

(Access Mia's "Native Art, Native Voices," teacher resource by [CLICKING HERE](#))

### **ARTWORK 1: [Suitcase](#)**

#### **Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. When Nellie Two Bears Gates was 7 years old she was sent from her home on Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota to a boarding school in Missouri. At boarding school her Native language and culture were replaced by English and Christian teachings.
2. Art helped maintain a community's oral tradition in the absence of written language. Nellie Two Bears Gates was perhaps the first woman of her tribe to break the gender barrier and create artwork using figurative images. Figural art was historically made by men for art on tipi covers and clothing. Women traditionally created with abstract geometric designs, like what is seen on the border of this suitcase.
3. One side of this suitcase is a marriage scene. In one corner the bride and her parents are seen displaying all the gifts they received. Lower on the suitcase the bride is also seen next to her tipi surrounded by her new gifts. On the reverse side of the suitcase cowboys are roping cattle to show how the family adapted and continued their traditions of bison hunting to cattle after the bison population was decimated.

#### **Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. Using the images on the suitcase, create a story. How does it begin, what happens next, and how will it end?
2. Gates created objects that incorporated the traditional and contemporary. In what ways do people today also combine traditional designs with contemporary objects?
3. If you were to decorate a suitcase or backpack with images that told stories about your life and identity, what would you include?

**ARTWORK 2: [Collage IX: Landscape](#)****Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. George Morrison was an Anishinaabe artist from the Grand Portage Reservation in northern Minnesota.
2. *Collage IX: Landscape* is the first wood collage Morrison made while in St. Paul, using driftwood he gathered along the shores of Lake Superior. Throughout his life, the lake's horizon line inspired how he fitted together the wood pieces he collected. The patterns of the wood grain reminded him of patterns he saw at the lake—clouds in the sky, ripples in water, colorful patches on rocks.
3. Place was incredibly important to Morrison. No matter where he was in the world, when he created new artworks, he would sometimes include the location along with his signature.
4. George Morrison's works occupy both Native galleries as well as modern art galleries. He was one of the first Native American artists to break away from cultural stereotypes to create artworks that speak on a universal level, while also maintaining a connection to his roots along Lake Superior.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. Look closely at this artwork made out of many pieces of wood. Artist George Morrison calls this a landscape, a word used to describe an artwork showing a place. What about this reminds you of a place? Look for a line (called a horizon line) that shows where the sky meets the land or water.
2. The shapes are made of old pieces of wood the artist found, particularly along the shore of Lake Superior. He used the colors and textures of the driftwood to "paint" a picture of the patterns he would see at the lake. What patterns do you see here that remind you of nature? (Think about sky, rocks, water, trees, and light.)
3. People see so many different things in this "painting." What do you see in it?

**ARTWORK 3: [Rendezvous](#), G258****Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. Born in Oklahoma, Allan Houser was a Chiricahua Apache teacher, sculptor, and painter. He is one of the most renowned Native American painters and Modernist sculptors of the 1900s, known for both honoring Apache tradition and his artistic exploration.
2. Allan Houser often picked out his stones for carving in person and let the stone inspire what would come from it.
3. *Rendezvous* tells the story of a young Native woman setting off to meet someone. She wears a shawl clasped around her and holds a fringed bag in hand, with the movement of her footsteps implied through the flow of her dress.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. Describe this sculpture. What do you see? Allan Houser wanted his modern art to tell the stories of Native people. What's going on in the sculpture? What do you see that suggests this to you? How has Houser suggested a sense of movement? What mood does the sculpture suggest to you?
2. What do you wonder about this woman?
3. What about this sculpture makes this figure appear real? Which aspects appear less real? Why do you suppose Houser omitted extra details in this sculpture? How would it change if he had included all kinds of details?

**ARTWORK 4:** [Cradleboard](#), G260**Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. Cradleboards are made from large pieces of wood and often elaborately decorated and carved. They usually have a [cradleboard cover](#) to go with them. Together they protect a baby and keep them safe.
2. Almost 200 years before this cradleboard was made, the Kahnawake (Mohawk) of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy) lived surrounded by French-Canadian settlers. The presence of these settlers and their folk art likely influenced traditional Kahnawake art.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. Look closely at this cradleboard. How did the artist use shapes to create animals and flowers? What do you see that reminds you of nature? What do you see that makes you say that? How did the artist make the designs stand out from the background? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. The artist included birds and a flowering tree. They may represent a mother bird feeding her babies which is symbolic of the relationship between the cosmos and the Kahnawake people. Think about your family and those who care for you. How do you show you care? What relationships are important to you? Why?
3. The artist likely learned how to carve wood from an elder or family member, who also would have learned the same way. Think about lessons or skills you have learned from someone in your family or community. How does it feel to learn something new? What are the challenges? What is exciting? Do you have a special skill that you want future generations to learn? Why?

**ARTWORK 5: [Adaptation II](#)****Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. Jamie Okuma began working with beads as a child, creating her own powwow regalia with the help of her mother and grandmother's knowledge. She continued learning beadwork and, in high school, created her first of many beaded miniature dolls.
2. After 15 years of creating miniature dolls, Okuma opened her own fashion label and began making high-end articles of clothing using beadwork and quillwork. She considers her fashion a self-portrait, reflective of her exquisite taste.
3. Okuma invented her own techniques for beading shoes. Like Native women in the past who adapted their techniques to new materials, she created her own curved needles to bead onto the curved surfaces.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. What do you notice first about these shoes? What drew your attention to that part first? Explore the different parts of the shoes. What words describe the heels? What designs or patterns do you see there? What words describe the designs on the platforms? The tongue flaps? The sides?
2. To make these special shoes, Jamie Okuma uses traditional Native techniques she learned as a young girl when she first made her own powwow regalia. What materials do you see? (Dyed porcupine quills, dyed feathers, silver cones, sequins, beads.) What, if anything, in your own life do these materials remind you of?
3. In the process of transforming the shoes, Okuma had to invent new tools and strategies (i.e., curved needle, coating her fingers with liquid latex and setting powder). Think of a time when you had to innovate to do something that was important to you? What was your innovation? How did it help you accomplish your goals?

**ARTWORK 6:** [Dress](#), G261**Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. Female artists are highly respected and celebrated for their skills and art.
2. This dress is made of a mountain goat hide. The artist retains some of that shape to embody the wearer in the mountain goat's characteristics.
3. The top of this dress is embroidered with pony beads. Pony beads are large, smooth glass beads that were so valuable at this time that they were valued the same as a pony.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. The artist used the original animal's shape to inspire the design of this dress. How did the artist use shape and color to create a design? Why do you think the artist did it that way? What animal characteristics would be important to you?
2. Artists take a lot of time to carefully design and make these dresses. The beading would have been expensive and taken a lot of time to assemble. If you could ask the artist a question, what would you ask? Why?
3. Think of a special piece of clothing you own. Why is it special to you? Where do you wear it? Why? How does it make you feel when you're wearing it?

**ARTWORK 7:** [Woodlands shirt](#), G260**Key Ideas (provide 2-4 per artwork)**

1. A female artist would have prepared and painted this shirt. It is likely made from antelope, a hide the artist would have traded for with tribes in the west. Antelope hide is stronger than the more readily available deer hide.
2. A French colony, known as New France, existed from 1534 to 1763. This area spanned from Minnesota east to New York and from Canada down to Louisiana. Early French explorers traded in this region with the Native Americans of the Great Lakes and Woodlands areas. This shirt is representative of both.
3. This shirt is incredibly rare! Few objects from the 1700s survive from this region and in this abstract style.

**Suggested Questions (provide 2-3 per artwork)**

1. Look closely. There are many different shapes, textures, and patterns on this shirt. Describe them. What do they remind you of? Imagine what they might represent.
2. Look closely. How would this shirt maybe make someone stand out in a crowd? What do you see that makes you say that? What are some ways that clothing communicates meaning in your community? How so?
3. This shirt includes elements from the Great Lakes, Woodlands, and Plains regions. Art is oftentimes inspired by other cultures or communities. Think of a time you were inspired by someone. How did you feel? What was it?