Nordic Folk Art

Objectives:

* Students will learn what folk art is and how it differs from other areas of art.
* Students will gain an understanding of folk art in the Nordic countries in different mediums such as wood, paints, textile handcraft, and clothing.
* Students will learn the history of these four folk art styles and how this art is made today.

This lesson plan may contribute to the following learning standards:

National Visual Arts Standards:

* Anchor standard 7: perceive and analyze artistic work.
* Anchor standard 8: interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
* Anchor standard 11: relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

Washington State Social Studies Learning Standards:

* G2.3.1 explain how the environment affects cultural groups and how groups affect the environment
* G2.3.2 examine the cultural universals of place, time, family life, economics, communication, arts, recreation, food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and education
* G2.3.3 compare the traditions, beliefs, and values of cultural groups in North America
* G3.2.3 describe the connection between the physical environment of a place and the economic activities found there

Vocab: Nordic, Folk Art, Sami, Duodji, Folk Dress, Gakti, Bunad, Rosemaling

* Nordic: The Nordic Region is a part of Northern Europe. It is made up of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. These five countries share a lot of history and culture.
* Folk Art: Refers to artistic works created by artists that did not receive academic training (did not study at art school).
* Sami: The indigenous people of northern Europe--their homeland is called Sapmi. Sapmi stretches across the arctic circle in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia.
* Duodji: Items handcrafted by the Sami people, such as clothing, woodcarvings, and jewelry.
* Folk Dress: Folk dress is a type of outfit that expresses an identity. Usually, folk dress can tell you where someone is from, or where their family is from.
* Gakti: Traditional folk dress of the Sami people. Gakti today are made of woolen cloth and are decorated with colorful ribbons, leather, lace, and embroidery.
* Bunad: Refers to traditional clothes that people used to wear in the Norwegian countryside. Bunad are colorful garments made of wool and adorned with embroidery, buckles, shawls, scarfs, and traditional jewelry.
* Rosemaling: Folk painting style from Norway. Rosemaling loosely translates to Rose Painting.

**Before the Lesson: What is the Nordic Region?**

Read aloud the information below while using the first slide as a reference.

The Nordic region is made up of five countries in Northern Europe: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. Image 1 shows where the Nordic countries are in the world.

**Part 1: what is folk art?**

Ask your students: What is folk art? What does that phrase mean? What kind of art is ‘folk’ art? Gather answers from your students, then read them the following definition:

Folk art refers to artistic works created by untrained artists.

To break this definition down for them, use the following info from the American Folk Art Museum

*If ‘folks’ stands for people, then folk art is art made by people. People have always had art in their lives and in their homes, but not everyone who makes art goes through formal training. The earliest objects that we now call ‘folk art’ were utilitarian--meaning that they were made to be used in daily life.*

* Vocabulary check-- Utilitarian: Ask your students to think about objects that they might use in daily life. Examples could be furniture, dishes, utensils, clothes, etc. All of these are examples of utilitarian objects, and all of them can be featured in a folk art tradition.

Show your students images 2a-6d from the National Nordic Museum folk art images packet. Explain that these are examples of Nordic folk art, or folk art from the Northern European countries of Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. As you show your students the images, ask them:

What do they notice about this piece of folk art? How do they think this piece of art is used? How is it made?

After facilitating conversation with these questions, use the text below to give your students more information.

Image 2a, 2b: Folk Dress example from Iceland

* This Icelandic folk dress was designed in the middle of the 19th century by artist Sigudur Gudmundsson. It is made of black cloth, with a cropped shirt with narrow sleeves. This design is meant to make you think about the Icelandic landscape. The distinctive headgear in the costume is made to look like a snow-covered glacier. At the time this costume was designed, Iceland was seeking to become an independent country, and costumes like this helped solidify an Icelandic national identity.

Images 3a, 3b: Dalmalning and Rosemaling

* Rosemaling and Dalmalning are two forms of painted folk art. Rosemaling is from Norway, while Dalmalning is from Sweden. Both art forms date back to the 1700s.

Images 4a, 4b, 4c: Woodcarving

* Woodcarving has been an art form in the Nordic region since before the Viking era. The people who lived in Viking age decorated almost all their belongings--including furniture, beds, bowls, wagons, and more. Woodcarving is a common folk art all around the world, but these examples are meant to look like the Viking style.

Images 5a-c: Selburose mittens

* This distinctive mitten pattern is associated with the Norwegian town of Selbu. A selburose is a knitted rose pattern with 8 points. At the time that the selburose pattern became popular, Norway was in the middle of a decades-long process of Norwegian independence. It is thought that the popular selburose pattern helped contribute to a sense of Norweigan national identity. Since the 19th century,

Image 6a-d: Sami Duodji

* These images are of Sami handcrafts, known as duodji. The Sami are the indigenous people of northern Europe--their homeland is called Sapmi. Sapmi stretches across the arctic circle in Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. Reference maps on slide 7 to show your students where Sapmi is.
* Sami clothing like the examples in images 6a+b are called Gakti. Gakti can look different all over Sapmi--you can tell from someone’s Gakti where in Sapmi they come from! Gakti have been worn by Sami for at least over 1000 years, and they continue to be worn today both for everyday work and for special ceremonies. Gakti today are made of woolen cloth and are decorated with colorful ribbons, leather, lace, and embroidery.
* Images 6c+d are examples of Sami mittens. Like with other parts of the Nordic region, the Sami have a long history of knitting, primarily making mittens and stockings. Both Gakti and these mittens are examples of duodji--items handcrafted by the Sami people. Other examples of duodji include hats, belts, jewelry, shoe bands, cups, knives, bags, and harnesses.

Now that your students have seen some examples of folk art, have them try their hand at matching the Nordic folk art with the country or region that it’s from! Use images 7-10 for this activity.

* Icelandic Sweater
* Norwegian Rosemaling
* Swedish Dala horse
* Sami woven band from Sapmi

**Part 2: Folk Art Closer Up**

This section is intended to expose your students to four specific folk art styles in the Nordic countries. Each art style will have separate activities to engage your students.

**Rosemaling- images 11a-12d**

* Rosemaling is a distinctive painted art form from Norway. The word ‘rosemaling’ roughly translates to rose painting. Rosemaling as an art form began in the mid-1700s in the Norwegian countryside. Rosemaling designs feature special strokes called C and S strokes. There are three main styles of Rosemaling in Norway, each one named after the region it comes from: Telemark, Hallindal, and Rogaland.
* One object that many Nordic immigrants brought was a giant wooden trunk, which would hold all of their other belongings throughout the journey. These trunks were well decorated You can see examples of decorated trunks in the rosemaling images.
* At the end of the lesson plan are some coloring sheets that mimic common Rosemaling designs. Encourage your students to color in the sheets and then follow the written directions to make their own Rosemaled plate!

**Woodcarving- images 13a-14c**

Woodcarving has been a part of Nordic heritage and culture for centuries. The Vikings were master woodcarvers. As archaeologist Neil Price puts it, “the people of the Viking age decorated more or less everything possible.” Much of Scandinavia was covered in forests, and wood was an important resource used for everything from houses and boats to dishes and furniture. When looking at Viking objects, archaeologists have found that all but the most basic items were carved. There were multiple woodcarving styles that became popular over the Viking age, ranging from fine lines to detailed animal figures.

While your students are looking at the Viking-style woodcarvings (images 13a-c), use the following discussion questions:

* What is going on in this image?
* What do you see that makes you say that?
* What more can we find?

Later in Nordic history, other woodcarving styles developed. This style of woodcarving is called “acanthus.” it was especially popular throughout Europe in the baroque period, which lasted from 1600 to 1750. The acanthus is a plant that grows in the Mediterranean, and the Acanthus style of woodcarving became popular in parts of the Nordic region around 1700.

In the 1900s, Nordic immigrants to the United States brought their woodcarving skills with them. In the 19th century, a huge number of immigrants came to the U.S. from the Nordic region--by 1910, about ⅓ of the entire population of Norway had moved to the United States.

Take a look at the woodcarving examples in images 14a-c and fill out the object observation sheets attached.

**Knitting**

Have your students read the following text aloud, while showing them images 15a-d

* Making clothes and cloth has always been an important part of Nordic culture. In the Viking age, wool cloth was so valuable that it could be used as money. Each Viking ship would need a large mainsail, which weighed over 100 pounds. It would have taken one person 2 whole years of work to make just one mainsail!
* In more recent times, knitting has become a popular Nordic folk art. Knitted wool sweaters and other clothing were very decorative and were worn often in the countryside. The Norwegian Handcraft Association (Den Norske Husflidsforening) was founded in 1891, and knitting became one of the most popular folk art crafts in Norway.

Selburose pattern – image 16a

* This distinctive mitten pattern is associated with the Norwegian town of Selbu. A selburose is a knitted rose pattern with 8 points. The selburose pattern became popular in Norway in the mid-19th century. Marit Guldsetbrua Emstad, a 16-year-old girl, is credited with popularizing the design when she wore selburose mittens to church one day in 1857.
* Today, it is an international symbol of Norway, but the design itself is very old. The selburose pattern became popular in the mid-19th century and by the 1930s, folk artists in Selbu were making and selling tens of thousands of selburose mittens every year.

Now have your students try out creating your own knitting pattern! To facilitate this activity, show your students the knitting pattern samples (images 16b-d) and encourage them to create their own pattern on grid paper.

**Folk Dress**

Read the text below to your students or have them read in turns as you look at images 17a-b and the Icelandic folk dress on slide 18.

Folk dress is a type of outfit that expresses an identity. Usually, folk dress can tell you where someone is from, or where their family is from.

* In Norway, the folk dress is usually called a bunad. Bunad refers to traditional clothes that people used to wear in the Norwegian countryside. Today, many people wear bunad at celebrations, such as dances, weddings, church events, and especially on the Norwegian constitution day, Syttende Mai. In Norway, bunad can look different depending on where you are from in the country--there are hundreds of different bunad styles! The images include Norwegian-American ski jumper Olga Bolstad wearing a bunad, as well as a bunad in the NNM collection.
* This example of an Icelandic folk dress was designed in the middle of the 19th century by artist Sigudur Gudmundsson. It is made of black cloth, with a cropped shirt with narrow sleeves. This design is meant to make you think about the Icelandic landscape. The distinctive headgear in the costume is made to look like a snow-covered glacier. At the time this costume was designed, Iceland was seeking to become an independent country, and costumes like this helped solidify an Icelandic national identity.

Show your students image 18, with all five national folk costumes next to each other. Ask your students: what do they notice about these outfits? Have them fill out the compare/contrast worksheet as they take a longer look at the image.

To finish this section of the lesson, have your students guess where each of the folk costumes in image 18 are from.

Answer key: from left to right—Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark, Sweden

**Norway: Rosemaled Paper Plate**

**Materials**

* Paper plate
* Rosemaling design (see following page for more designs)
* Colored pencils or pens
* Scissors
* Glue stick

**Directions**

1. Choose your favorite design and color it. Take a look at the Rosemaling samples in the PowerPoint for ideas!

2. Cut out your colored design and glue it on a paper plate.

A picture containing diagram

Description automatically generated

