

Learning Application: The Story Behind a Folk Craft

(Adapted from the *Big Draw on the Move Sourcebook*.)

Can a folk craft tell a story? How can you find out?

Assemble some handmade folk crafts into a “mini-museum” in your classroom, museum, or cultural event. Baskets, pottery, wood carvings, paper cuttings, kites, a quilt square—whatever is readily available and not too fragile or valuable to prevent handling. (If you are at a cultural event such as a craft or folklife festival, collect items from the makers if possible.)

Invite participants to touch, feel, even smell the artifacts, and ask each to pick the one that interests them the most.

Pass out art materials (paper, pencils, markers, crayons) and invite each participant to draw the item they are most interested in.

If you are in a setting where the makers of the crafts are present, have the participants take their drawings with them and find the maker of that type of item. (Basketmaker, quilter, paper cutter, etc.) They should conduct a short interview with the maker, asking some of the following questions or making up their own:

Who taught you how to make this craft?
How old were you when you made the first one?
Why did you choose these materials, colors, shapes?
What do you like best about making this craft?

If you are not in a setting with makers present, prepare some sheets of information on each craft (and its maker, if known), which the participants can use to discover more information.

Ask participants to use the information from the interview or information sheets to write a story about the craft in their drawings. Have them share the stories with the other participants.

Put the drawings and the stories on display on a bulletin board.

EXTENSION: Invite other visitors to vote on their favorite drawing/story pair, to leave a Post-It note comment near their favorite, or to share their favorite on a social media platform.