


Imagining the Native American Native California Artist Judith Lowry

Lesson Script/Facilitation Support

Materials Needed:

-  Student Note Taker: Imagining the Native American Native California Artists Judith Lowry
-  Slides: Imagining the Native American: Native California Artist Judith Lowry Project in slideshow mode. Note: slides are animated to slowly provide written text - they will appear on click.

***Allow 10 minutes for lesson introduction (slides 1-5 and student handout page 1).**

Slide 1: Read slide. Announce that the next area of study is called “*Imagining the Native American*” - *Native California Artists*. Artwork is another way to learn about Native California people. Like us, the person looking at the artwork may know little or nothing about Native California. Native California artists can give us a personal view of being a Native person.

Slide 2:

Show the students the appropriate notepaper for this session. Show the students the notepaper and then show them what notes should look like when they are finished.

Essential Question and Vocabulary

Time: 5 minutes

Essential Vocabulary

- Oral tradition, social advocacy, stereotype

Slide 3: Read slide. With students, read the Essential Question and tell students they will be able to answer this question after this lesson.

Slide 4: Read slide. As slide 4 is introduced, let students know that there are five words/phrases we will be paying particular attention to for this lesson (oral tradition, social activism, cross-cultural, feminist and stereotype). Read through the vocabulary, ask the students to repeat the pronunciation and after each word is introduced, using pair-share, ask students to tell each other the meaning that was discussed.

*Notes: If you are using Google Slides, ask students to write down the definition in their own words on google slide. Otherwise, make a note of the vocabulary on the notepaper.

Slide 5: Read slide. Announce using artwork of Native California artists to further understand the history of California, artists often make artwork about their personal lives, about what is important to their families and communities. This lesson will look first at paintings and drawings of Judith Lowry, a Hamawi Pit River/Mountain Maidu artist. Ask class: “Does anyone know an artist?”, “Does anyone know a Native California artist?” Would you like to become an artist?

*Notes: write down some information on Judith Lowry.

Introduce the artist, point out his tribal affiliation. Ask: “What types of things can we learn about ourselves from artists and artwork?” Listen to responses, under document camera or on whiteboard list responses, then announce “Today we are going to learn about how artists frequently express important issues using color, shapes and lines.” State that artwork is personal thoughts about topics important to them, topics they have often spent a lot of time thinking about. One topic could be “identity”. Ask the class: “What is identity?” Return to document camera or whiteboard, record responses - announce to class, “We will be looking for these same descriptions in her paintings.”

Slide 6:

Read slide. Explain that this painting, “Wilis-Kol-Kold” (1994) is an early example of the type of painting done by Judith Lowry in which she explored her family history and the past experience of her Native community in historic northeastern California. The figure shown here is a distant relative who was referred to in family history as a traditional healer. Explain that a traditional healer generally means someone who is recognized as possessing specific knowledge using plants and practices, such as songs and dances to support physical and mental wellbeing within a community. Explain that it often takes years to become a respected traditional healer. Point out that in this portrait, we can see several items that are an important part of her healing work. Ask the class to notice these elements of the painting which can be seen in other paintings: 1) the space is filled by a large representational figure, 2) Lowry has a clean linear, sharp edge drawing style, 3) often her paintings reference an event, figures from real life or from art history, particularly European art history, scenes taken from tribal oral history as she understands it.

*Note: Write something about why Lowry would choose to paint the figure so large...what would she (Lowry indicating to the viewer? Write something about objects or plants that are important to you, things that make you feel important or special in some way.

Slide 7:

Ask the class to take a moment to quietly take in the image. Gently clear your throat, or briskly rub your palms together, or move yourself in front of the screen/image to return the student’s attention back to yourself. Ask if anyone would take a risk and share their overall feeling about the image. Collect several responses. Announce that this painting is a “difficult” image to “see” and that may be due to its dominant theme - a loss of life,

death of a child, the somber tones. Explain that the image comes directly from Judith Lowry's immediate family history: this small girl was a family member who ran away from a residential boarding school for Native children in winter. State that images such as "*Going Home*" illustrate hardships imposed upon Native families and Native children, but also picture for the viewer, the tragic cost of historical and contemporary decisions that result in terrible mistreatment of people. Explain that artists create a personal visual language to communicate important emotions and stimulate thinking. Explain the type of imagery created by Lowry closely aligns with her personal beliefs about acknowledging social conflicts that result in oppression, inequality and injustice, this is called social activism.

*Notes: Note something about going to school faraway from your home. What would make you want to leave?"

Slide 8: Read slide.

"My parents had managed to make a Plains style Indian costume for my little brother to play in ... What was significant for me ... was watching my brother dance around in front of our home movie camera and realizing for the first time that he was an Indian, that my brother's looks identified him as such. For the first time, I understood that I came from a racially mixed family."

-Judith Lowry, 1999

Slide 9: Read slide. Ask the class to offer a guess about what is happening in this painting. Inquire as to "who do these figures represent?", "what gender are the main figures?" and "why is this question important? Ask: "What status are these women? What are the clues?" Continue by asking the class, if they think that this scenario is at all relevant to our experience today? Announce to the class although the painting depicts an everyday occurrence, ask what is the larger message here related to Native American history - consider purchasing of Manhattan Island, 1626. Then, suggest how the material and intellectual resources of Native occupied western hemisphere immensely changed the known world. Introducing the term "consumerism," suggest that Lowry is describing a very modern phenomenon, but using historical references for an activity we participate in en masse on a daily basis. Ask the class if this painting might suggest that Native people "give up their indigenous identity" to the newcomers? Ask the class to consider - Is it possible or even profitable for Native people to maintain their indigenous identity? Should Native people rightfully claim indigenous contributions to worldwide economies, philosophies and arts?

*Notes: Note something about how this painting reflects a common image of first encounters between Europeans and Native cultures, a colorful moment of cross-cultural tension. How does this painting pose a different perspective?"

Slide 10: Read slide. Announce to the class, "The next painting is a curious painting, but also fun." Continue with the inquiry: What is painting showing us? What do you feel is happening? Can the painting be described as having a lot of movement? Ask the

class to describe how their own bodies might feel when moving in the same manner. Ask for responses as to why the figures are moving in such a manner. Inform the class that the Owls are wives and that they are said to be blind. What does this new information suggest about what's happening? Suggest we need to use our other senses at times due to disabilities. Announce that this is a scene of a mistake - the Owl Wives have mistaken their husband, Elder Rat, for their dinner. Ask the class to share an incident when they have made a mistake and wished you had not. Suggest that this scene is about a mistake made in haste, perhaps the Owl Wives acted too quickly without thinking - unable to see the pending error. Ask the class to guess the obvious mistake the blind Owl wives have committed? Introduce another point of curiosity as viewers of art - why do humans describe human behaviors through the actions of animals? What "attributes" are associated with owls? What are some attributes associated with an old rat? Explain that here, based on the Mt. Maidu story, Old Rat is wise and holds a certain degree of respect. Suggest that there are times when it is safer to describe inappropriate behaviors - behaviors that happen a lot in human relationships - by telling a story about animals who act out what is uncomfortable for humans to talk about. Explain that Lowry's painting aligns with the generations old tradition of teaching stories, revealing wisdom we may not see in the moment. Suggest that this painting is about character-building and defining values, perhaps highlighting not acting on impulse, giving in to instinctual urges, such as hunger,. Announce that is but one function of oral traditions and oral storytelling in Native American societies, including those of northeastern

California. (https://www.southwestart.com/native-american-arts/judith_lowry)

*Notes: Note something about the character of the Owl Wives as presented, describe the overall feeling of the painting.

Slides 11-17: These pages offer a question and upon click, provide the answer. Use these slides to review the "Imagining the Native American" slide show on Judith Lowry.