about *Noah’s Ark*. There is no right or wrong answer. Transition to looking at the next image to learn more.

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## *Funeral for Titanic*

### **MATERIALS**

White paper napkins; Post-its and writing utensils

### **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- Describe what you see. What is going on in this picture?
- What are the different elements of this image? Talk about the drawing, then the text within the piece.
- What elements do you recognize? What does this object remind you of?
- What colors did the artist use? What materials? Pass out the napkins so that the students can touch them as you continue the conversation. If not paint, what readily available materials could one use to change the color of the napkin? What might the artist have used?

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- Ask students what they already know about the sinking of the *Titanic*. Make sure to share that the ship's destination was New York City.
- The artist who created this object, George Widener, discovered that he shared the same name as a man who went down with the *Titanic* when it sunk. Why might that have gotten him interested in the event?
- What skills did Widener need to create this piece of artwork?
- Share the biographical information about Widener—that he is self-taught and maintains a fascination with numbers and dates—and point out the dates in the drawing to show the connection. How did he choose to memorialize the *Titanic*?
- At first, Widener used white paper napkins in his artwork because he couldn't access other materials. Why might he have continued using them when other materials became available to him?

### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITY**

Pass out another Post-it to each student and ask them to add another word to their definition of folk art based on their conversation about *Funeral for Titanic*.



## *Both Artworks*

### **MATERIALS**

Post-its, writing utensils, and a board or table

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- What do *Noah's Ark* and *Funeral for Titanic* have in common? How are they different?
- Consider materials, subject matter, symbolism, history, what we can learn from the artworks, and information about the artists.

### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Pass out one more Post-it to each student and ask them to add one more word to their definition of folk art based on these comparisons.
- Ask students to come to a board or a table and affix their Post-its. Then have them arrange the Post-its into clusters by theme, grouping their answers with similar ones.
- What words or themes did students use the most? Is there anything the class doesn't agree with?
- To be considered folk art, it is important that an artwork was made by a self-taught artist, but let students know that the definition of folk art is something that is frequently debated.

## EXPLORATION

# LESSON PLAN 2

## *Beaver in Arctic Waters & Pair of Scrimshaw Teeth*

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### BEAVER IN ARCTIC WATERS

Artist unidentified

United States

Mid-nineteenth century

Watercolor on paper

18 x 25 3/8"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. H. Landey, 1980.36.2

### RESOURCES

“Timeline: The History of Whaling in America,” American Experience, Public Broadcasting Service, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/timeline-whaling/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/timeline/timeline-whaling/).

A multimedia tool with a wide range of resources relating to the whaling industry and seafaring culture—from eighteenth-century whale population maps to audio recordings of popular sea shanties from yesteryear.

Flayderman, E. Norman. *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders, Whales and Whalemen*. New Milford, CT: N. Flayderman & Co., 1972.

An in-depth description of the art of scrimshaw and the history of whaling.



**BEAVER IN ARCTIC WATERS**



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**PAIR OF SCRIMSHAW TEETH**  
**(Children Watching Sailboats on Pond &**  
**Family Generations)**

Artist unidentified

Nantucket, Massachusetts

1840–1860

Sperm whale teeth

Children: 5 5/8 × 2 1/4 × 1 1/2"

Family: 5 1/2 × 2 3/16 × 1 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Kristina Johnson, 2008.15.1, 2

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The art of scrimshaw—embellished keepsakes made from organic materials derived from whales and other marine mammals—is largely a by-product of the American whaling industry. Operating from such ports as Nantucket, New Bedford, and Sag Harbor, whaling flourished from about 1830 through the early twentieth century. Making scrimshaw helped to fill time and deflect the complex emotional dynamics that characterized male crews confined onboard ship for long periods of time. The act of carving also enabled sailors to maintain an emotional link to loved ones on distant shores by fashioning various tokens as gifts. Beginning scrimshanders started with a simple project like a plain walking stick and moved on to more ambitious work as their skill increased. Pictorial images were sometimes based on published sources but also reflected foreign ports, personal experiences, pent-up sexuality, and poignant thoughts of home.

**RESOURCES**

Flayderman, E. Norman. *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders, Whales and Whalemen*. New Milford, CT: N. Flayderman & Co., 1972.

An in-depth description of the art of scrimshaw and the history of whaling.

Hellman, Nina, and Norman Brouwer. *A Mariner's Fancy: The Whaleman's Art of Scrimshaw*. New York: Balsam Press, 1992.

Discusses scrimshaw as an art form, and the role of New York in the history of American whaling. Presents photographs and descriptions of pieces from the South Street Seaport Museum.

Jaspersohn, William. *The Scrimshaw Ring*. Middlebury, VT: Folk Life Center, 2002.

Illustrated children's book set in Rhode Island during the early eighteenth century that captures a young boy's encounter with a band of pirates who leave him with a very special memento.

McManus, Michael. *A Treasury of American Scrimshaw: A Collection of the Useful and Decorative*. New York: Penguin Studio, 1997.

Offers an overview of the European origins of the art of scrimshaw, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Excellent color reproductions with highly detailed images, including many of hand tools used on ships and popular games of the day.



**PAIR OF SCRIMSHAW TEETH (Children Watching Sailboats on Pond & Family Generations)**



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## *Beaver in Arctic Waters*

### **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What is going on here?
- Who is involved in this scene? Where are they?
- How many boats are in this image? Describe their positions in the composition using the terms *foreground, middleground, background, left, right*, etc.
- What else is floating in the water? What information does that give you about location?
- Can you find anything in the image that lets you know where this ship is from?
- What medium was used to create this painting? What effects does the use of watercolor allow for?

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- What time period does this painting illustrate? How can you tell?
- How might it feel to be one of the men in this painting? What could they be thinking?
- What is the mood or tone of this painting?
- If this watercolor was one panel in a comic strip or storyboard, what would the panel before it have looked like? What about the panel after?

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## *Pair of Scrimshaw Teeth*

### **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What are we looking at here?
- What can we say about the main material used here? What animal would you guess it might come from?
- How would an artist apply an image to a tooth?
- Focus on the actual images on each tooth and describe them one by one.

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- What connects these two examples of scrimshaw? What design elements do they share? Do you think they were done by the same artist? Why?
- What are some possible sources for the inscribed images?

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## Both Artworks

### MATERIALS

Paper cut into the shape of whale teeth and drawing utensils; white Ivory soap, sharp tools (plastic needles, tacks, etc), India ink (or black shoe or furniture polish), paper towels, and sponges (optional); Styrofoam (trays or blocks) cut into the shape of whale teeth and black ballpoint pens

### QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- How are *Beaver in Arctic Waters* and the *Pair of Scrimshaw Teeth* connected?
- Why was whaling important in the nineteenth century? Suggest to students that there is a clue overhead—were there electric lights back then? Explain how whale oil was mainly in demand for use in lamps but was also used as lubrication for the machines of the Industrial Revolution. What would be left over from the manufacturing process? Baleen and bones were used commercially but were also sometimes used by sailors to make scrimshaw.
- Explain the art of scrimshaw, or carving on the bones of whales or other marine animals. Who would have practiced scrimshaw?
- Imagine what life would have been like for a sailor on a whaling expedition. The scene in *Beaver in Arctic Waters* is from a moment of excitement. Sailors got to travel and explore the world. But would all of a sailor's days have been like this one?
- What might a sailor think about on long days cooped up at sea? Who might he think about? What might he miss? How could he use scrimshaw to express some of these thoughts?
- After he was back at home, what might he be able to do with the art he had created?
- Studying the clues on the *Pair of Scrimshaw Teeth*, let's create an imagined portrait of the unidentified artist who made them.

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have students draw “scrimshaw” scenes from the life of a sailor onto paper cut-outs shaped like whale teeth.
- Have students use tacks, plastic needles, or other sharp tools to carve “scrimshaw” designs related to sailing or whaling into bars of white Ivory soap. Use India ink (or black shoe or furniture polish) on a paper towel or sponge to fill in and darken the carved lines. Use a clean paper towel to wipe off the excess.
- Create “scrimshaw” by drawing with a black ballpoint pen onto Styrofoam trays (or blocks) cut into the shape of whale teeth.
- Sailors also wrote plays, poems, and songs based on their experiences to pass the time while at sea. Break students into small groups and have them write a short theatrical re-enactment of the scene from *Beaver in Arctic Waters*. Have them perform for each other.

## EXPLORATION

# LESSON PLAN 3

## *Map of the Animal Kingdom*

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### MAP OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

Artist unidentified

Probably New England

1835

Watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper

26 x 34 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Promised gift of Ralph Esmerian, P1.2001.269

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the Litchfield Academy, a school for girls in Connecticut, the study of geography and history was considered important in expanding the minds of students in the nineteenth century, improving their memories, and giving them a wider perspective on the world. Geography was integrated into the ornamental arts, where students drew maps in ink and shaded the boundaries with watercolor in a manner similar to *Map of the Animal Kingdom*. This unusual example shows animals and some peoples native to regions around the globe; it closely follows a pictorial atlas map published by W. C.

Woodbridge of Connecticut in 1831 that was intended for use in the classroom. The *Map of the Animal Kingdom* is framed with delicate theorem painting of roses with thorny stems and leaves, a technique that relied upon the use of hollowcut stencils to create the modular forms.

### RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

"A History of the Litchfield Academy," Litchfield Historical Society, [www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org/history/academy.php](http://www.litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org/history/academy.php).

Details the history behind the storied Litchfield Female Academy in New England.

Ristow, Walter W. *American Maps and Map Makers: Commercial Cartography in the Nineteenth Century*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1985.

Discusses mapmaking processes and their makers from the nineteenth century.

Sizer, Theodore and Nancy. *To Ornament Their Minds: Sarah Pierce's Litchfield Academy, 1792-1833*. Litchfield, CT: Litchfield Historical Society, 1993.

Details Sarah Pierce's relationship with the Litchfield Female Academy, and the history of the academy itself.



MAP OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM

## **MATERIALS**

A large world map; blank United States or world maps; drawing paper and drawing utensils; writing paper and writing utensils; string

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- Describe this image. What do you notice about it? What sort of object is it?
- What animals do you see? Which ones stand out to you? Are they realistic? What is the relationship between the animals and the map?
- What decorative elements did the artist include? How does the border relate to the interior content?
- Many maps that we have today are commercially printed or viewed on computer or mobile devices. How was this map created? What materials did the artist use? How can you tell?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- Mapmakers sometimes get the information they need to create maps by exploring the world. Do you think this artist did that? Why or why not? In what ways does this map reference exploration?
- Share that this map was created in the early nineteenth century by a student at an academy for girls, and that it closely follows a pictorial atlas map published for use in the classroom. What subjects might the artist have been studying when she made this map? How can you tell?
- Beyond learning content information about geography and zoology, what skills could the artist have learned in making this map? What evidence can you find in the image to support that?
- How is the experience of looking at the *Map of the Animal Kingdom* different than reading a book about animals?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- *Map of the Animal Kingdom* only shows certain information. What could you use it to discover? What are its limitations? Now compare it to the world map in your classroom. What information does the map privilege? What does it leave out?
- What was most important to the artist of *Map of the Animal Kingdom*? How can you tell? What is most important to the creators of the world map in your classroom? How can you tell?
- What continent is in the middle of the world map? How might world maps in a classroom in China look different than ours? In Australia?
- Do all maps have a point of view? Can they be objective or are they always, somehow, subjective?



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Choose a topic you are studying in social studies or science (Native American dwellings, stops on the Underground Railroad, insects, weather systems, for example) and have the students figure out how to represent it in drawings on a blank United States or world map.
- No map can show all the information about a place it depicts. The artist of *Map of the Animal Kingdom* created a map with a very specific goal. Have students remake a map of their community with a similarly narrow focus—to show what is most important to them. (A map of ice cream shops? A map of museums? A map of friends and family members' apartments?)
- Have each student choose a different animal on the map and sketch it at the top of a blank sheet of paper. The students can research facts about that animal and write them in a paragraph or as a fact sheet below the sketch. These sheets can be arranged around a print-out of the map, connected to the animal on the map with a piece of string.
- Young men and women in the nineteenth century were often recipients of different styles of education, both in terms of what they were taught and how it was taught to them. Have students use the American Folk Art Museum's website ([www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection)) as well as the library and the Internet to research and find examples of other assignments given to nineteenth-century students. Did they find more examples of artwork created by school girls or school boys in the museum's collection? Have them write an analysis of their discoveries.



## EXPLORATION

# LESSON PLAN 4

## *Possum Trot Figures*

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### POSSUM TROT FIGURES

#### (Helen, Blond Girl, and Genny)

Calvin Black (1903–1972) and

Ruby Black (1915–1980)

Yermo, California

c. 1953–1969

Paint on redwood and pine with fabric, tin,  
cotton stuffing, leather holster, and toy pistol

46 1/2 x 14 x 14"; 34 x 11 1/2 x 6"; 57 1/2 x 13 1/2 x 10"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Elizabeth Ross Johnson, 1985.35.3, 4, 7

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These figures once belonged to Possum Trot, a roadside attraction operated for more than twenty-five years by Calvin and Ruby Black. During the Depression, the Blacks, born and raised in the Deep South, headed to California to try their fortunes. In 1953, they moved to a parcel of land near Yermo that they had bought, sight unseen, through a magazine advertisement. Their land, as it turned out, was in the Mojave Desert on a desolate stretch of Highway 15. The Blacks, planning to take advantage of the growing popularity of car travel, opened a rock and mineral shop but did little business. To attract customers, Calvin created an evolving environment that eventually included a carousel and other wind-driven constructions, totem poles, a model train that stretched along the highway, and wooden dolls that posed in tableaux, drove carriages across the shop's roof, and kicked their legs and waved their arms.

Calvin carved and painted the dolls, using fragments of redwood scavenged from fallen telephone poles for the heads and bodies and pine for the legs, arms, and noses. Ruby fashioned clothes for the girls from cast-off dresses and fabric found in the local dump. The Blacks' fifty-seven dolls became the center of their world, and Calvin devised a "Fantasy Doll Show" in a ramshackle building named the Bird Cage Theater. Inspired by his previous work in a carnival, Calvin composed entertaining songs, music, and dialogue that he warbled in a high-pitched voice. He installed tape recorders into the singing figures and attached moving rods to some of their arms and legs to make them dance. The childless couple lavished attention on their dolls, buying them perfume and jewelry from tips that visitors were encouraged to leave for their favorites.

These three figures, all outside dolls, show the effects of the sun, harsh desert wind, and blowing sand. *Helen*, with articulated limbs, once kicked and waved to catch the attention of passing motorists. *Blond Girl* is a petite, child-size charmer. *Genny*, a cowgirl with holster and pistol, is the stereotypical feminine yet self-assured heroine of 1950s Westerns. With their layers of tattered clothes, the dolls evoke the Blacks' persistence in the pursuit of the American Dream.

## RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

Maizels, John. *Fantasy Worlds*. New York: Taschen, 1999.

Color illustrations and descriptions of a vast range of international folk art environments, fantastical architecture, and sculpture gardens.

Manley, Roger, and Mark Sloan. *Self-Made Worlds: Visionary Folk Art Environments*. Reading, PA: Aperture Press, 2005.

A survey of international visionary, self-taught artists and their innovative art environments—from California to India.

*Possum Trot: The Life and Work of Calvin Black, 1903–1972* (1977 documentary film by Allie Light and Irving Saraf), Folkstreams, [www.folkstreams.net/film,105](http://www.folkstreams.net/film,105).

A video that reveals the world of self-taught artist Calvin Black, who created a captivating art environment in the Mojave Desert of California. Folkstreams is an online archive of short documentary films that captures stories rooted in diverse American cultures and folk expressions of music and art.

Umberger, Leslie. *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007.

This book offers essays and photography on the work of twenty-two contemporary vernacular artists. The art environments chronicled here range from the iconic to the obscure—from the intact to no longer extant. All represent the imagination-fueled worlds of their creators.





**POSSUM TROT FIGURES (Helen, Blond Girl, and Genny)**



## **MATERIALS**

Drawing paper and drawing utensils; map of California or the United States; colored drawing utensils; oak tag or stiff paper, scissors, and brads; clothespins, fabric scraps, and a camera

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What are we looking at here?
- What materials were used to create these figures?
- What is texture? What kinds of different textures do you see here? How can you tell without feeling them?
- Describe each of the figures in turn, starting from the tops of their heads down to their toes. How are they similar to each other? How are they different?
- Have students make a sketch of the face of a figure of their choice. Make sure they don't tell anyone which one they drew, then ask them to exchange papers with a partner. Can their partners tell which figure was drawn? Why or why not?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- Are the figures realistic? Why or why not?
- What do you notice about what they are wearing? What are some possible explanations for the condition of their clothing?
- What might their relationship to one another be? What could their personalities be like?
- Ask students to stand up and pose like one of the figures. Once they've assumed their positions, ask them to start moving around the room, or dancing in place. Why are they moving the way they are? What do they have that the Possum Trot figures do not? Make sure they notice that *Helen* had the ability to kick and wave with the wind.
- How is your experience of looking at these three figures together different than looking at only one? How would your experience change if you saw more than fifty of them together? Let students know that these figures are three of fifty-seven total.

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- Share with students that these figures were made by self-taught artists, Calvin and Ruby Black, a husband and wife. Explain some of their background, including what they made their figures from, how they divided the labor, and their reasons for making them. Why might a married couple, or just two people, work on a project like this together? What might be some joys that come out of a collaboration like that? What might be some difficulties?
- Look on a map to see where Calvin and Ruby lived (generally). What information does that add to the conversation about the condition of the figures' clothing?
- Would you want to pull over off the highway at a place like Possum Trot? Why or why not? How would seeing them there be different than seeing them here, against a white backdrop? How does context change them?
- How are these figures "of their time"? Would they have existed in the same form a hundred years before? Or today? Why or why not?



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have students go back to their quickly sketched “portraits” of the figures and use them as studies for a larger, color portrait. In the spirit of the Blacks’ collaboration, have them trade-off drawings. One person can do the outline and another person can color, or someone can draw the figure and someone can do the background.
- Have students design their own figure in the style of the *Possum Trot Figures*. Use oak tag or other stiff paper to draw on. Make sure that the figures’ arms and legs are separate from the body. Cut out the head/torso, arms, and legs, then attach them together using brads so that the limbs can move.
- Have students create small three-dimensional figures using old-fashioned clothespins for heads/ bodies and found materials for clothing and details. Take photographic portraits of them, and then find a small outdoor area in which to leave them exposed to the elements. Periodically bring them inside, or bring the students to them depending on where you were able to find space, and document how they weather. What environments might they fare better in? Worse?
- Ask students to research and create a visual timeline of transportation extending from the mid-nineteenth century through today. What innovations change the way Americans traveled? They could alternatively focus on why people traveled across country and how that changed over time.



## EXPLORATION

# LESSON PLAN 5

## *Sea Captain & Child Holding Doll and Shoe*

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### SEA CAPTAIN

Attributed to Sturtevant J. Hamblin

(act. 1837–1856)

Probably Massachusetts

c. 1845

Oil on canvas

27 1/8 x 22 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Robert Bishop, 1992.10.2

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Portraits of sea captains are poignant reminders of the hazards and hardships posed by the oceangoing trades during the nineteenth century. Perhaps more than members of any other profession, men who earned their livelihood at sea relied on painted portraits to function as a surrogate presence in their homes, as voyages frequently lasted years and men did not always survive to return home. This is one of several similar portraits of sea captains painted by Sturtevant J. Hamblin, who established himself in Boston with his brother-in-law, William Matthew Prior. The two were the primary practitioners of a schematic style of portraiture “without shade” that could be completed quickly and at modest cost to the client.

### RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

Brilliant, Richard. *Portraiture*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991.

History of portraiture in both art history and popular culture. Addresses the conventions and innovations artists employ, and how portrait artists have worked over time.

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

An exploration of American folk art from the colonial period through the present as seen through highlights from the American Folk Art Museum’s collection.



SEA CAPTAIN



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## CHILD HOLDING DOLL AND SHOE

Attributed to George G. Hartwell

(1815–1901)

Probably Massachusetts or Maine

c. 1845

Oil on canvas

26 3/4 x 21 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Robert Bishop, 1992.10.1

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This portrait is replete with symbols—a departing ship in the background; a dead, cutoff tree stump with a cluster of grapes; and scattered roses—that indicate the child was deceased when the painting was made. The portrait is a reminder not only that the lives at sea were tenuous but that men often returned home only to discover the loss of loved ones in their absence. Posthumous portraits were taken from a corpse, adapted from existing daguerreotypes, based on earlier portraits, or even modeled on members with similar features. It was typical to show a deceased child as he or she was in life, surrounded by familiar objects. Based on the doll held in this child’s hand, it is likely that the toddler is female.

## RESOURCES

Brilliant, Richard. *Portraiture*. London: Reaktion Books, 1991.

History of portraiture in both art history and popular culture. Addresses the conventions and innovations artists employ, and how portrait artists have worked over time.

Hollander, Stacy C., and Brooke Davis Anderson. *American Anthem: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

An exploration of American folk art from the colonial period through the present as seen through highlights from the American Folk Art Museum’s collection.

Rothermel, Barbara. “Mourning the Children: An Interpretation of the Symbols in Two Posthumous Portraits.” In *Folk Art* 22, no. 4 (Winter 1997/1998): 60–64.

Offers an art historical context for the symbolism that appears in nineteenth-century posthumous mourning paintings of children, explaining the relationship between European traditions and American folk art portrait painters working throughout the 1800s.



CHILD HOLDING DOLL AND SHOE



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## Sea Captain

### MATERIALS

Drawing paper and oil pastels; blue, black, red, manila, and yellow paper, scissors, and glue; writing paper and writing utensils

### QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- Introduce the terms *foreground*, *middleground*, and *background*. What do you see in each?
- What might this man's job be? How can you tell? Where is he? What is he holding? How is he dressed?
- What time period might he be from? What makes you say that?
- Have the students position themselves like the sea captain. How do they feel in that pose? What qualities are they conveying about themselves?

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- What do we call a painting like this?
- What can you say about the style of this portrait? Is it very realistic? Detailed?
- Introduce the information that the artist worked in a style that allowed him to create portraits quickly and at modest cost. Why might it have been important to a sea captain to have his portrait painted quickly?
- Where might this portrait have been displayed? Why?

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Have the students interview each other to get an idea as to what information they'd like to have conveyed if they were to sit for a portrait. Then have them create quick portraits of each other using oil pastels based on their answers, framing them in the same way as the *Sea Captain*. Make sure they include details in the foreground, middle ground, and background that give information about their sitter's life.
- Using only a stack of blue, black, red, manila, and yellow paper, scissors, and glue, have students create a collaged version of *Sea Captain*. This will emphasize both the graphic simplicity of the work and also the artist's composition skills.
- Have students write a diary entry or poem from the point of view of the sea captain, thinking about his family at home.

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## Child Holding Doll and Shoe

### QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING

- What do you see in the foreground, middleground, background?
- Where is this child?
- What can you say about color in this portrait? How does the artist use color to connect her to her surroundings?
- What is she holding? Make a written list of all of the objects and potential symbols in the scene.

### QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

- Return to the list of objects and let students know that there is a language of symbols used in traditional portraiture. Have them analyze and make educated guesses about what the cut-off tree branch, sailing ship, doll, shoe, and roses might mean. Discuss the clues to the gender and class of the child, as well as the fact that this is a posthumous portrait.
- Why might it have been a tradition to have portraits painted of deceased children? Discuss how mortality rates have changed over the years. Why?
- How could the artist have known what the child looked like?
- Have you seen anything like this today?

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## Both Artworks

### MATERIALS

Writing paper and writing utensils; copies of chapter 135 of *Moby-Dick* (not included); copies of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar" (included at end of section)

### QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Look at the two portraits in the context of each other. What do they have in common visually? In terms of composition? Style? Time period?
- How might the two inform each other thematically? What does the portrait of the child tell us about why a sea captain might have wanted his portrait painted?
- What could life have been like for the families of sailors? For the sailors themselves?

### ACTIVITIES

- Studying these two portraits together would be a nice ancillary activity to a study of *Moby-Dick*; Ahab has a young wife and child at home and expresses guilt at having left them, and in Chapter 135, Starbuck has a monologue as he is about to die at sea that includes cries to his wife and child. Have students read just this chapter, if not the whole novel, and have them write a passage or do a drawing on a divided piece of paper—one side will be an interpretation of the scene, the other side an expression of what Starbuck's wife and child may be doing or thinking at the very moment he is crying out to them.
- Read Alfred, Lord Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar," in which a nautical symbol (crossing the bar from the harbor to the open sea) also stands for a symbol of death. Have the students write a comparison of the portraits and the poem.

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## **CROSSING THE BAR**

By Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1889)

Sunset and evening star,  
    And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
    When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
    Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
    Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
    And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of farewell,  
    When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place  
    The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
    When I have crossed the bar.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING

# LESSON PLAN 6

## *Untitled (Vivian Girls Watching Approaching Storm in Rural Landscape)*

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### UNTITLED

#### **(Vivian Girls Watching Approaching Storm in Rural Landscape)**

Henry Darger (1892–1973)

Chicago

Mid-twentieth century

Watercolor, pencil, carbon tracing, and collage  
on pieced paper

24 x 108 3/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Museum purchase, 2004.1.1b

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Chicago artist Henry Darger led a very private existence. The full breadth of his work was discovered only after his death by his landlord, artist and industrial designer Nathan Lerner. Darger is best known today for around three hundred single-sheet and panoramic multi-sheet watercolors related to his writings, notably the 15,000-page epic *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What Is Known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinnian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion*. Soon after the death of his mother and the adoption of his newborn sister, Darger was relegated to a notorious Illinois asylum for children. The depredations of the institution left an indelible mark on the sensitive boy, and he escaped in 1908. During his journey by foot back to Chicago, Darger experienced a terrifying tornado. This formed the basis for a fictionalized account of a twister named Sweetie Pie that occupies more than 4,000 pages in a written narrative. The watercolors on view depict extreme weather conditions that continued to occupy Darger: lightning strikes, storm clouds, wind, and rain.

## RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, image gallery and the Henry Darger Study Center, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection) and [www.folkartmuseum.org/dargerstudycenter](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/dargerstudycenter).

Anderson, Brooke Davis. *Darger: The Henry Darger Collection at the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2001.

Full-color catalog of the American Folk Art Museum's Darger collection that offers an introduction to the controversial and self-taught artist.

Biesenbach, Klaus, ed. *Henry Darger*. Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2009.

A comprehensive look at the many projects and processes of this prolific twentieth-century artist who has informed the work of so many others. With essays by leading curators and scholars, this book covers quite a bit of ground, from Darger's source material and preliminary studies, which reveal process and inspiration, to his completed, large-scale watercolor collages; we get a feel for the full range of his oeuvre. Included are hundreds of pages of saturated color reproductions of his work, with some pull-outs. Further step into Darger's world by reading through a facsimile of his autobiography, *Story of My Life*.

Biesenbach, Klaus. *Henry Darger: Disasters of War*. Berlin: Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, 2004.

Primarily comprising beautifully saturated color images from the magnum opus. Also includes a transcribed conversation with Kiyoko Lerner, the widow of Henry Darger's landlord who had discovered Darger's works, and her firsthand accounts of interactions with the prolific recluse.

*In the Realms of the Unreal* (2005 documentary film by Jessica Yu), POV: Documentaries with a Point of View, Public Broadcasting Service, [www.pbs.org/pov/intherealms/additional-video.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/intherealms/additional-video.php).

Includes an audio tour of Henry Darger's work, excerpts from the artist's 15,000-page manuscript, an interview with the film's director, and high-school level curriculum materials produced by the American Folk Art Museum.

MacGregor, John M. *Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal*. New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2002.

A thorough compilation of selected images and writings from the largest known work of illustrated fiction. Biographical information unfolds throughout. Also explored is Darger's artistic methodology—from collection to collage, experimentation, and refining his skills.

Shaw, Lytle. "The Moral Storm: Henry Darger's Book of Weather Reports." in *Cabinet Magazine* 3, "Weather" (Summer 2001). Archived at [www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/henrydarger.php](http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/henrydarger.php).

An article that focuses on Darger's relationship with weather patterns and their influence on his work—both his fiction and the weather journals he meticulously kept over the course of a decade.





**UNTITLED (Vivian Girls Watching Approaching Storm in Rural Landscape)**

*Left half and right half*

## **MATERIALS**

Copies of the image, pencils, and highlighters; writing paper and utensils; copies of various weather reports; magazines, newspapers, and product packaging for collage; drawing paper and utensils

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What is going on here? What do you see that makes you say that?
- Who are the figures in this scene?
- What are they doing? What are they looking at? How can you tell?
- What is the setting for this image? Is it urban or rural? What sorts of buildings do you see? Plants? Animals?
- What is the weather like? Does it look like the storm is coming or going?
- What materials did the artist use to create this image?
- Is this a realistic scene? Why or why not? What are some realistic elements? Some fantastical ones?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- How are the girls in this painting different from each other? Can you divide them into groups? Who is grouped with whom and why? If you have photocopies of the image, encourage students to use pencils or highlighters to mark up their copies, draw circles, arrows, etc., to help them organize their thoughts.
- How are they reacting to what is going on around them? What emotions are they each portraying? How does the artist show this?
- What is the tension in this painting? Is it interpersonal? Is it human versus nature?
- Does your understanding of this watercolor change as you spend time studying it? When you first saw it, how did it make you feel? Why? As you start to notice the details and as you discuss it further, what is revealed? How do you feel about that progression?
- Tell the “story” being depicted here in your own words. What might happen next?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- Share the title of this image with the students. Does knowing this change their understanding of the image? Who do you think the Vivian Girls are?
- Share the title of the entire book and some of the background about its length and creation. What other scenes can you imagine taking place in the book? What themes do you think recurred?
- Darger did not use models or draw from life. Where do you think Darger could have gotten his source material? Do you recognize the style of any particular element in this watercolor? If you wanted to create fantastic landscapes filled with all different kinds of characters, where might you go to find your material?
- Share some of the details of Henry Darger’s biography and that he is one of the most celebrated self-taught artists in the world. Musicians have named their bands after his characters, writers have created plays based on his work, films have been made about him, and more. Why do you think so many people are drawn to his work? Are you? Why or why not?

### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Have students read examples of weather forecasts (including temperature, humidity, pollen-count, etc.) and write one for the day depicted in this image.
- Repurposing the same types of source materials Henry Darger did—newspapers, magazines, product packaging—have students create a mixed-media artwork that shows a moment of tension or peril.
- Ask students to choose one character in the watercolor and sketch her as best they can. Then take away the image (or turn off the projection) and ask them to “recontextualize” her by putting her into a totally different scene.
- Have the students silently study the watercolor for a full minute. Then turn it off and ask them to make a sketch or write a list of everything they remember. Turn it back on and compare. What stood out? Why?
- Ask students to choose one of the characters in the watercolor and imagine what happens to her ten minutes, one day, one year, and twenty years later. Have them write diary entries for each point along this timeline.



## SOCIAL NETWORKING

# LESSON PLAN 7

## *Isobel and Dixie*

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### ISOBEL AND DIXIE

William O. Golding (1874–1943)

Savannah, Georgia

1932

Pencil and crayon on paper

8 x 10 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of David L. Davies, 2004.22.1

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Little is known about William O. Golding, an African American seaman who was eight years old when he was enticed on board a ship in the port of Savannah in 1882 only to be kidnapped out to sea. He spent the next forty-nine years on merchant ships, whalers, and yachts, sailing around the world to Africa, Asia, Australia, Central and South America, and Europe. When he was in his late fifties, declining health ended his shipboard life and he returned to Savannah, spending time in the Marine Hospital for a chronic lung condition. It was there that Golding was encouraged to draw, and he chronicled his life, adventures, and the ships he knew so well in around sixty drawings. He also left two letters that describe how he was abducted and his subsequent adventures on the seven seas.

### RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

Pennington, Estill Curtis, and James C. Kelly. *The South on Paper: Line, Color and Light*. Spartanburg, SC: Saraland Press, 1985.

Includes a section dedicated to William O. Golding, discussing his biography and drawings.

Wertkin, Gerard C., ed. *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

A comprehensive and scholarly study of the field, with many photographs included. This A-Z encyclopedia covers multiple genres within the field of folk art, encompassing painting, sculpture, basketry, ceramics, quilts, furniture, toys, and beadwork. Includes an entry on Golding.

“William O. Golding (1874–1943),” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia: The Arts*, [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-3433](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-3433).

An online encyclopedia that documents the cultural history of the state of Georgia. Replete with thousands of articles, images, and video and audio clips, this article discusses the life and work of self-taught artist William O. Golding.



ISOBEL AND DIXIE

## **MATERIALS**

Writing paper and utensils; drawing paper and utensils; image of maritime signal flags (can be downloaded online)

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What do you see here? List all of the elements.
- What colors did the artist use over and over? What shapes? Ask students to take visual notes on scrap paper of all of the geometric shapes they see.
- What kind of place is this? How can you tell? What country is it in? How can you tell?
- How many ships do you see? What kind of ships are they?
- Where are the people in the drawing? What are they doing?
- What words do you see?
- What material did the artist use to create this drawing?
- What more can we find?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- This drawing seems fairly simple, but the artist gives us a lot of information in a small space. What does he include to tell us about the weather on this day? How can you tell that weather is important to the people who live and work in this area?
- He tells us about the time of day, too. How?
- What season do you think it is? Why?
- What time period is this drawing depicting?
- Draw the bird/wave shape on the board and ask students to find it in the drawing. What do they think it is? Do they all agree? Did the artist use it in the same or different ways in different areas of the artwork?
- Do you recognize all of the flags in this drawing? Are they all national flags? Some of the flags are maritime signal flags used on ships around the world to communicate with each other. What information might ships need to share with each other? Why wouldn't they use flags with words on them instead? Do you think that flags like this are as necessary still today? Who would learn how to use this "language"?
- What skills would a sailor on one of these ships need? Would sailors on different ships in this image need different skill sets?
- What is the tone or mood of this drawing? What makes you say that?



### QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT

- Have a conversation about why artists make artwork. We don't always know why artists make art. It isn't always important to know why, either. But sometimes there is a documented story behind the creation of a piece of artwork—this is one of those pieces. Share William O. Golding's biographical information with students. What are their reactions?
- While hospitalized after declining health ended his sailing career, Golding was encouraged to document his life story. He made about sixty drawings about his adventures, and wrote two letters. What elements of his life do you see in this drawing?
- Why might he have used drawings to tell his story rather than just write it?
- Does knowing his history change the way you see it?
- Many artists draw or paint from life—while they are looking at their subjects. Could Golding have done that with this drawing? What if we had the opportunity to look at a photograph taken at the time he was experiencing this scene? Would it look the same as his drawing? How might memory change an image?
- How is drawing from memory different than drawing from the imagination?

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Ask students to make a drawing from memory of a “long ago” day in their lives.
- Show the image of maritime signal flags and discuss their meanings. Ask students to compare those flags to the ones in the drawing. Have them write their names or imagine they are sailors and write a message using flags. Have them exchange with a neighbor and use the “key” to puzzle out the message.
- Have students imagine and write the contents of the two letters written by Golding about his adventures.



## SHOPPING

# LESSON PLAN 8

## *Newsboy Show Figure*

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### NEWSBOY SHOW FIGURE

Artist unidentified

Eastern or midwestern United States

c. 1880

Paint on pine

35 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 13 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Promised gift of Ralph Esmerian, P1.2001.350

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Newspaper boys, also called “newsboys” or “newsies,” were the main means of newspaper distribution from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century in the United States. These ragamuffins were among the poorest classes in the city. Having purchased the newspapers outright from the publishers, the children were not allowed to return unsold papers and thus often worked late into the night to see a profit, earning only around thirty cents a day. This led to the famous Newsboys Strike of 1899. Sentimentalized depictions of such Dickensian urchins were popular in a variety of media and were used to convey commentary on important social issues of the day, such as exploitative child labor practices, neglected children from poor immigrant families, and the plight of homeless orphans. Other representations of newspaper boys were simply used to promote the newspapers themselves. The newspapers held by this disaffected youth smoking a cigar, however, advertise tobacco and cigars, indicating that this stereotypical representation stood outside a tobacco store.

### RESOURCES

Sessions, Ralph. “The Image Business: Shop and Cigar Store Figures in America.” *Folk Art* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1996/97): 54–60. Archived at Antiques and the Arts Online, [www.antiquesandthearts.com/archive/image.htm](http://www.antiquesandthearts.com/archive/image.htm).

Article written on the occasion of a traveling exhibition of the same name organized for the American Folk Art Museum by curator Ralph Sessions.

Sessions, Ralph. *The Shipcarver's Art: Figureheads and Cigar-Store Indians in Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Discusses the importance of tobacco show figures, and illuminates formal and social aspects of this sculptural form.



NEWSBOY SHOW FIGURE



## **MATERIALS**

Model magic; disposable or digital cameras; DVD of *Newsies*; link to video of “Carrying the Banner” (from *Newsies*) on YouTube

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- Describe what we’re looking at here.
- Do you think this is a two-dimensional or three-dimensional form? How can you tell? What materials is it made from?
- What do you notice about this person? How old might he be? What is he wearing?
- What is he holding? What is in his mouth?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- Ask students to stand up and assume his pose. How do they feel? What is their attitude when they are posed this way? Why might they be leaning rather than standing up straight?
- Why might the boy depicted in this sculpture be tired? Remind students that he is holding newspapers under his arm—not just one but a stack. Share with the students background information about newsboys, who were iconic in New York City.
- Why might a child work such a hard job? Are children in this country allowed to work today? What do they do instead?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- At the time this piece of art was made and newsboys were active—1880—school wasn’t mandatory in New York City. Often the poorest children worked instead. For this and other reasons, as well, many people in the nineteenth century did not know how to read or write. What are some examples of ways that would affect a person’s life?
- This artwork was created in part for this very reason. It was made to stand outside of a store. Why do you think it would have been installed there? What merchandise might the store have sold? Share with the students that this show figure stood outside of a tobacco store.
- Do we have anything like show figures today? What are some examples? Why might show figures themselves have become a thing of the past—what technologies took their place?
- Did the artist who created this show figure do it just for fun? Some artists create artwork to be functional, like this show figure, and make their living selling their work.
- Share with students that there was a Newsboys Strike in 1899. Why do you think that was? Would you have joined the strike?

## **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Using model magic, make a simple sculpture showing a child of today with something typical in his or her hand. Make sure that the clothing, pose, and objects give the viewer information about that child, like the *Newsboy Show Figure*.
- Take a neighborhood walk to look for examples of contemporary advertising outside of stores. Use disposable or digital cameras to take pictures of signage and storefronts. Back in the classroom, analyze those photos for clues about New York City in the present and compare them to the *Newsboy Show Figure*.
- Take a field trip to see the musical *Newsies* or watch the movie version on DVD. Alternatively, watch or listen to its theme song “Carrying the Banner” on YouTube. Ask students to explain in their own words what it might have been like to be a newsboy.

**WIND, WATER, AND WEATHER**

**LESSON PLAN 9**

*Schoolhouse Quilt Top*



**SCHOOLHOUSE QUILT TOP**

The Presbyterian Ladies of Oak Ridge, Missouri

Oak Ridge, Missouri

1897–1898

Cotton with cotton embroidery

74 1/2 x 90 1/2"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Beverly Walker Reitz in memory of

Vest Walker, 1984.22.10

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Communities often come together to raise funds or honor one of their own through group quilting projects, a trend that was popular by the mid-nineteenth century. This schoolhouse-block quilt top was made by female members of the Presbyterian Church in Oak Ridge, Missouri, and auctioned to raise funds for the church. Each block bears the name of one of the contributors. The embroidered names were stitched by the women, while the handwritten names were all penned by Vest Walker, who, at the age of seventeen, was also the successful bidder.



## RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

International Quilt Study Center & Museum at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, [www.quiltstudy.org](http://www.quiltstudy.org).

Database of images and information regarding historic and contemporary American and international quilts.

“Quilt Discovery Experience,” National Park Service, [www.nps.gov/home/planyourvisit/quilt-discovery-experience.htm](http://www.nps.gov/home/planyourvisit/quilt-discovery-experience.htm).

This website describes the history of quilting and the various patterns that are traditionally made, including the Schoolhouse quilt pattern.

The Quilt Index, [www.quiltindex.org](http://www.quiltindex.org).

An online research and reference tool with contextual information and images of quilts held in private and public collections. Browse by category, collection, time period, style/techniques, purpose/function, or location.

Warren, Elizabeth V. *Quilts: Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum*. New York: Rizzoli International in association with American Folk Art Museum, 2010.

An encyclopedic, beautifully illustrated text that reveals how quilts are inextricably tied to American culture. Each example reflects a story about its maker and her community. This definitive volume brings together two hundred of the most significant examples from the collection of the American Folk Art Museum. Each masterpiece was chosen carefully as an emblem of its time, style, and technique. Includes full-page image reproductions.

“Why Quilts Matter: History, Art & Politics: Discussion Guide,” The Kentucky Quilt Project, [www.whyquiltsmatter.org/welcome/resources/discussion-guide/](http://www.whyquiltsmatter.org/welcome/resources/discussion-guide/).

A full-color, comprehensive discussion guide developed in conjunction with a nine-part documentary series that explores how quilts are a portal to understanding social history.





SCHOOLHOUSE QUILT TOP



## **MATERIALS**

Drawing paper and utensils; Schoolhouse Quilt pattern (various free downloads online), paper or fabric, sewing materials, and scissors; copies of the poems “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost, and “If” by Rudyard Kipling (included at end of section)

## **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What do you see? What colors? What is the design?
- Is this a painting? A sculpture? What might it be? How can you tell?
- What material is it made from? How is it pieced together?
- What sort of building is shown on this quilt top?
- Ask the students to make a sketch of the schoolhouse or, if they are old enough, to cut one out of paper. How many pieces of red fabric were used for each schoolhouse? Each square that makes up a quilt is called a “block.”
- How many schoolhouses appear on this quilt? How did you figure it out? How many pieces of red fabric were used in all?
- What might the writing on this quilt be? Can you read any of it? If not, can you make a guess?

## **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- What do you call a design that repeats over and over? What elements create the pattern on this quilt? What effect does this repetition give? How would your experience of looking at the quilt change if all of the buildings were different rather than the same?
- This is a quilt top rather than a quilt because it hasn’t been quilted, which means that it doesn’t have a middle and back layer added to it and stitches sewn through the layers to hold them together. Why do quilts have three layers? If you were going to find a quilt in a home, where would you expect to find it?
- Many quilts that are made to be used at home are made from reused fabrics. Does this quilt top look like it was used on a bed or a couch over the years? Why or why not?

## **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- Traditionally, do you think men or women were more likely to create quilts? Why? Let students know that while men did and do make quilts, generally it was an art form practiced by women. What skills were needed to create this quilt? At the time this quilt was created, in 1897–1898, what else were women likely to have used those same skills for?
- Provide students with the background information about the creation of this quilt—it was made collaboratively by women from a church community and then auctioned off to raise money for their church. Does this give the students a clue as to what the writing on the quilt might be?
- What might it be like to create a quilt with a group of other people? Imagine the experience and describe it.
- Do you know anyone who has made a quilt before? How do the patterns for quilts get shared or passed down? Why might someone make a specific kind of quilt, like a schoolhouse quilt, rather than make up his or her own design?
- Have you ever done any fund-raising? For what cause? How did you go about it? Can you think of other examples of communities coming together to create something? To raise money?



### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Schoolhouse Quilt patterns are available for free online. Download one, and, depending on the level of your students, have them each create a block of a schoolhouse quilt from either paper or fabric. If you use fabric, have them do their best to sew the pieces together. Discuss the challenges involved in doing this. What skills would they need to develop to get good at making quilts? Have them sign their work and hang the blocks together to form a quilt.
- Ask students to write their own math problems based on the shapes, blocks, and lines of the quilt. Challenge them to exchange their problems with each other.
- Have students brainstorm other art forms that make use of repetition. Examine poems for repetition and discuss the different ways poets employ repetition and the effects it has on the reader. Ask students to write their own poem using repetition. Included are three classic examples of poems that use repetition: “We Real Cool” by Gwendolyn Brooks, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” by Robert Frost, and “If” by Rudyard Kipling.



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**WE REAL COOL**

By Gwendolyn Brooks (1959)

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.

**STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY  
EVENING**

By Robert Frost (1922)

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

**IF**

By Rudyard Kipling (1895)

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim,  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: Hold on!

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

**WIND, WATER, AND WEATHER**

**LESSON PLAN 10**

*Situation of America, 1848 & J.B. Schlegelmilch Blacksmith Shop Sign and Weathervane*

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**SITUATION OF AMERICA, 1848**

Artist unidentified

New York City

1848

Oil on wood panel

34 x 57 x 1 3/8"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Promised gift of Ralph Esmerian, P1.2001.58

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This overmantel shows the New York City skyline, including the spires of St. Paul's Cathedral, as viewed from the Brooklyn docks across the East River. It celebrates the economic growth—spurred by shipping on the Erie Canal and overland rail transport—between producers in America's heartland and the development of the New York waterfront as a hub of commercial activity and a distribution point for export to foreign markets. The Fulton Ferry would have left a dock similar to this on its route across the river. Oral history maintained that *Situation of America, 1848* was removed from the Squire Phillips home in Brookhaven, Long Island, New York. Although this information has not been verified, much of the seaport's market activities in the early nineteenth century were generated by Long Island farmers and travelers.

## RESOURCES

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

“The Erie Canal: Journey Through History,” Epodunk—The Power of Place, [www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal](http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal).

A multimedia tour of the Erie Canal for adults and children.

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, [www.gilderlehrman.org](http://www.gilderlehrman.org).

Features sections for educators and students that offer comprehensive resources for teaching and learning American history, including timelines, primary-source documents, visual aids, and lesson plans.

Homberger, Eric. *The Historical Atlas of New York City: A Visual Celebration of Nearly 400 Years of New York City's History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Contains photographs of mid-nineteenth-century New York, including images of downtown Manhattan comparable to the view represented in *Situation of America*, 1848.

Mackay, Donald A. *The Building of Manhattan*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

The growth and development of Manhattan Island from the ground up, explained in drawings and text encompassing both the history and science of building the city, from Dutch colonialism to the present.





SITUATION OF AMERICA, 1848.

SITUATION OF AMERICA, 1848



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**J.B. SCHLEGELMILCH BLACKSMITH  
SHOP SIGN AND WEATHERVANE**

Artist unidentified

Southeastern Pennsylvania

Mid-nineteenth century

Iron with traces of paint

28 3/8 x 42 x 1/4"

American Folk Art Museum, New York

Gift of Ralph Esmerian, 2005.8.61

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

This blacksmith trade sign speaks to the early history of Maiden Lane, where the blacksmith shop of Cornelius Clopper once stood in Manhattan. Long Island farmers coming to sell their produce in the city had to pass by Clopper's place of business before they entered the city. Here the enterprising blacksmith sold refreshments from his house while the farmers' horses were being shod and wagon wheels repaired. The site of this smithy became the Fly Market, a covered expanse where meat, produce, and fish were sold. The Fly Market fell into disrepair with the success of the Fulton Ferry, and it was ultimately replaced in 1822 by the Fulton Market, site of today's New Amsterdam Market.

**RESOURCES**

American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery, [www.folkartmuseum.org/collection](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/collection).

Kauffman, Henry J. *Metalworking Trades in Early America: The Blacksmith, Whitesmith, Farrier, Edgetool Maker, Cutler, Locksmith, Gunsmith, Nailer and Tinsmith*. Lakeville, MN: Astragal Press, 1995.

Describes the work and processes of the various metalwork trades popular during the nineteenth century.

Meadows, Cecil A. *Trade Signs and Their Origin*. London: Reading and Fakenham, 1957.

Provides a history of various international trades and their accompanying signs, from the 1600s through the 1800s. Categories include both common and unusual trades. Descriptions are complemented by small-scale black-and-white drawings of the signs themselves.



J.B. SCHLEGELMILCH BLACKSMITH SHOP SIGN AND WEATHERVANE



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## *Situation of America, 1848*

### **MATERIALS**

Color copies of *Situation of America, 1948*, blank writing paper, writing utensils, scissors, and glue

### **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

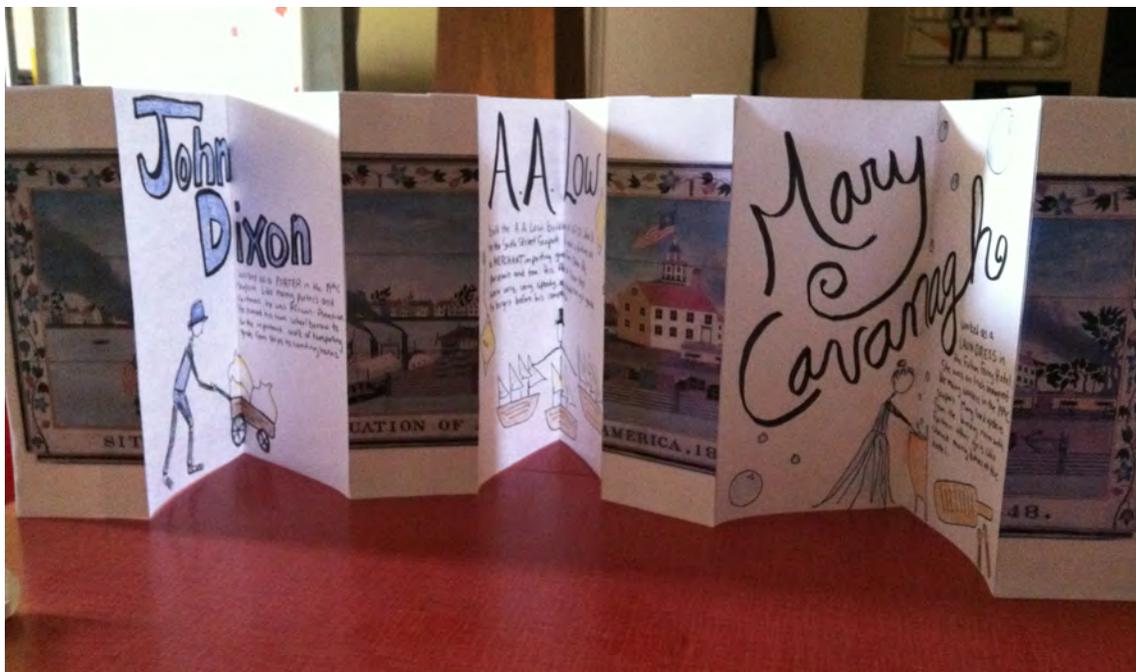
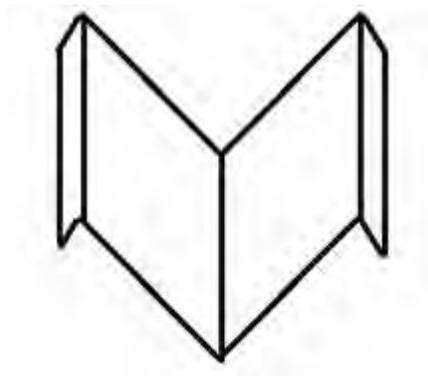
- Have students carefully examine the image. What do you notice?
- What materials were used to create this image? How can you tell? It is called an overmantel and was hung above a fireplace.
- What kinds of buildings are depicted? Transportation? Objects?
- What colors, shapes, and other elements repeat in this image? What effect does that give the painting?

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- What clues does the artist give as to where this scene is taking place?
- The view in this painting is from the Brooklyn docks, looking out across the East River toward the South Street Seaport and St. Paul's Church in the background. How would one travel between these two places? What kind of ship is that in the lower left corner of the painting? How can you tell? The ferry and train are connected in the painting through their diagonal plumes of gray smoke. Both are powered by steam engines. Share background information about Robert Fulton and the Fulton Ferry, the first regular steam ferry service on the East River.
- The artist chose not to include people in this scene. What effect does that give?
- If there were people here, what would they be doing? What kinds of activities are taking place? How can you tell?
- What do you think the "situation of America" is as this painting tells it? Try reading it in the positive then the negative.

### **SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES**

- Create an annotated, visual timeline of transportation across the East River, from the time of the Lenape Indians, who canoed across, through present day.
- Transform the title of one of the books you are reading into a visual representation of the words, in a style similar to that of the blacksmith shop sign and weathervane.
- Have the students pull an element from *Situation of America, 1848* to research—from the history of St. Paul's to the effect of the Erie Canal on New York City to the steam engine to the different kinds of goods that passed through the Seaport in 1848—and write a short report about the topic and its connection to the Seaport.
- Create an accordion book expanding upon *Situation of America, 1848*. Give each student three sheets of writing paper, oriented horizontally, on which they will deliver their research—it can be a combination of images and text, or just text. Fold each of these pages in half, then fold back one inch on either side of the paper. Then cut a color copy of *Situation of America, 1848* into four equal vertical strips and paste them onto the one-inch folds of each text panel. (Diagram and illustration on next page.)



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## *J.B. Schlegelmilch Blacksmith Shop Sign and Weathervane*

### **QUESTIONS FOR CAREFUL LOOKING**

- What are we looking at here?
- What words can you read?
- Try to read the image like a sentence, too, from left to right. What is the person on the left doing? What is he holding in his hand? Try out his posture. He is a blacksmith, hammering a piece of metal. What is that to his right? What is on top of the horse? An ampersand. And under the horse is a horse shoe. Therefore, he is a blacksmith and horse-shoer.
- What is this object made out of? How can you tell?

### **QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION**

- What might this object have been used for? Let the students know that it was a shop sign and weathervane. Share background information about Cornelius Clopper, a nineteenth-century blacksmith at the seaport who did similar work to the blacksmith depicted in the sign.
- What might the advantages have been in combining words and images?

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## *Both Artworks*

### **QUESTIONS FOR CONTEXT**

- Compare the two pieces of artwork in terms of material, use, and subject matter. What do they have in common?
- What does each piece of artwork tell us about commerce in the mid-nineteenth century? About transportation?
- Cornelius Clopper's Fly Market, which sold goods to travelers while their wagons were repaired and their horses shod, was put out of business by the success of the Fulton Market, which was located right beside the South Street Seaport, where ships came in from all over the world, as well as directly next to the Fulton Ferry Landing. Why do you think the Fulton Market was so successful?
- These two images have helped us think about commerce and transportation in mid-nineteenth century New York City. How have these things changed over time? Why aren't horse-shoers still necessary in the city today? Rail transportation was a huge game-changer in the nineteenth century—while we still use trains to transport people and goods today, why don't we count on it as much? Does the Fulton Ferry still run? When the Brooklyn Bridge was finished in 1883, it stretched almost exactly across the ferry's route. By 1924, the ferry ceased operation.

# GLOSSARY

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## **Background**

The part of a composition that appears to be farthest away from the viewer; it is typically closest to the horizon.

## **Blacksmith**

A tradesperson who creates objects from various metals. Blacksmiths use tools and heat to hammer, bend, and cut to create functional and aesthetic objects such as sculpture, tools, and weaponry.

## **Collage**

The practice of creating an image by arranging and adhering relatively flat elements to a surface. This technique allows the artist to bring disparate visual elements into a united composition.

## **Composition**

The plan, placement, or arrangement of elements such as colors, forms, shapes, and space in artwork.

## **Daguerreotype**

One of the earliest forms of photography, named for the man who developed the process in the mid-nineteenth century, French artist and scientist Louis Daguerre.

## **Folk art**

Art created by people with no formal or academic training in the arts, though they may have received training through apprenticeships or family traditions. Folk art is not a single art form, but includes a diverse range of visual expression, such as painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles, and pottery. Folk art is often utilitarian, religious, handmade, rooted in a crafts tradition, and/or stemming from a communal tradition. It encompasses the highly personalized expression of self-taught creators.

## **Foreground**

The area of a composition—often at the bottom—that appears to be closest to the viewer.

## **Maritime signal flag**

A flag specifically used in the system of international maritime signaling. Each flag is used to communicate either a letter of the alphabet or a specific or standard meaning to other ships.

## **Middleground**

The part of a composition that appears between the foreground and background.

## **Portrait**

A painting, drawing, sculpture, or other work of visual art that captures the likeness of a person, usually focusing on the face. A portrait can be figural or abstract, and may capture the essence of a person, not just his or her physicality.

**Quilt**

A bedcover consisting of three layers—a decorated textile top layer, an inner layer of padding, and a bottom fabric layer—that are stitched together, often decoratively, to hold each of the layers in place.

**Scrimshaw**

Embellished keepsakes made from organic materials derived from whales and other marine mammals. This American art form is largely a by-product of the American whaling industry; it was first practiced by sailors working on whaling ships out of New England. A **scrimshander** is one who creates works of scrimshaw.

**Sculpture**

A form of visual art that occupies three dimensional space. Sculpture can be monumental or miniature in scale; it can be crafted with delicate or durable materials.

**Self-taught artist**

An artist who has received no formal or academic training in the arts, and usually has not been trained or mentored by a community in a traditional art form, but has developed artistic processes, styles, and/or techniques independently.

**Show figure**

Three-dimensional lifelike and life-size figures, often carved from wood, designed to advertise tobacco and other businesses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Symbol**

The visual or graphic representation of something beyond itself, often as an abstract concept; **symbolism** is the representation of concepts or ideas through the use of symbols, particularly in the arts.

**Theorem painting**

An early American decorative art form popular in the early nineteenth century created with the aid of cut stencils.

**Trade sign**

Iconic objects that advertise trades, services, or products. Often carved, oversize versions of everyday items associated with the trades they advertise, they were usually hung off the facades or placed standing in front of businesses.

**Weathervane**

A form of folk sculpture that served both functional and decorative purposes. Weathervanes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America were crafted by hand from wood or metal. They were used primarily to indicate wind direction—important to those with itinerant occupations and to individuals whose work could easily be impacted by weather conditions. Weathervanes were often used as trade signs and atop churches.

**Whaling**

The industry and practice of harvesting whales from the oceans; it dates back to at least 6000 BC.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES



American Folk Art Museum website, Image Gallery and The Henry Darger Study Center,  
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# VISITING THE AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM

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## STUDENT AND EDUCATOR PROGRAMS

The American Folk Art Museum offers a range of discussion-based gallery and artmaking programs for students, including single visits and multi-session museum–school partnerships. For more information on current programs for students or additional educator programs, please call 212/265-1040, ext. 381, or e-mail [grouptours@folkartmuseum.org](mailto:grouptours@folkartmuseum.org). Information about all programs can also be found on the museum’s website, [www.folkartmuseum.org](http://www.folkartmuseum.org).

## TOURS, PRE-K TO GRADE 12

*Offered September–June, Monday–Friday, 10 AM–4 PM*

All programs are discussion-based and interactive and are led by experienced educators. Students will further develop their critical-thinking skills through dynamic conversations and activities centered on works of art. Programs relate to the New York State Learning Standards and the New York City Curriculum Blueprint. The program you choose will be customized for your students’ age group and abilities, and the museum welcomes inclusion classes and students with disabilities or special needs. The museum can accommodate up to thirty students at time.

The museum offers a series of themed tours—including Introduction to Folk Art, People, Places, and Artists’ Materials—that can be tailored for any age group. All groups have the option to sketch as part of the gallery experience and access the museum’s Touch Collection. For the complete list of tour themes, descriptions, and fee structure, see [www.folkartmuseum.org/schools](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/schools).

## MUSEUM-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Multi-session collaborations between the museum’s education department and schools combine exhibition-based programs with specialized classroom visits by an experienced museum educator. These multiple-visit school partnerships provide students with a unique opportunity to hone their critical-thinking skills and powers of observation. Customized to meet each schools’s objectives, school partnerships can also include artmaking workshops, professional development for school staff, and programs for families. School partnerships are appropriate for all age levels. A listing of sample partnership programs can be found at [www.folkartmuseum.org/partnerships](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/partnerships).

## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

You are invited to create a workshop specifically for your staff at the grade, school, or regional level. Museum educators will work with you to develop a program that meets the needs of your specific group.

The museum also offers additional free curriculum guides that integrate folk art into classroom learning: **Folk Art Revealed** (pre-K to grade 5 and grades 6 to 12) is a guide to teaching American history and culture through folk art and includes color images of works in the museum’s collection, lesson plans, a glossary, and bibliographic resources; and **In the Realms of Henry Darger** (grades 9 to 12) explores important themes in the work of the twentieth-century self-taught artist known for his vivid panoramic watercolors and includes selections from the artist’s writings, color images of his work in the museum’s collection, lesson plans, and bibliographic resources. Curriculum guides can be downloaded at [www.folkartmuseum.org/resources](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/resources).

## **PLANNING YOUR VISIT**

- Programs are offered at the museum during the school year Monday through Friday, anytime between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- Reservations must be made at least one month in advance.
- The museum does not allow self-guided groups. All groups must have a reservation with a museum guide.
- Groups must have one adult chaperone per every ten students; chaperones and teachers are responsible for supervising groups.
- Tours in select languages, including American Sign Language and visual descriptions, are available. Additional lead time may be necessary to schedule such a tour.
- The museum is a contracted vendor with the New York City Department of Education (vendor number: MUS005000; contract number: QR1640A).
- Buses may drop off school groups in front of the museum; there is no parking lot.
- There is no lunch area onsite, but there are several public outdoor seating areas steps away; please inquire when you book your visit.
- To make your reservation, please call 212/265-1040, ext. 381, or e-mail [grouptours@folkartmuseum.org](mailto:grouptours@folkartmuseum.org).

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

The museum is fully accessible and welcomes groups with special needs. Copies of labels and wall texts are available in large print. American Sign Language interpretation tours, verbal imaging tours, and tours of touch objects from the museum's Touch Collection are available by request with one-month advance notice. For more information, please contact the education department at 212/265-1040, ext. 381.

## **MUSEUM LOCATION**

2 Lincoln Square (Columbus Avenue at 66th Street), New York City

## **HOURS**

Tuesday–Saturday 12–7:30 PM

Sunday 12–6 PM

Closed Monday

*School programs are offered Monday–Friday, 10 AM–4 PM, September–June*

## **ADMISSION**

Free

*Fees apply for school programs; please inquire when you book your visit.*

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Subway: 1 to 66 St/Lincoln Center

Bus: M5, M7, M11, M20, M66, M104

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

[www.folkartmuseum.org/info](http://www.folkartmuseum.org/info)

212. 595. 9533

