

## Teri Greeves: Beadworking and Belonging

“If my mother can understand what I’m doing with a native eye, then it’s successful...”

“By speaking about the history and values of my people through my work, I can help bring balance into the world my children will grow up in.”

### Craft in America Theme: Process

#### Lesson Overview:

In this lesson, students will study the work of bead artist Teri Greeves. After watching the Craft In America Origins DVD segment featuring Greeves, students will examine how Greeves’ beadworking signifies and honors her Kiowa heritage. Students will look for examples of decorated garments in their experience that indicate belonging to a group. Following this, students will hand embellish an item of wear with an image symbolic of a particular group.

Grade level: (8-12)

Estimated Time: (six 45 minute class periods)

#### Background Information:

Beadworking has been found in cultures all around the world. Early beads were made of shells, seeds, animal teeth, porcupine quills, and other objects found in nature. Kiowa artist Teri Greeves learned beadworking from the women in her family and from others on the Shoshone and Arapaho’s Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. Greeves helped her mother in a family-owned trading post where beadworking was honored as a valuable and culturally significant art. Although she has a deep respect for tradition, Greeves opts for “pictorial” work rather than the traditional floral or geometric designs. She depicts stories of the Kiowa people, but from a contemporary perspective. The artist often applies beadwork to modern-day objects such as umbrellas and sneakers.

#### Key Concepts:

Beadworking is an art found in many cultures.

Clothes and symbolic imagery can signify belonging within a group.

Since ancient times, people around the world have adorned themselves artistically.

#### Critical Questions:

How does Teri Greeves’ artwork connect the generations in her family?

How are cultural traditions continued?

When might a garment identify the wearer as belonging to a particular group? What value might this have?

#### Objectives:

Students will:

Become familiar with the tradition of beadworking in Kiowa and Native American culture.

Explain how Teri Greeves’ work forms connections between the origins of her ideas and the objects she makes.

Describe ways different groups use adornment for group identification.

Embellish an article of clothing or accessory with a design indicating group identification with relevance to the student.

#### Vocabulary:

Kiowa, pictorial, motif, adorn, garment

Interdisciplinary Connections: Language Arts, History/Social Studies

National Art Education Standards for the Visual Arts:

4. Content Standard: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
5. Content Standard: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

#### Resources and Materials for Teaching:

##### Resources

Craft in America DVD, "Origins"

The work of Teri Greeves can be found at the following gallery site: <http://www.shiprocktrading.com/>

The National Museum of the American Indian has examples of beadwork including beaded shoes by Teri Greeves. <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

"Beadworking Past and Present" and "Designs of Belonging" worksheets

##### Materials for Studio Production

Beading needles (eyes are small enough to thread through beads)

Beads (seed bead size)

Sturdy thread, fine enough to pass through needle

Beeswax for thread (available at sewing supply store)

Felt, cotton or linen fabric, one 6" square per student

For designing: sketch paper and colored media (markers or pencils)

For transferring design: tissue paper or erasable marking pens (available at sewing supply stores)

Embroidery needles

Embroidery floss

Acrylic paint

Fine point brushes

Student choice of object to decorate: cell phone pocket, hat, backpack, etc.

##### Instructional Strategies:

Investigation (one 45 minute class)

##### Before viewing

Engage students in a discussion about the clothes they are wearing, and what group or groups their clothing makes them a part of. (Some examples would be tie-dye fabrics association with a counter-culture outlook, urban street style clothes, and tee shirts featuring band names). What other kinds of clothing do you have that identifies you as a member of a different group? (Possibilities include team attire, choir gowns, and blue jeans). What clothing do you have that reflects your heritage? (Perhaps students have traditional ethnic garments such as kilts, dirndls and dashikis, or special clothes worn on holidays). Explain to the students that they will view a segment featuring bead artist Teri Greeves, whose beadwork reflects her heritage. Suggest that as they view her in her studio and listen to her story they should pay special attention to the way she connects her artwork to her heritage and identity.

View the segment on Teri Greeves in "Origins" on the Craft In America DVD.

##### After viewing

Discuss the program with students. In what ways does the artist combine the past and the present in her artworks? (She uses traditional materials and techniques, she creates imagery that refers to stories important to native life, and she often beads modern-day objects such as sneakers and umbrellas). What role does her mother play in Teri Greeves' artmaking process? (Greeves' mother provides a connection with

her Kiowa history and respect for traditional beadwork from many native cultures.) What role do her sons play in Teri Greeves' artmaking process? (Greeves sensed a need to engage her sons with their Kiowa heritage. Examples include the Sunboyz presented as superheroes.) Help students understand that much of the artist's pictorial imagery comes from her memories and stories associated with her heritage. What kind of imagery did the artist create with beads and what was the source of these images? (Images of parades remembered from her childhood, World War II soldiers and Sunboyz—all related to her heritage.) View the video clip in which Teri Greeves and her mother discuss beaded garments.

Discuss the video clip. How do Greeves' garments make the wearer part of a group? What value might this have? Being part of a group can make one feel comfortable and included. For Greeves, the beaded garments also show a pride in the group's (Kiowa) heritage. Elicit comparable student experiences: How does it feel to be part of a group identified by clothing? Do you ever take pride in group identification?

Studio Production (approximately five 45 minute class periods total)

Considering Beadworking Past and Present (one 45 minute class)

Explain to students that they will be embellishing an item of their choice (or a patch of cloth provided by the teacher) with a design that has personal significance and can be representative of a group to which they belong.

To assist them in generating ideas for their own work, have students compare traditional beadwork with the work of Teri Greeves while completing the "Beadworking Past and Present" worksheet. They will need to access The National Museum of the American Indian and the Shiprock Gallery websites (or they may examine images from each that the teacher has printed out).

Students may also view the clip in which the original bead materials are described.

Creating Designs of Belonging (one 45 minute class)

Have students complete the "Designs of Belonging" worksheet. Circulate, helping students brainstorm first, the many groups to which they belong, and second, the symbols that may already exist for these groups. Part of the worksheet suggests that students solicit opinions about their design choices from classmates and especially, if possible, from fellow members of the group. If it is a family group, students may take the sheet home and share the designs with family members and record their responses on the back of the sheet.

After finishing the second worksheet, students should have some ideas for designs that they may finalize on a separate sheet of paper. Students should be able to describe how the design represents, symbolically or pictorially, the group they have selected. (Examples could be the depiction of traditional family heritage motifs, embellished religious symbols, stylized sports motifs, or initials representing the combined names of a group of friends.)

Embellishment (three 45 minute classes, including the reflection activity)

Note that some students may wish to engage in beadworking in the manner of Teri Greeves, in which the design is completed with solely with beads. Alternatively, students may wish to stitch the design with thread or paint the design and add beading to highlight particular areas.

To transfer designs to cloth choose one of the following. Using a temporary marking pen, draw the design or trace it on a light table if fabric is not opaque. Alternatively, draw the design on tissue paper and pin or tape it to the fabric. Sew directly through the paper and tear it away when design is finished. If painting is combined with stitching or beading, students should paint the intended sections of the design first and let them dry.

For beading, thread needle, bring thread ends together and knot at ends of lengths (thus doubling the strand). Pass or pull the thread over the chunk of wax. The wax helps to keep the thread from twisting and knotting and adds strength. Attach first knot to the back of the fabric and bring thread to the front of the fabric in preparation for stitching. To do the hump stitch in the tradition of Kiowa beadwork, string 5-7 beads on the thread. Make a stitch slightly shorter than the length of the strung beads (one or two bead lengths) so they form a small hump or loop above the surface of the fabric. This creates an interesting textural effect. Lines of beads should be worked closely together for a rich, dense appearance. Tie off thread on the back of design when it runs out and add another strand of thread when needed. Embroidery floss for embroidered stitches may be handled in the same manner as the beading thread. Separate the floss into two or three-strand sections for use. Knot at one end, or bring ends together and knot if thread is to be used doubled. Small stitches may be used to outline areas of design.

### Reflection

When students complete their embellished design, they should create a typed or handwritten artist's statement to accompany their project for display. Students should begin the statement with a reference to the work of the artist studied, Teri Greeves, and what they learned about her. Students may also include a description of the completed work, how it was inspired, how the piece represents the group they have chosen, and how they created the work.

### Assessment

By examining the two worksheets and the artist's statement, and in discussions with the student throughout the project, it should be evident that the student can:

Describe and illustrate examples of beadworking from Native American history as well as the work of Teri Greeves and explain the concept of heritage within the pieces.

Share and explain various examples of group identification through objects and garments.

Create an embellished design symbolizing a group of relevance to the student.

### Additional Resources

The Hudson Museum at the University of Maine has much information about and images of Northeastern beadwork from the 17th century to the present: ([www.umaine.edu/hudsonmuseum/virtual1.htm](http://www.umaine.edu/hudsonmuseum/virtual1.htm)).

Lois Sherr Dubin, *The History of Beads: From 100,000 to the Present*. NY: Abrams, 2009.

Lois Sherr Dubin, *North American Indian Jewelry and Adornment: From Prehistory to the Present*. NY: Abrams, 2003.

### Extensions

Students may examine the work of the following artists on the Craft In America website, listed under Fiber. David Chatt also creates stitched bead designs. Janet Lipkin makes wearable sculptural pieces.

K. Lee Manuel designed fashion pieces from suede, leather and feathers. Joyce Scott also works in glass beads, along with many other materials.

## Designs of Belonging

Name \_\_\_\_\_

*“If my mother can understand what I’m doing with a native eye, then it’s successful...”*

Consider the various groups you belong to and list them below. Think of your heritage and family, school clubs, sports and activities, groups with shared interests, religious and service groups, and community groups such as town, state and country.

Narrowing down the groups you may want to depict, choose one, two or three and think of symbols or depictions that have been used to represent them. Sketch them here:

Narrow your selection to one group. Will you use and alter the design that has been previously used, or will you develop a new design? Try your ideas here:

Share your ideas with a classmate, and if you can, with a member of the group the design is intended to represent, such as a family or sports team member. What do they think of it? Choose one for your final design. Draw it to the size you will use on separate paper.

# Beadworking Past and Present

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Examine the beaded examples from the National Museum of the American Indian and sketch some of the repeating motifs in these squares:

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Examine Teri Greeves' work from the galley website and sketch parts of the designs in these squares:

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What designs are common among these artworks? Describe the identifying characteristics of the beadwork, including texture, bead application, colors, items decorated, and designs. Use the back of this sheet to answer.

How is Teri Greeves' work similar to and different from the historic examples from the museum? How might you explain the similarities and differences? Use the back of this sheet to answer.