South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

Arthur Amiotte
“Spirit Shield”

Provided by the South Dakota Art Museum
Brookings, South Dakota
Unit of Study: Arthur Amiotte

Title of Lesson Plan: Spirit Shield

Grade Level: 3 – 5
South Dakota Content Standards

Fine Arts:

Visual Arts Standard One 3-4:
Students will describe how visual arts tell stories, express moods, or convey ideas.

Visual Arts Standard Two 3-4:
Students will understand selected techniques which give artwork detail.

Visual Arts Standard Two 5-8:
Students will describe the various techniques which give artwork definition and detail.

Visual Arts Standard Three 3-4:
Students will describe how selected works of art have recorded and preserved history.
South Dakota Content Standards

U.S. History:

3.US.2.2  Students are able to identify a community’s culture and history.

4.US.1.1  Students are able to explain factors affecting the growth and expansion of South Dakota.

4.US.2.1  Students are able to describe the impact of significant turning points on the development of the culture in South Dakota.
Assessment Strategies

- Class discussion
- Observation using VTS
- Creation of a war shield graded by criteria identified in a rubric
Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about South Dakota artist Arthur Amiotte.
- Students will evaluate the painting using VTS techniques.
- Students will explain the significance of the war shield in Native American culture.
- Students will create a war shield.
Time Required
- Two class periods of 45 minutes

Materials/Technology Needed
- Arthur Amiotte painting: “Hand Shield”
- Access to the Internet and other library sources
- Paper plates
- Paint
- Yarn or string
- Scissors
- Glue
- Feathers
- Beads
Background Information

- The Native Arts Trading Limited website provides this explanation for the significance of the war shields, “Shields were used in battle and also decorated with anything that would add power to the wearer. A shield was very important in that it would sometimes be the first thing an enemy would see and it needed to be very powerful to frighten off anyone that would do harm.” (pp. 1)

- Additional information about shields is located below with the webpage title “Plains Indian Shields - Types.” For younger students it may be best to provide information about the shields rather than have them do the research.

- The website titled “Native American Indian Designs and Symbol Guide” is a very good resource to provide images and explanations of various symbols found in Native American culture.
Lesson Description

- Show students Arthur Amiotte’s painting, “Hand Shield”.

- Using VTS observations have students discuss what they see in the painting, colors used, why the hand is significant, etc.

- Discuss with the class the significance of the war shield. Explain to students that the shield was not only used during battle for protection, but it was also used during other ceremonies and to celebrate or call upon the spirits.
  - According to the Native American Indian Designs and Symbol Guide on the Buck A Gram website states that the symbol of the hand refers to “…presence of man. His work, his achievements and his history.”
Lesson Description continued

- Pass out a paper plate to each student. Have each student paint the back side of their paper plate a light brown, tan, or beige as its base color.

- As the plates are drying, explain to students that the shields were decorated with various symbols and typically animals that had spiritual significance (again the Native American Indian Designs and Symbol Guide website page is a good resource for this). Have students evaluate different symbols from this page (you could hand out examples of these symbols for students to look at). Again using VTS observations, students should be able to note that there are many geometric shapes found in these symbols.
  - You could also show students examples of actual Native American shields (good resource of historical shields found on “Shields by ‘DOW HADAWAY’ - Shawnee” web-link listed below)
Lesson Description continued

- After the plates have dried, have students create their own war shield using paints, a symbolic animal, and other decorations (feathers, beads, etc.).
Enrichment

- Find someone in the community or surrounding area that would come and talk to the class about the different types of shields and their significance to the Native American culture.
Bibliography/Resources

- Native American Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum.
  - Arthur Amiotte painting: “Hand Shield”


Arthur Amiotte Presentation to Students
Arthur Amiotte

http://www.aktalakota.org
Arthur Amiotte

- Born on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1942
- Raised in South Dakota
- Attended Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD and University of Montana
Arthur Amiotte

- Artist for over 40 years
- Contemporary Lakota artist, historian, and educator
- Inspired by SD artist Oscar Howe to use his Lakota heritage in artwork
- One of the most influential artists who portrays Lakota life, thought, and philosophy in the Northern Plains Region
Bibliography


*For more information or to show students other pieces of artwork by Arthur Amiotte contact the South Dakota Art Museum.
Hand Shield

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Other Examples of Arthur Amiotte’s Artwork
My Son-In-Law, My Father-In-Law
Turtle Seed

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Different Worlds

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum