



SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

ART FIRST NATIONS : TRADITION AND INNOVATION Elementary Program 1

**Teacher's Guide by
Dr. W.M. Zuk
Dr. D.L. Bergland**

Module 1 : Southwest

ARTWORKS:

JOHNS, David: Melodies of Nature
TAYLOR, Mary: Storm Pattern Rug

CONTENTS OF MODULE

This module deals with traditional and innovative artworks from the Southwest area of North America. The traditional artwork, Storm Pattern Rug, features a woven rug containing symmetrically balanced, geometric storm patterns, and was created by Mary Taylor in 1960. The innovative artwork, Melodies of Nature, was created in 1981 by a Navajo artist named David Johns. His pastel drawing features colorful lines and shapes representing a stormy landscape.

A **Seeing** experience provides the student with information for determining how David Johns' artwork differs from the traditional artwork. A motivational story promotes visualization and deals with a wish for rain during hot, dry weather. This leads to a discussion where similarities and differences of the artwork are examined. David Johns' artwork is found to differ from the design on the woven rug in several ways. It is an asymmetrical composition and contains fewer zigzag lines, patterns, and traditional storm symbols. It also contains fewer geometric shapes, and more curved lines, and colors.

A **Making** section allows students to produce a pastel drawing showing the power of a storm. This involves using the change tool of combination to bring together storm symbols with new shapes and colors to show the action of weather. Through these activities, students are brought to an understanding of how David Johns used innovative ideas.

Navajo -(NAV- a -ho)

SEEING

*This module focuses on a storm theme and features David Johns, a Navajo artist from the Southwest, who expresses new and different ideas based on the old ways of his culture. These ideas are explored through **SEEING** and **MAKING** activities.*

Suggested teaching time

45 minutes

Problem to be Solved

What determines how David Johns' work is new and different from a traditional artwork?

Objectives

Students will:

- demonstrate an understanding of the life and culture of David Johns, a Navajo artist from the Southwest;
- distinguish similarities and differences between the symbols and images on a traditional storm pattern rug and an innovative pastel drawing;
- know the tools, techniques and materials used to create these artworks;
- understand that David Johns' artwork differs from the traditional work in line, shape, color, and composition (balance, pattern).

Vocabulary

Line, shape, step or terrace shape, color, light, dark, balance (equal, symmetrical; unequal, asymmetrical), repetition, pattern, pastel.

MOTIVATION

Display the two Southwest reproductions and communicate the following information.

Relax and settle into a comfortable position. Listen to a story about how a wish for rainy weather comes true.

Imagine living in a desert area where there are miles and miles of sand, and where the sun's heat is very intense. There has been no rain for months. Not even a drop! Deep cracks appear over the earth's surface. Nothing seems to grow anymore. Even your lips are cracked from the heat. The inside of your nose is dry and your throat is scratchy. Will the rains ever come? You wish they would.

In the distance, a few thunderclouds are piling up. But they have been there for days and weeks. You snuggle your head deeply under your hat to protect it from the hot sun. A big beetle hides under a leaf and a lizard pushes itself under a chipped rock, looking for coolness.

Listen! Is that a rumble in the distance? What is it? It must be someone driving down the road. No, there is no dust rising. Without any warning, a bolt of lightning snaps through the air! One drop of rain lands on your skin. You wish for more. Then some tiny drops fall on your forehead. More and more rain drops begin to fall and the desert sand gulps every drop. Soon it seems like rivers are flowing from the dark sky. You stand there as water streaming down your face and body. You have the biggest and wettest grin ever seen on anyone's face. Your wish for wet weather has come true.

Look at these pictures in front of you. One shows a woven rug made by an artist called Mary Taylor. The other shows a pastel drawing of a storm created by an artist named David Johns.

DISCUSSION

Focus student attention to the two reproductions.

Explain to students that they are going to explore how David Johns' artwork is new and different from the older one. Use comparison and contrast to explore the artworks through **description, formal analysis, interpretation, and judgement.**

Description

Describe the subject matter and elements of design in each artwork. Help students discover that David Johns' work differs by using :

- *curved lines*
- *fewer zigzag lines*
- *more curved shapes*
- *more step shapes*
- *fewer geometric shapes*
- *greater variety of colors and values*

1. Tell what you see.

2. Identify specific characteristics of each artwork. What kind of lines, shapes, and colors are evident? **Lines** - thick, thin, zigzag, step, straight, curved. **Shapes** -step, irregular (curved, pointed), geometric (squares, rectangles, diamonds). **Colors** -earth tones (red, black, white, greyish); primary (red, yellow, blue), secondary (orange), brown, pink, light and dark (value).

Formal Analysis

Explore the principles of design in each artwork. Help students discover that David Johns' work is different because it:

- is asymmetrically balanced*
- contains only step patterns*
- has fewer patterns*

1. Explore the principle of **balance**. How are the lines shapes and colors arranged in symmetrical (equal) ; asymmetrical (unequal) ways ?
2. Explore the use of **pattern**. How are lines, shapes and colors combined and repeated (in rows, groups or areas) ?

Cultural Context

Refer to the information provided about the artworks. Use questioning strategies as you investigate the history, materials, and uses of each artwork.

Discuss the tools, techniques, and materials used to create the works and the differences between a weaving and a pastel drawing.

Help students understand how David Johns was influenced and guided by traditional ideas with storm themes.

Title - "Storm Pattern Bug"

Size- (100 x 150 cm /39 3/4 x 52 1/2 in)

Artist -Mary Taylor

Technique/Medium -Weaving: wool

Storm pattern weavings originated in the western area of the Navajo nation shortly after the turn of the century. These weavings were made from handspun sheep's wool on handlooms. The featured storm pattern rug contains a symmetrically balanced design colored with red, black, and light purple aniline dyes. It has large black and white concentric rectangles at the center with a red step or terraced design representing thunderclouds in the center of a black rectangle. Black terraced and zigzag lines also radiate from the center rectangle. White terraced lines continue to the four corners of the rug. Two water bug motifs appear at the top and bottom of the rug. Elaborate feathered motifs also appear above and below the waterbug designs. The rug is framed by inner white and outer black zigzag borders to emphasize the power of lightning. The creation of storm patterns in Navajo rugs is a way of acknowledging the power and forces of storms and nature.

Help students understand that David Johns' artwork differs from the traditional symmetrical storm pattern rug because it uses a pastel medium to express storm ideas. It doesn't use a border and further departs from tradition by using unusual asymmetrical arrangements of blended shapes and colors.

Title -"Melodies of Nature"

Size -(39.5 x 49.5 cm / 15 ½ x 19 ½ in)

Artist -David Johns

Technique/Medium -Drawing: pastel on paper

Traditional, aboriginal people of the Southwest shared the idea that mankind should live in harmony with nature. In the featured artwork, this awe and respect is captured in a new way by blending landscape colors to show the nature of stormy weather conditions. The numerous terraces or steps running on slanted verticals and horizontals represent thunderclouds that build up over the earth during an impending storm. Blue rain colors join together earth and sky through various pastel treatments and applications of color in thin and thick layers.

Interpretation

*Interpret the **meaning** of the works by initiating a discussion.*

Provide the following information and help students understand that David Johns' work is different because it uses fewer traditional storm symbols and creates new ways to express a storm theme.

1. Look at the two works. What kind of storm is occurring (thunder, lightning, rain, wind)? What do you think the storm is like (building up, raging, violent, subsiding)?
2. How do you think it might feel to walk into David Johns' storm compared to walking into a storm shown in the traditional rug? Why? Storm symbols have a deep significance and meaning to the Navajo people living in desert regions because rain is scarce and much needed for corn and other crops. Thunderclouds, lightning, and water signify weather and its relationship to life and these ideas appear as steps, zigzags, and other images in artwork.
3. What do the storm symbols used in both artworks tell us about the Navajo people and the importance of rain in their lives?

Judgement

Explore the significance and value of the artwork

1. Which of the two works interested you most? Why?
2. Which one do you think best shows a storm? Why?

ACTIVITY

Clue Sheet

Solving the problem

*Ask students to read the **Biography** and **Culture** texts provided in their workbook, and then complete the **Clue Sheet**.*

*If workbooks are not available, reproduce and distribute the **Clue Sheet** (p. 41 in this guide). Read the **Biography** and **Culture** texts to students from this guide (pp. 39-40).*

How is David Johns' work new and different?

The Biography and Culture texts provide more clues about how David Johns' pastel drawing is different from the woven rug. Students should be familiar with this information before they complete the Clue sheet.

After students have completed the Clue Sheets, check and discuss their responses in class. Collect the Clue sheets for assessment purposes.

ASSESSMENT

Assess both oral and written responses.

Were the students able to express their ideas about the similarities and differences in the two artworks in terms of questions posed in the description, interpretation and judgement sections?

Did the responses in their Clue Sheets reveal an understanding of the differences between the traditional and innovative artwork? The innovative artwork can be characterized in terms of:

- fewer zigzag lines and geometric shapes;
- more curved lines and shapes;
- a greater variety of colors, and light and dark values;
- blended colors and shapes;
- asymmetrical balance in arrangement of elements;
- containing only step patterns;
- fewer patterns;
- no border design;
- using a modern medium of pastels to express storm ideas;
- fewer traditional storm symbols.

ENRICHMENT/EXTENSION

1. Conduct a series of reflective questions (write about or discuss):
 - a. David Johns titled his painting "*Melodies of Nature*". What other name would you give it now that you are aware of Navajo culture?
 - b. What would you use to make the storm in this picture:
 - more intense (brighter colors, lighting, metal parts, sounds, and music);
 - more subtle or gentle (softer, cooler color additions).
 - c. knowing that storms can be dangerous, describe how the weather outside the picture might be affecting animals, people or nature.
 - d. Write a story which tells about the most scary storm you have ever been in (rain, snow, sleet, wind, thunder).
2. Find other aboriginal stories or legends which tell about storms. Perform a play or skit based on one or a combination of storms you have investigated. Create or find recorded music to accompany the performance.
3. Investigate and identify examples of how weather affected First Nations people long ago (food, clothing, shelter, leisure activities, migration). Compare one or more of the following:
 - a. Southwest aboriginal people;
 - b. Plains and other aboriginal people;
 - c. non-Native people.
4. Collect and investigate examples of First Nations songs, poems, and dances that deal with weather. Group them according to ones you like best and give reasons for your choice.
5. Investigate artists throughout art history who have used storm themes in their artwork. Write a short story based on a storm depicted in your favorite artwork.
6. Brainstorm the kinds of sounds and music that could be used to illustrate different storms (sand, snow, wind, rain, sleet, electrical, raging, gentle). Describe the storms using musical instruments, voice, percussive objects, or other sound making devices.
7. Weather has a serious effect on our lives. Write an imaginary story about being:
 - a. rescued from a storm;
 - b. almost hit by lightning;
 - c. caught in a flash flood;
 - d. in a snow blizzard;
 - e. in a hot, dry desert.
8. The powers of a storm are often represented in exaggerated movements. Create a series of movements, dances or pantomimes to show a variety of storm actions and expressions.

MAKING

Storm Theme

Medium & Technique: Pastel Drawing

Suggested teaching time

45 minutes

Problem to be solved

How can storm symbols be combined with lines, shapes and colors to express the power of a storm in a pastel drawing?

Objectives

Students will:

- express the power of the storm using storm symbols and their pattern arrangements;
- use pastel drawing techniques effectively;
- use asymmetrical balance in arrangement of symbols and their patterns;
- demonstrate the ability to use a change tool (combination) to bring together storm symbols with additional lines, shapes, and colors to express the power of a storm.

Vocabulary

Combination, pastel.

Materials .

Prepare classroom for a drawing activity using pastel.

- sketching paper (one sheet per student);
- 12 x 18" (30.5 x 46 cm) drawing paper (one sheet per student);
- pencils, colored dry pastels;
- newspaper to cover working area;
- cotton batting or tissue for blending pastel colors.

DISCUSSION

(Reviewing the artworks)

Display reproductions so they can be easily seen by students.

Briefly review the similarities and differences in the artworks:

Mention how David Johns was inspired by traditional Southwest storm ideas.

- Emphasize that his work is different from the traditional woven rug because it is asymmetrical and uses lines, shapes, colors, and materials in new ways.
- Communicate to the students that they will create a pastel drawing which shows the power of a storm.
- Tell the students that they will be using a change tool called combination.

CHANGE TOOL

(Combination)

Artists use a variety of change tools to make their work innovative. David Johns uses a change tool called combination in his pastel drawing. **Combination** involves bringing together two different ideas in new ways. David Johns brings together a traditional storm symbol with bold and dynamic shapes and colors.

ACTIVITY

Solving the problem.

Use David Johns ideas as inspiration to make a pastel drawing showing the power of a storm.

Suggested procedure

- Storm Ideas : brainstorm different elements in nature that make up a storm (clouds, rain, sun, lightning, wind, rainbow). Sketch several ideas using shapes and lines to represent what they might look like. Choose one or two ideas. See illustration on page 37.
- Developing the Background Scene and Storm Patterns. Develop stormy (landscape) effects by blending pastel colors in light values and in large, flat areas on the background drawing paper: then create an asymmetrical arrangement of one or more chosen storm ideas. Repeat the storm elements (shapes, lines) side by side, touching, overlapping, or over-under to show patterns storms make.
- Storm Power: combine storm symbols with additional lines and shapes drawn in and around the storm patterns to show its power. Use outlines, shading, layering of shapes, lines, light and dark colors in varying ways, to further emphasize the power of the storm, and effects it might have.

ASSESSMENT

Display the results of the art production activity.

Explain to students the importance of evaluating their own image, i.e. determining its strengths and weaknesses.

Use group or peer discussion to explore and question methods of creation and ways ideas were developed.

Conduct a discussion while noting student comments and degree to which they are thoughtful and critical of their own work and others. Are they able to:

- explain how they developed storm ideas using sketched lines and shapes;
- describe how they used pastel colors and blended them to create background landscape forms;
- explain how they selected storm symbols and used repetition to show the patterns storms make;
- explain how they used asymmetry in the arrangement of storm symbols and their patterns;
- explain how they used combination to communicate the power of a storm using additional lines, colors, shapes and values;
- discuss how students feel about each other's artwork. If given a chance, how would they change it and why?

ENRICHMENT/EXTENSION

1. Create quick pastel drawings showing the main kinds of storms in your area. Display the student's drawings in different categories such as, raining, lightning, thundering, snowing, sleet, wind storms, etc.
2. Create (as a group) different storm designs and patterns and arrange individual designs on a bulletin board or a large piece of paper in one or more of the following ways:
 - a. side by side, overlapping;
 - b. like a storm (angled, bursting, downpour, blowing);
 - c. around the room in a long strip or by putting a border around the chalkboard.
3. Study newspaper weather symbols. Invent new symbols for storms combining geometric designs and aboriginal design ideas.
4. Use simple geometric shapes to create storm pictures or designs in the same way that Southwest aboriginal people created storm patterns in traditional rug designs.
5. Decide on a storm and draw a geometric design to represent it. Invent a storm dance that goes with the geometric design.
6. Draw a sequence of pictures showing how a storm develops. Fold the drawing at various stages of its development and have a partner predict the stages. Unfold the drawing and evaluate his/her predictions. Take turns drawing and predicting stages.
7. Use musical instruments, voice, percussive objects, and experiment with different sounds that recall storm ideas. Use the best combination of sounds to express different storm effects. Make a tape of the sounds: then participate in creating a video in which the storm sounds are coordinated with students' pastel drawings of storms.

BIOGRAPHY

DAVID JOHNS

(1948-)

David Johns is a Navajo artist who is becoming well known for his drawings and paintings of landscapes which combine rain, wind, thunderclouds and other weather conditions. His artwork has been exhibited throughout the southwestern United States and in other countries. He creatively combines thundercloud symbols found in traditional Navajo weavings with bold, colorful drawings and paintings which express a respect for nature. In some of David Johns' artwork, only a few traditional symbols and patterns are used. Also, symmetry and border designs found in traditional woven rugs do not appear in his artwork. However, his artwork still captures the power and energy of storms in colorful paintings and pastel drawings with curving shapes. In his own special way, David Johns gives new life to the art and traditional beliefs of his culture.

NAVAJO CULTURE

The Navajo people live on the edge of the large desert regions and prairie borders of Arizona and New Mexico. They established their homeland almost one thousand years ago after moving from northwestern Canada. Their contact with the Pueblo and Spanish altered their nomadic way of life. They became involved in weaving, pottery making and farming. This required them to settle in one place, tend crops and look after herds of horses, cattle, and sheep. The Navajo built up large herds of sheep and became master weavers of rugs, blankets and clothing. Some of the early Navajo traditional hand-woven rugs made in the 1900's used storm symbols and patterns to express their connection and closeness with nature. These rugs sometimes contained rectangular shapes, zigzag lines, and symmetrical designs to symbolize lightning. Step patterns were also used to represent thunderclouds. Border designs are featured in many Navajo storm pattern weavings. Young artists today still continue to use the ideas of nature and storms in their artwork -although they sometimes use fewer traditional storm symbols in their pictures. Their newer work often uses paints and pastels and shows blended colors in bright hues and dynamic curving shapes. These ideas give new life to the art of their culture.

(REPRODUCIBLE)

NAME:

DATE:

CLASS:

CLUE SHEET- DAVID JOHNS

How is David Johns' artwork new and different. Find the true statements which apply to his work.

Put **True or False (T or F)** in the space provided:

1. ___it has fewer zigzag lines and geometric shapes.
2. ___it is symmetrical.
3. ___it shows more curved lines, and shapes.
4. ___it contains only step patterns.
5. ___it contains fewer colors.
6. ___it has fewer patterns.
7. ___it is a woven rug.
8. ___it uses pastels to express storm ideas.
9. ___it has a border design.
10. ___it uses fewer traditional storm symbols.

Write a paragraph using some of the above ideas and some of your own. Tell in your own words *how* the ideas in David Johns' pastel drawing are new and different from the ones in the traditional woven rug.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

BOOKS

Battershill, N. (1981). *Painting and drawing skies*. New York: Watson Guptill.

Buff, M. (1957). *Dancing cloud*. New York: Viking.

Clark, A. (1943). *Little Navajo bluebird*. New York: Viking.

Dickinson. (1988). *Exploring the sky by day*. Scarborough, Ontario: Firefly Books.

Hamm, J. (1982). *Drawing scenery: landscapes and seascapes*. New York: Perigee Books.

Highwater, J. (1980). *Song from the earth: American Indian painting*. Boston, MA.: New York Graphic Society.

Jacka, L. (1988). *Beyond tradition: Contemporary Indian art and its evolution*. Arizona: Northland Pub.

Manley, R. (1975). *Ray Manley's Soutwestern Indian arts and crafts*. Arizona: Ray Manley Photography Inc.

Maxwell, G., & S. Bob. (1984). *Navajo rugs: Past, present and future*. Palm Desert, CA: Desert Southwest Inc.

Milli, G. (1959). *Navaho art and culture*. Colorado: Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Centre.

Wardle, B. (1990). Native American symbolism in the classroom. *journal of the National Art Education Association*, 43(5), 16-24.

Whiteford, A (1970). *North American Indian arts*. New York: Golden Press.

Wyman, L. (1959). *Navajo Indian painting*. Boston, MA.: Boston University Press.

AUDIO CASSETTES

Jones, M. (1988). *After the rain*. NC-61020. Milwaukee, WI.: Noranda Productions.

Nakai, C. *Thunderstorm*, Volume III. Friday Harbor, WA.: Nature Recordings.

QUESTIONS ?

Call Rachel Ross, Art Education Consultant, at 1 800 361-2598 or write to rachel.ross@artimagepublications.com.

For Orders/Customer Service: PHONE 1-800-361-2598 / FAX 1-800-559-2598

Art Image Publications - A Division of GB Publishing Inc.
P.O. Box 160, Derby Line, VT 05830

