

Worksheet #1: Investigating the Art of Alison Saar

Work with at least one classmate to investigate the art of Alison Saar, based on the artworks shown in the video. You may rewatch the video or find examples of her sculptures online.

1. Describe in general terms a few of the artworks by the artist shown in the video.  
What do they have in common?
2. Recall that in one scene, the artist ties small cast-iron skillet together. What was she making?  
How do you suppose she was going to use the skillets?

What significance do you think these objects have? What might they symbolize?

How does this use of these objects fit with other sculptures by the artist shown in the video?

3. What materials do you recall the artist using? How was she working with the materials?

What tool or tools was she using?

What significance or special meaning might her choice of materials and tools have?

4. According to the artist, tin ceiling sheets have histories and “memories.” She says they are “witnesses.” What do you suppose she means? How might a piece of ceiling tin serve as a witness?
5. Alison Saar also says that the tin ceiling pieces refer to “scarification, tattooing, and identity that depends on how you mark your body.” In order for those pieces of tin to have that meaning, how would the artist need to use them?



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6. About Alison Saar's work, a curator in the video says, "What makes her work so compelling is her efforts to reclaim the narratives of gender and race by presenting ordinary individuals as agents of their own change and monumentality in this life." Do you agree with this description of her work? Why?
  
7. In the video, the artist says that the women on her mother's side of the family and her African American heritage is profoundly important for her identity. She also says that her mother and grandmother were both powerful Black females and that she feels compelled to "carry on." Do you think her artwork is about powerful Black females? Why or why not?
  
8. What can you take away from thinking carefully about the work of Alison Saar?
  
9. How might her work become an inspiration for your own artwork?

What ideas about people might inspire you?

What ideas about materials might inspire you?

What ideas about objects might inspire you?