

Painting Culture Through the Baobab Tree

Same Story, Different Countries

Lesson created by Marielle Kraft

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

This lesson compares the significance of paintings of the Baobab Tree from South African culture and the Civil Rights Movement from the United States, and asks students to analyze their artistic elements as a group and as individuals.

EDUCATION STANDARDS

Grade 6 | 90 minutes

| Common Core Standards | National Core Arts Standards |
|---|---|
| CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details | VA:Re7.1.6a: Identify and interpret works or art or design that reveal how people live around the world and what they value. |
| CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics. | VA:Re7.2.6a: Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions. VA:Cn11.1.6a: Analyze how art reflects changing times, traditions, resources, and cultural uses |

OBJECTIVES

1. **Cognitive:** Students will be able to explain symbols of culture, such as the Baobab tree as an important symbol in South African culture. Students will demonstrate the 4 themes of Culture seen in histories around the world: Oppression, Resilience, Resistance, and Unity in the visual symbol of a Baobab tree.
2. **Affective:** Students will work well in whole class and partner settings. Students will demonstrate listening and oral participatory skills, as well as focus in

independent work. Students will follow directions in a timely manner.

3. **Artistic:** Students will create their own visual representations of culture in the shape of a Baobab tree in the following format: Trunk: CULTURE, 4 main branches: Oppression, Resilience, Resistance, and Moving Forward, twigs off shooting from branches: music, language, art, photography, dance, etc.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

1. **Cognitive:** Teacher will evaluate students' ability to observe and analyze the different elements of paintings pertaining to the Civil Rights and Apartheid Eras. Students will take individual notes during the observation stations on the worksheet and the teacher will collect these sheets at the end of the lesson. Students will also be able to verbally explain to a partner the importance of the Baobab tree as a symbol of South African culture.
2. **Affective:** Teacher will circulate around the classroom to make sure students are working well together both in pairs and in small groups. Teacher will ask students to remind her the expectations for moving around the classroom safely. She will ensure that this is the case.
3. **Artistic:** Teacher will collect the worksheets to see how students work to analyze the paintings at the stations by observing the different elements of visual arts to interpret meaning. Teacher will evaluate the Baobab painting by the students' abilities to use the space on the page and use at least 3 colors in painting their tree.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. A large poster, brown paint + paintbrush, sharpie
2. [Resource 1.1 - Paintings of the Baobab Tree](#)
3. [Resource 1.2 - Fast Facts about the Baobab Tree: Tree of Life](#)
4. [Resource 1.3 - Civil Rights and Apartheid Paintings](#)
5. [Resource 1.4 - Assessment Rubric](#)
6. [Handout 1.1 - Observation Stations: Civil Rights and Apartheid Paintings](#)

ACTIVITY

History Warm-Up/Think-Pair-Share

- The teacher will project the first painting from **Resource 1.1 (Paintings of the Baobab Tree)**, the original painting from the *Same Story, Different Countries Project* by Garth Erasmus, on the board and ask students what they see in the painting, both physically (the tree itself) and artistically (the elements of the painting itself).
- After taking many different observations, show them the second painting from **Resource 1.1**, “Baobab” by Thomas Baines, and ask them the same questions as earlier.
- Explain to them that both paintings depict the Baobab tree, and have them think-pair-share with shoulder partners about their thoughts on the use of color and the use of space on the canvas.
- Then get students to work together to interpret meaning from these observations, culminating in a class discussion about what we can learn about the Baobab tree from just 2 paintings.
- Then reveal actual facts from **Resource 1.2 (Fast Facts about the Baobab Tree: Tree of Life)**, reference them in the 2 paintings as you go, and introduce them to South African culture through the tree.

Integrated Arts Activity

- Split the students into partners. Separate the desks into 4 groups around the room with 1 painting from **Resource 1.3 (Civil Rights and Apartheid Paintings)** on each group of desks.
- Explain to students that they will have 3 minutes at each table to observe the four paintings just like we did with the Baobab paintings, write down the artistic and subject matter details on their worksheets, and make an interpretation about the Civil Rights or Apartheid eras based on their observations. Pass out the analysis worksheet.
- Tell students they will be working in partners, and they are expected to share at the end of class. Each student will fill out his or her own individual worksheet, which will be collected at the end of the lesson.
- Ask students to take their seats after 12 minutes of rotating, observing, analyzing, and interpreting, and to finish their concluding thoughts individually at the

bottom of the worksheet.

- Direct students to gather with a group of 6 to verbally compare and contrast their observations and interpretations of the paintings as an introduction to the Civil Rights and Apartheid eras.
- Regroup the class as a whole class and discuss the analysis worksheets. Some partners will share their observations + interpretations, and the teacher should record these on the board as they review each of the 4 paintings. Along the way, the teacher will validate whether or not the interpretations are accurate, and they will give correct information about Civil Rights and Apartheid as they go. Students will take notes.

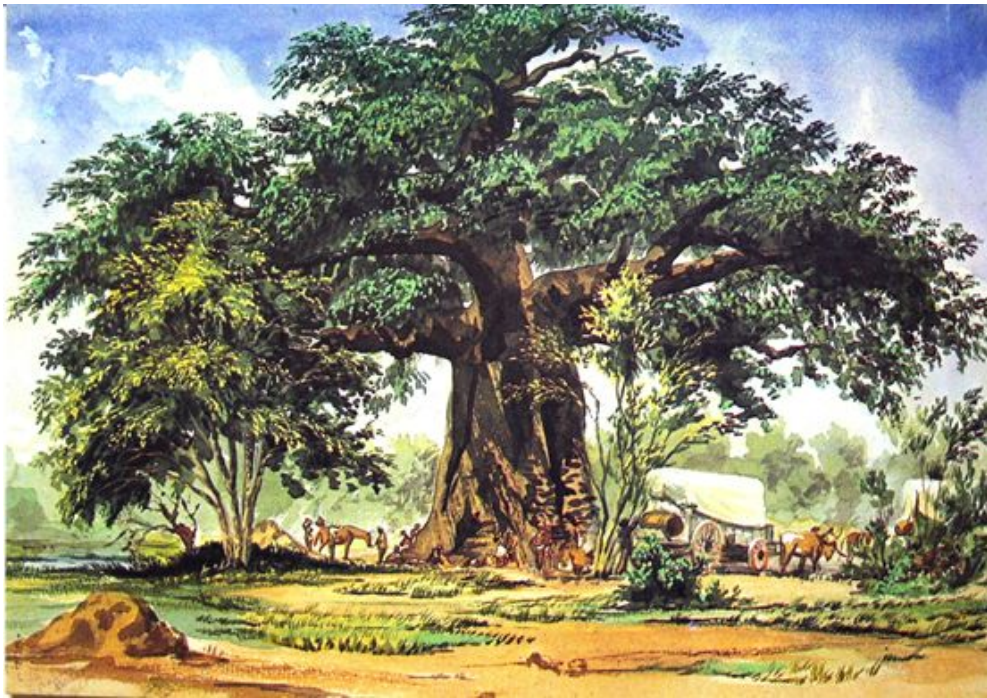
Unit Culminating Activity

- Students will be asked to head back to their seats and open up their social studies notebooks. The teacher will explain that they will be sketching out their own baobab trees as a symbol for the Culture unit ahead.
- Students will grab whatever colorful tool they can find in the classroom and use what they've learned about Baobab trees to create their own outline of the Baobab trunk and 4 top branches.
- After sketching, the students will write the word "Culture" down the trunk, as I explain that culture is the base of the unit and it involves 4 themes for our 4 lessons: Oppression, Resilience, Resistance, and Liberation.
- We will fill out the branches of our trunk and keep growing our tree as the unit progresses. At the end, each student will handprint the top to make colorful leaves that are in essence representative of our classroom community and culture, both individually and together.

RESOURCE 1.1



“Baobab Tree” by Garth Erasmus



“Baobab” by Thomas Baines

RESOURCE 1.2

Fast Facts about the Baobab Tree: Tree of Life

- 60 ft, in circumference, 90ft in diameter
- Average lifespan of 500 years
- It is a spiritual symbol for many south African cultures -> they feel a spiritual connection to the tree(s) in their village
- Dead relatives are buried at the base of the tree -> believed that their souls become apart of the Baobab Tree
- Fruit is bears is a super fruit -> extremely healthy and brings important nourishment to the locals who eat it
- Stores up to 1,2000 gallons of water in its trunk
 - It can sustain in harsh temp changes
 - Elephants often strip the bark for the moisture -> grows back quickly
- Acts as the focal point of South African history and a major symbol in South African culture

Sources:

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/none/tree-life>

<http://www.sandplay.co.za/uncategorized/the-baobab-tree/>

RESOURCE 1.3

Civil Right Paintings



["Moving Day" by Norman Rockwell](#)

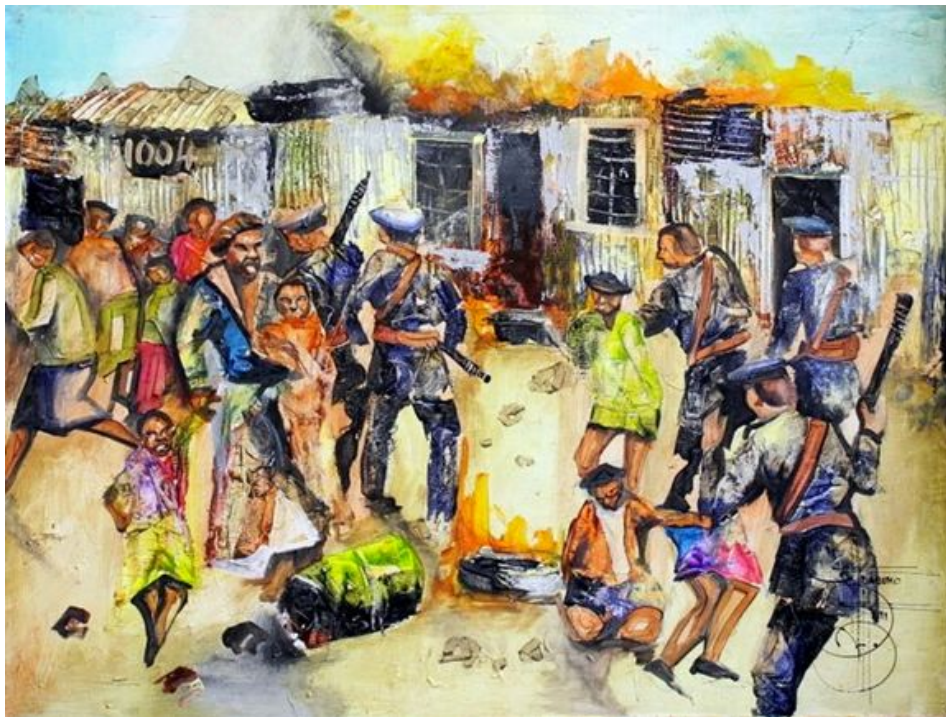


["UNITE" by Barbara Jones-Hogu](#)

Apartheid Paintings



“Guilt of Ignorance: Children of Apartheid” by Michaela Rinaldi



“Apartheid” by Ndabuko Ntuli

HANDOUT 1.1

Name: _____

Date: _____

Partner: _____

Observation Stations: Civil Rights and Apartheid Paintings

Record observations that you and your partner make from each painting and interpret their meaning.

Civil Rights Paintings

1) Norman Rockwell – “Moving Day”

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Observation: | Observation: | Observation: |
| Interpretation: | Interpretation: | Interpretation: |

2) Barbara Jones-Hogu – “UNITE”

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Observation: | Observation: | Observation: |
| Interpretation: | Interpretation: | Interpretation: |

South African Apartheid Paintings

1) Michaela Rinaldi - "Guilt of Ignorance: Children of Apartheid"

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Observation: | Observation: | Observation: |
| Interpretation: | Interpretation: | Interpretation: |

2) Ndabuko Ntuli – "Apartheid"

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Observation: | Observation: | Observation: |
| Interpretation: | Interpretation: | Interpretation: |

What is your overall impression of the Apartheid and Civil Rights eras? Explain using evidence from the paintings and your interpretations of the artistic elements, author's intent, and subject matter.

RESOURCE 1.4

Painting Observations Worksheet: They will be assessed on the variety of their observations, including both observations about the artistic elements and the subject matter of the paintings. This worksheet will be collected. This will be scored on a scale from 1-3:

| Poor (1) | Fair (2) | Excellent (3) |
|---|---|---|
| Worksheet is incomplete. 0-1 observations made for each painting, and little to no variety of both artistic elements and subject matter. No interpretations made. | Worksheet is complete, but lacks some thoroughness. Some variety among the observations, but many of the same observations are made for all the paintings. More thought and depth needed. Interpretations are made loosely based off of the written observations. | Worksheet is thoroughly complete. Observations are varied and it is evident that the student examined each painting individually for both artistic elements and subject matter. A high effort is clearly shown. Interpretations are made based on written observations. |