

Comparing and Contrasting Native American Metal Art with Other Mediums

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Industrial Arts
Grade Level: 9-12
Suggested Duration: 8-10 class periods (50 minutes)

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

The visual arts content standards for ninth through twelfth grades are that each student will:

2. create art or design projects in response to contemporary issues that demonstrate an awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative works;
6. analyze an exhibit or collection's impact on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings;
7. evaluate the effectiveness of an artwork as perceived by a variety of audiences;
9. analyze a collection of artworks based on sets of criteria;
10. incorporate knowledge of personal, social, cultural, and historical life to create artworks; and
11. compare uses of art in a variety of personal, societal, cultural, and historical contexts.

Understandings

- Each tribe has its own oral histories, which are as valid as written histories. These histories predate the “discovery” of North America. (EU3)
- History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. History told from American Indian perspectives frequently conflicts with the stories mainstream historians tell. (EU6)
- Students will further their knowledge of the [Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians](#).

Essential Questions

- What are some general stereotypes and biases regarding American Indians?
- How is art used as a metaphor by Native American Artists?
- How is the art by various artists similar to one another?
- How could we express or describe our own identity through original art pieces?



Students will be able to...

- identify metal art and its importance.
- identify how Jay Laber’s art might help dispel stereotypes.
- critically examine contemporary and historical portrayals of American Indians.
- define stereotypes, bias, and discrimination and understand how they relate to stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans in art.

Students will know...

- stereotypes and biases originate from misinformation and misperceptions. Students will develop an awareness of how this has impacted Native American art and imagery.
- that contemporary American Indian artists are using various mediums to create unique works of art.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Analyze and evaluate multiple issues and perspectives regarding American Indian stereotypes.
2. Students will research Jay Laber artwork and compare and contrast it with another prolific Native American artist.
3. Students will present their t-charts to the class.
4. Students identify Indigenous artist that they relate to and create their own artwork.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Days 1 & 2

Building Students’ Background Knowledge

To begin discussion, ask students if there has ever been a time when someone assumed something about them based upon their appearance, either positive or negative, e.g., they were lazy, must like a certain type of video game, food, or music. Collect responses with an eye toward concrete examples of stereotyping. As students provide their responses, ask them how it made them feel. How did they know the person was making assumptions about them?

Explain to students that stereotype is more of how we describe people and prejudice deals with how we feel about people.

Activity: Ask students to draw a scientist and have students share their drawings with a partner. Did they have any similarities? Did students make any assumptions about what a scientist should look like?

Next, conduct a google search using the word “scientist.” Google has a menu bar that displays images so click on the images tab and have students conduct a Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) as they examine the images. This could be done via large group or if students have access to Chromebooks, they could do this activity with a partner.

Teacher tip: Included in the lesson are video clips featuring Native American artists and one of the topics they discuss are stereotypes regarding Native art and artists.

Consider using these three questions for analyzing the images:

- What is going on in this image?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Go back to their pictures and discuss the Essential Questions with students. Take time to talk about new vocabulary words such as Stereotypes and Bias. Display on a Smart Board the definitions of the following terms and definitions, biases, discrimination, and stereotypes.

1. Bias – Cause to feel or show inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something.
2. Discrimination – The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, age, or sex.
3. Stereotype – A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing. "biases, discrimination, stereotypes.

Google's English dictionary is provided by [Oxford Languages](#).

- Ask students what are some stereotypes you have heard about American Indians?
 - Conduct a Google search with the words "Native American," access the images tab. Teacher will lead a conversation about what they see in the photographs. (Teacher Note: The search helps with understanding the stereotype that Native Americans are something of the past. If you review the pictures that show up first you will notice that many are historical, and they might not feature many updates.)
 - How does Google portray Native American's? Are there any common themes?
 - Can a simple search about Native Americans create stereotypes? How? Why?
- Ask students if American Indians are something of the past.

What type of art do you enjoy and how do you feel it reflects your identity? Think, Pair, Share.

Display the term Native American art. Ask students to share what comes to mind when they think about Native American art and facilitate a class discussion. Now do a Google search on Native American art and display the images. Ask students to share what they see? Is there a common theme or look?

Facilitate another discussion about what they see.

Show the following [Jay Laber: Reborn Rez Wrecks in the Missoula Art Park](#) as a way to introduce the topic. Ask students to write down a few notes regarding the clip utilizing a 3-2-1 prompt: three things you saw in the video that caught your attention, two questions you have about information presented in the video, and one thing you really enjoyed. Facilitate a brief class discussion.

To help students better understand these terms, show the following TEDx clip, [Indigenous In Plain Sight | Gregg Deal | TEDxBoulder](#), (**LANGUAGE DISCLAIMER: *Indigenous In Plain Sight* uses a racial slur in the video at 8:18 of this clip, teacher can choose to skip past this or preface a discussion with students that it is used to help others understand his point.**) This video will help the teacher understand the terms from an Indigenous artist perspective.

Teacher will lead a short discussion of the videos. Some examples of questions the teacher may use are:

- In the videos did the artists mention issues regarding biases and stereotypes?
- Do biases, discrimination, and stereotypes have any influence on artists' works?

Next, teacher will display the following excerpt to help students further understand how Laber and other artists express themselves through art:

“Reborn Rez Wrecks’ is a good metaphor for Jay's sculptures as they relate to our tribal communities,” Corwin Clairmont, Laber’s teacher and mentor, and member of the Confederated tribes of the Salish and Kootenai, told Forbes.com. “We are sometimes seen as discarded or forgotten people, and to take something discarded and then resurrect it into something of strength and beauty is quite wonderful, and is what many of our tribal communities are striving to do as a people.” Forbes, 2020

NOTE: Students will need access to computers for approximately two days. Students will now research Jay Laber’s artwork and conduct research for an artist they choose to compare with Laber’s work (see links below.) Student’s will use the t-chart provided at the bottom of this lesson to compare and contrast Jay Laber’s work with another metal artist of their choice. Suggested Native American artists the students may select are listed in the resource section.

Some key question students should ask as they explore the artwork:

- What do you see in the artwork of the artist you are researching?
- How is it similar to Jay Laber’s?
- What is different from that artist’s work in comparison to Jay Laber’s artwork?
- What helped influence your selected artist to create the art?
- How does the artist use artwork to express self to the viewers?
- Was the artist influenced by anyone or anything that helped create the works?
- Additional questions that may be asked when analyzing artwork by both artists can be found on the blog titled [How to Look at Art: 30 Mindful Questions to Ask Yourself](#).
 - A sample that is taken from the link are:
 - What is the piece doing? Does it tell a story? Evoke a feeling? Document an event? Present an idea?
 - What do you think the artist was feeling?
 - How does it make you feel?
 - What emotions are captured in the piece? If there are people in the piece, what are their expressions?
 - What parts of the piece make you feel the way you do?
 - Does the piece bring to mind any of your own life events or memories?
 - How has your opinion changed about this piece from the time you started looking at it until now?

Day 3

Students will now share the information they gathered with the class. This will be done by displaying the T-charts on a Smart Board. They will discuss their findings with the class.

Days 4 through 8

Note: Three to five days is an estimate for time needed in order to complete this final phase of the lesson. Teacher will determine how much time is suitable for students to complete their reflection and artwork.

After the presentations are completed, students will identify a piece of authentic American Indian artwork that inspires them and write a short reflection. Students should include information on the tribal affiliation of the artist, what inspired the artist, and where this information was obtained. The papers should also indicate what about the artwork inspires the students. Some guidance may be needed. It is suggested the teacher lead a discussion on how the artwork is 'authentic American Indian' artwork.

Based upon what they chose, students will create their own artwork. This can be done in a variety of mediums depending on what your school has available. Teacher will determine which artform is best fit for students. The following are an example of art mediums that may be used.

- Metal art
- Woodwork
- Drawings
- Computer Generated Art
- Collages
- Paper Mâché
- Pottery
- Glass Blowing

Recommended Resources

Note: Some of the below links may require a subscription for articles and links.

[Jay Laber's 'Reborn Rez Wrecks' Turns Junk Cars Beautiful At Missoula Art Museum](#)

[Blackfeet sculptor Jay Laber lives on in works across Montana, the world](#)

[How to Look at Art: 30 Mindful Questions to Ask Yourself](#)

Native American Artists:

[Cannupa Hanska](#)

- [Cannupa Hanska Luger Is Turning the Tables on the Art World](#)

[Gerald Clarke, Jr.](#)

- [Gerald Clarke Jr.: The Stereotype of Native American Art is Problematic](#)

[Kathy Whitman Elk Woman](#)

[Margaret Jacobs](#)

- [Hudson Valley Moca-Margaret Jacobs \(Akwesasne Mohawk\)](#)

[Raven Halfmoon](#)

- [Indigenous Artist Raven Halfmoon on Interpreting History Through Contemporary Sculpture](#)

[Rose B. Simpson](#)

- [Found\(ation\)](#)
- [Rose B. Simpson Thinks in Clay](#)

[Wendy Red Star](#)

Compare and Contrast Chart

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Please select 5-7 bulleted items to compare and contrast:

- What do you see in the artwork of the artist you are researching?
- How is it similar to Jay Laber's?
- What is different from artwork in comparison to Jay Laber's artwork?
- What helped influence your selected artist to create the art?
- How does the artist use the artwork to express self to the viewers?
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 - How does it make you feel?
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Jay Laber's Artwork	Native American Artists