South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

Oscar Howe
“Let the Spirit Move You”

Provided by the South Dakota Art Museum
Brookings, South Dakota
South Dakota Artists Curriculum Unit

**Unit of Study:** Oscar Howe, Native American painter

**Title of Lesson Plan:** Let the Spirit Move You

**Grade Level:** 3 – 5
South Dakota Content Standards

Writing:

3.W.1.3 Students can write a paragraph using supporting details.

4.W.2.1 Students can capitalize names of magazines, newspapers, works of art, musical compositions, organizations, and the first word in quotations.
South Dakota Content Standards

Reading:

3.R.5.2 Students can choose reference materials to locate information.

3.R.5.3 Students can collect information from two reference materials.

4.R.5.2 Students can research a topic by gathering information from at least two sources.

5.R.4.1 Students can examine and compare texts from various cultures, time periods, and geographical locations.

5.R.5.1 Students can select information from two or more reference sources to meet a goal.
South Dakota Content Standards

Listening, Viewing, & Speaking:

3.LVS.1.4 Students can demonstrate presentation skills.

4.LVS.1.3 Students can express ideas and convey information in an oral presentation.

5.LVS.1.1 Students can identify the purpose and content of a presentation through listening and viewing.
South Dakota Content Standards

U.S. History:

3.US.2.1 Students are able to describe characteristics of a community.

5.US.1.1 Students are able to differentiate the lifestyles of various Native American tribes.
Assessment Strategies

- Class discussion
- Observation of students participating in small groups
- Observing student research skills
- Group presentations to the class
Learning Objectives

- Students will learn about South Dakota artist Oscar Howe who was a member of the Yanktonai Sioux Tribe.
- Students will learn how Oscar Howe’s work represents Sioux tribal traditions.
- Students will identify a variety of dances important to Sioux traditions.
- Students will learn about Kevin Locke and the Hoop Dance.
- Students will use a variety of resource formats to gain information.
- Students will learn teamwork skills by working in groups.
- Students will practice oral speaking skills.
Time Required

- Two class periods of 45 – 60 minutes each for initial reaction to one of Oscar Howe’s paintings using VTS strategies; then research one traditional type of Sioux dance based on another of Oscar Howe’s paintings (depending on the class this may take more time).

- Plus, one class period for group presentations to the class.
Materials Required

- Access to the Internet and library resources for research on types of Native American dances
- Access to the Internet to access a demonstration video of traditional Native American dances
- Writing paper
- Writing utensils
- Images of the painting of the sacred dance being researched and presented to the class by each group
- Trade books on Oscar Howe or other Native American artists
Background Information

- Oscar Howe is one of the premiere Native American artists of our state. He set out to capture the essence of the Sioux heritage while breaking away from creating stereotypical Indian art. Through this lesson, you will be able to see how Howe’s works broke the mold and pushed the bounds with the use of shapes and bold colors to help feel the power and meaning associated with Native American dancing.

- Kevin Locke is a Lakota Sioux that has spent his life educating people around the world about the customs and history associated with the Lakota/Dakota Nation. He specializes in performing the traditional Hoop Dance, and he also plays the Northern Plains flute.
Lesson Description

- First, show students the painting entitled “Sioux War Dancer” by Oscar Howe. Using VTS, have students write about what they think is going on in the painting, describe what shapes are used, and what emotions are created through the use of color when looking at this painting, etc. Students will share these observations/reactions with the rest of the class. Tell the class the title of the painting, “Sioux War Dancer.”

- Use the painting to provide a brief introduction to artist Oscar Howe and to the significance of dance in the social and spiritual tradition in Native American culture.
Lesson Description continued

- Show students an example of Native dances by visiting The Kevin Locke Native Dance Ensemble website (listed under resources). (*This could also be used at the end of the class presentations as well for a closing activity.)

- Then, divide students into small groups. Each group will be given a different Oscar Howe painting symbolizing another sacred dance.

- Each group will examine their painting utilizing VTS to find and discuss details that may help them with their research for their particular dance.
Lesson Description continued

- Students will research their dance and create a brief presentation to explain the significance of the dance in their painting to the rest of the class.

- Students will present their painting and their research about this dance to the rest of the class.
Enrichment

- Students could compare and contrast their painting with the other paintings from other groups and write a paragraph about some of the similarities and differences.
Bibliography/Resources

- Howe Painting Collection at the South Dakota Art Museum
  - Oscar Howe Prints: “Sioux War Dance”, “Eagle Dancer”, and “Grass Dancer”. You could also incorporate the painting “The Singer” for students to research the significance of song/music to the Sioux culture.

- “Explore-Collections-Oscar Howe.” South Dakota Art Museum. 4 June 2009

- “History of Native Dances.” The Kevin Locke Native Dance Ensemble. 4 June 2009

- “Media Center - Video Clips.” The Kevin Locke Native Dance Ensemble. 4 June 2009
Oscar Howe Presentation to Students
Oscar Howe

- Born May 13, 1915 at Joe Creek on the Crow Creek Indian Reservation of South Dakota

- Attended Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, SD

- In 1948, appointed designer for the Corn Palace panels (Mitchell, SD)
  - Continued annually until 1971

- Taught art at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion, SD for 25 years

- Died October 7, 1983
Oscar Howe

• Major influence on the course of Indian art today

• Encouraged by his instructor, Dorothy Dunn, at the Santa Fe Indian School to paint scenes from everyday life, history, and legends of his heritage

• Drew inspiration from his heritage for artwork

• Translated stories he heard from his grandmother into drawings

• Artwork brings together European American and Native American cultures
Bibliography


*For more information contact the South Dakota Art Museum
Sioux War Dancer

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Eagle Dancer

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Grass Dancer

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
The Singer

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Other Examples of Oscar Howe’s Artwork
Buffalo Hunt

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum
Dakota Medicine Man

Image Courtesy of the South Dakota Art Museum