



CRAFT IN AMERICA

WEARABLES MADE FOR STORYTELLING EDUCATION GUIDE

Essential question

- How do artists convey stories in their work?

Supporting questions

- How does collaboration lead to a unique cross-pollination of ideas?
- How do custom-crafted clothing and wearable accessories—plus the embellishments featured on them—suggest stories about both the wearer and the maker?
- In what ways can contemporary adaptation to traditional craft inspire renewed interest among today's audiences?

Key Concepts

- Collaboration can lead to a unique cross-pollination of ideas.
- The practice of adorning oneself with clothing, jewelry, and other embellishments is a way of visually communicating information about the wearer.
- Makers tend to work within long-standing traditions, sometimes continuing the tradition and sometimes breaking with it to establish new directions.

Before viewing

Note: It will be helpful to familiarize yourself with the work of Graham Ebner ahead of time; even so, teacher and students can learn together about the creative processes of this artist as the class views the WEST episode and then explores internet resources.

Lead a brief discussion with your students about decorative clothing. Ask them to share what they know about:

- Designer clothing
- Embellishment
- Upcycling
- Leatherworking
- Cowboy boots
- Collaboration

After viewing

Ask students to recall how Graham Ebner collaborates with others to design his cowboy boots.

As you guide the discussion, be sure to note the following:

- Ebner collaborates with clients
- Ebner collaborates with neighboring artist Kathie Sever of Fort Lonesome embroidery
- Collaboration in the creative process has a cross-pollinating effect that results in a richly layered visual story. When discussing this point, ask the students to recall the Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox cowboy boots. Some possible questions to ask:
 - Can you identify the different stories that are visually layered in the embellishment of these boots?
 - How well do these boots tell the story of the wearer?
 - How well do they tell the story of the artist involved in their creation?
- Tell students that in the vein of Graham Ebner's creative process, they will collaboratively design wearable art objects featuring imagery that suggests a story about the maker, the wearer, or both.



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Discuss the following questions with students:

- How can stories be told with pictures?
- What messages can be conveyed by a person's clothing and other adornments?
- What are the pros and cons of collaboration?

Seeing Connections with Another Artist

To deepen their understanding, lead the students in an internet search for DIY artists who upcycle used fabric and other objects in unique ways, transforming the function of the original objects. Suggest that they especially look for DIY artists who collaborate with others and use traditional craft processes in new and interesting ways. Have them share at least one example within a small group. Broadening the conversation by relating Ebner to the DIY art movement highlights different ways contemporary makers are reviving traditional craft through personal and cultural narratives. Invite students to compare the artistic practice of Ebner and other DIY artists they find in their internet browsing.