

Teaching *Purpose and Planning: Connecting basket making to contemporary needs and resources*

Overview

Before viewing the segment on Corine Pearce and Pomo basket making, students will use the worksheet, *Examining Basketry*, as they sort baskets, make and generate questions about their materials and functions. As they view the video segment, students will pay special attention to the ways in which their questions are addressed. Finally, they will consider the broader questions about why people make and use baskets, how the environment contributes to the materials of a basket, and how baskets might convey meaning.

After viewing the video and participating in a discussion, students will create their own baskets. They will consider basket making materials that are available to them. Using the worksheet *Meaning in Materials*, students will think about the implications those materials might have on the meaning of the basket they create, as well as determine a purpose for the basket they will make. Later, during studio time, students will create either a communal basket or individual baskets with materials connected to their contemporary environment and needs.

(Video and Discussion: (one 45 minute class period)

Before Viewing

Show students a handmade basket and engage them in a discussion. What is this? How do you know? Do you have baskets of your own or in your family? How do you or other members of your family use baskets? Have you ever made a basket? If so, how did you make it? What do you know about the history of baskets? How do you think baskets have been used in different parts of the world and throughout history?

Explain that in this lesson students will explore a variety of baskets, learn about basket making in one group of Native Americans living in Northern California, and create their own baskets--individually or with a small group of collaborators. Tell students that they will learn that baskets fulfill many practical uses and also play a role in special events or ceremonies. Refer to the Critical Questions and explain that as they work together to learn more about baskets and to make their own baskets, they should be able to discuss the following questions:

- Why do people make and use baskets?
- How do the forms, materials and techniques used in basket making connect to the time and place in which baskets are made?
- How do baskets convey meaning?

Provide students with a variety of actual baskets and images of baskets. Utilize the Craft in America image gallery provided for this lesson as well as acquired classroom examples (craftinamerica.org/object/baskets). Have students inspect the baskets and prompt them to consider the questions found on the worksheet, *Examining Basketry*. Students may work alone,

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in pairs, or in small groups to complete the worksheet. Have students sort the baskets and compare and contrast them according to form, possible function, or materials. As students investigate the forms, materials, and possible functions of the baskets they should speculate about their artistic, geographical and cultural origins. At the completion of the worksheet students will have created a list of questions to be used while watching the video.

After students complete the worksheet, *Examining Basketry*, explain that they will view a segment from Craft in America's CALIFORNIA episode.

Tell students that the entire video focuses on craft artists and craft traditions in the state of California. The segment that they will see features a member of the Pomo people who are indigenous people of Northern California. The Pomo people are regarded as some of the world's finest basket makers. Pomo baskets are known for their beauty and for their exquisite craftsmanship. Pomo basket makers are both men and women, but the video features a woman, Corine Pearce. Ms. Pearce shares her own story of becoming a basket maker, and she also shares with us the process involved in creating baskets.

Make sure that students are prepared to take notes while the video is played. Suggest that as they watch the video, they should listen for and record answers to the questions generated on their worksheets while exploring the variety of baskets. Students also should consider the following critical questions:

- Why do people make and use baskets?
- How do the forms, materials and techniques used in basket making connect to the time and place in which baskets are made?
- How do baskets convey meaning?

Post these questions on the board and review them with the students prior to viewing the segment. Watch the segment online at craftinamerica.org/short/pomo-basket-weaver-corine-pearce

After Viewing/Discussion

Begin a discussion of the video. Have students refer to the questions they generated after examining and sorting baskets. For each question, ask students to share what they learned through watching the video.

- What questions do you still have?
- What did you find especially interesting?
- What are the steps in the process of making a Pomo basket?
- What part of the process in the creation of the baskets did you find most intriguing?
- What do you recall are key aspects of basket making for the Pomo people?
- How does the environment support the process of basket making for the Pomo basket makers?
- In what ways does the environment control or limit the process?



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Finally, direct attention to the Critical Questions and have students discuss each:

- Why do people make and use baskets?
- How do the forms, materials and techniques used in basket making connect to the time and place in which baskets are made?
- How do baskets convey meaning?

Optional: Teachers might opt to provide the above questions for students to address in their sketchbooks as an overnight assignment. This works well with high school. After students answer the questions on their own and bring them to class, have them open their sketchbooks for their classmates to read. A shared electronic document also can be posted by teachers and students can contribute their answers. This helps preserve time for studio work.

After Discussion

Remind students that they will create their own baskets. Clarify the choices that students will be expected to make. They will need to make choices about the basket's purpose, the materials they will use, and the basket's form. Explain that these decisions are interrelated. The purpose of the basket is connected to its form. The materials used are also connected to both purpose and form. Explain that they will need to choose whether they will create a basket for their own personal use or for a communal use. Finally, they will need to decide if they will work individually or with others to create a basket.

Focus on Function

Remind students that around the world and throughout time baskets have fulfilled the needs of people living in communities. People have used baskets to store seeds, gather eggs, transport apples, and even babies. Ask students: What purpose might your basket serve your class community or you personally? Could it be storage for personal devices? Would you prefer to create a basket that will provide storage for a personal item? Could it hold or transport snacks for class events? Would you want to create a basket that serves an everyday function for the classroom? What special occasions or important life events could be marked with this basket?

As students come up with various needs a basket could fulfill, record them on the board or chart paper.

Focus on Materials

Remind students that they will need to choose materials for their baskets. What kind of materials do students have available to them? What is in their environment? Included in a student's environment could be the art room supply closet, home, local stores, exterior man-made areas, or out in nature. What alternative materials found in their environment, such as plastics or paper, could be prepared into strands for weaving? Give students time to reflect on their own and make notes on the worksheet, *Meaning in Materials*. Then using the



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information they gathered on the worksheet have students contribute to a shared list of ideas about materials.

Focus on Form

Remind students that they will need to make choices about the shape or form of their baskets. Have students make sketches of ideas for the shape of the basket they would like to create on the back of the worksheet or in a sketchbook.

Reflection

When baskets are completed, have the students put their baskets to use. Suggest that they place the items for which the basket was intended into their basket. Recommend that they actually carry the full basket from one place to another. If a communal basket was made, have students use the basket together for its purpose.

In discussion or through a sketchbook reflection have students answer the following questions:

- How did it feel to use the basket?
- What aspects of the basket function well?
- What aspects of the basket do not function as expected?
- What words come to mind when you think about the materials you chose?

Ask students to think about how their completed basket is similar to and different from the many baskets they have seen and thought about during this lesson. Encourage students to share with one or more classmates how they decided upon the function, materials and form of the basket they made. As a part of that conversation, suggest that they ask their classmate(s) to examine their baskets and share what meaning comes through to them. Remind students to consider if they were to make another basket, what would they do differently, what would they keep the same?

Assessment

In discussions with the class and with individual students throughout the lesson; by examining the students' worksheets; and by witnessing the students' studio work, it should be evident that the students:

- Connected their own work to the tradition of basket making.
- Articulated local materials and resources that could be used for basket making.
- Understand specific functions that baskets serve within a community.
- Are able to explain how their basket holds meaning and tells about the basket's artistic, geographical, and cultural origins.



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Extensions

Further exploration of the ideas of this lesson can be found in the Craft in America Education Guides and segments:

- Consuelo Jimenez Underwood: Weaving Together Content and Form, craftinamerica.org/guide/consuelo-jimenez-underwood-weaving-together-content-and-form
- Gee's Bend and the Oriole Mill: Time and Textiles, craftinamerica.org/guide/gees-bend-and-the-oriole-mill-time-and-textiles
- Mary Jackson's segment from the MEMORY episode, craftinamerica.org/short/mary-jackson-segment