

LESSON TWO

HOW DOES ART EXPRESS IDENTITY?

USE THIS LESSON
BEFORE OR AFTER
VIEWING THE FILM

... if you feel your students need
basic background knowledge
about the countries
and art forms featured
in *Little Stones*.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to describe an art form in the film; analyze and discuss its significance; and evaluate this art form by reviewing a particular work of art with supporting examples and reasoning.

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students gain basic knowledge about art forms or artists in the nations of Kenya, Senegal, Brazil, and India. In particular, students are introduced to art forms featured in the film, *Little Stones*.

QUESTIONS

What can we learn about different cultures and peoples by analyzing their art forms?

What can the arts of a nation tell us about their history and their people?

How do people use different forms of art to express both personal and national or cultural identities?

TAKEAWAYS

Art is an extremely important form of cultural expression that can inform us in many ways about a people or nation.

Art can shed light on cultural influences from other places, historical events, cultural values, the persistence of certain traditions, and resistance and change to certain traditions.

People use art to express their own individuality, but also to connect with others in the culture and express a shared identity.

KEY CONCEPTS

kanga – rectangular, printed cloth with unique designs that are worn by women, and occasionally men, in Kenya and across the region in a variety of ways.

kora – a string instrument that is very important in the musical history of Senegal and other nations of West Africa, and in today’s music as well.

griot – also called *jali*, the oral historians/poets/storytellers of West Africa.

favelas – the sprawling, low-income, urban communities that have sprung up informally around most major Brazilian cities.

funkeiros – the up and coming hip hop artists and rappers of the Brazilian favelas

nationalism – ideology based on the premise that the individual’s loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests

nationalist – one who practices nationalism; one who promotes loyalty to and pride in the nation

RESOURCES

- Computers or other devices with internet and video playback capabilities
- Lesson handouts (2A, 2B)

TEACHER PREP

You should be prepared to model a bit of reflection and analysis for a particular work of art that speaks to you. This can be a song, visual art, a poem, etc. You will briefly share it with students and then use it to model the thinking that students will use in the lesson, so it have it ready to go for the lesson.

SUGGESTIONS

Students might carry out cooperative group work, so it is helpful to have a plan for creating groups ahead of time if you are going to use groups.

This lesson can be organized a few different ways, so it is important to read the lesson plan and choose a pathway before beginning!

If internet access is an issue, you can do much of this lesson without it.

DURATION

1 – 2 class periods

Variable, depending upon how you assign the readings

COMMON CORE CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

HANDOUTS

2A – Analyzing Art worksheet
 2B – Country readings (4)

CONTACT US

Have questions or need help with this lesson?

Write to us at: ceder-soe@umich.edu

LESSON SEQUENCE

OPENING ACTIVITY

1 Ask students to *Stop and Jot* for one minute, and then *Turn and Talk* in response to the following prompt, which you should have on your board or screen:

What form and genre of art is most important to you? Why? How does this art connect to or reflect your identity?

You may need to remind students that art is a very broad term that includes visual art (painting, drawing, sculpture, etc) or performing arts (music, dance, film, etc). You might also need to define genre and/or give them some examples, perhaps by sharing your own art interests.

Invite several students to share their comments about their own interest in art, and then explain to the students that they will be learning about different art forms in the four countries connected to the documentary film, *Little Stones*.

GUIDED INQUIRY

2 Remind the students that the film they are going to watch (or already watched) is about four women artists confronting different forms of violence against women. Explain that the women are from Kenya, Senegal, Brazil, and India, and that they will briefly study the art in these countries in order to develop background knowledge. This lesson will give them a broad overview of one art form or artist in each of these countries so that they understand the context of each of the stories a little bit better.

Pass out the **Analyzing Art worksheet** (2A). Next share a piece of art that you particularly enjoy and that the students might also find interesting. Display it for students, and then use the questions on the handout you just passed out to reflect on it out loud. Don't spend too long on this though . . . just enough to give students an idea of what they are being asked to do. If helpful for your students, jot some key ideas down on your board or screen as you talk.

Quickly display a new sample of art (you can use something related to the piece you just shared) and engage the class in a whole-group discussion using the *Describe, Analyze, Evaluate* prompts. Ask students to describe what they see or hear, make some analytical statements, and then develop some evaluative

statements. Explain they will do something similar in writing for the next part of the activity.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

3 This next portion of the lesson can be structured in a variety of ways, but it basically involves students exploring short articles (and websites if you have devices and reliable internet access) on one or more art samples using the *Describe, Analyze, Evaluate* prompts to write short paragraphs. Try to insure that someone is studying each country. Below are some options for organizing this activity:

- a. Assign all students one of the articles to read, either as classwork or homework, have them write their responses to the prompts, and then have them pick an additional article on their own to explore based on personal interest. Have students share afterwards in a whole group setting.
- b. Put students into groups of three to four and assign each group all four readings, allowing them to structure the work as long as everyone is contributing.
- c. Develop a jigsaw activity in which each group is assigned one topic (country). They read the article and do the questions together. They then form into new groups in which each student studied a different nation and art form. They then compare and contrast the art forms and share with each other.
- d. Put students into cooperative groups and allow them to pick which art form they are going to study. Have each group prepare a poster about the art form they studied, then have the students do a "Gallery Walk" to see what other students created.

Depending upon how you structure the activity, pass out the appropriate **Country readings** (2B) to the students.

4 Then, direct the students to read the overview of their assigned nation, and then work to answer the questions. Again, how this will happen will change depending upon how you organize the activity.

LESSON SEQUENCE *(continued)*

REFLECTION

5 To gather and synthesize ideas from the students together, post or create a four-column chart on your board or screen (or use a technology tool like *padlet.com* and create four spaces for recording). Label each column with one of the country names, and ask students to share their observations about each nation and its culture based upon their exploration of the art work. Encourage students to ask questions of each other, to add to each others' answers, and to work together to create as complete an overview as they can. Consider showing the whole class some of the suggested video clips and having them respond (you can use a *See, Think, Wonder* protocol: *What do you see? What does it make you think? What do you wonder?*)

ASSESSMENT

6 Have students write an *Exit Pass* that summarizes something important they learned about the culture of the country they read about and connects it to, or compares it to, their own culture or art forms they enjoy.

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ANALYZING ART

DESCRIBE

Describe the art presented in this article. If possible, find more examples online. If there is a performance, get your teacher's permission and try to watch a video.

On a separate sheet of paper, jot down a list of adjectives to describe this art.

Now, write a short descriptive paragraph in your own words, explaining what the art form is. Then use several of the adjectives you thought of to add depth and detail to your description.

ANALYZE

Analyze the art presented in this article. Write a short paragraph in response to *one* of the following analytical questions:

What does this art form tell us about traditions and customs of this nation, and the way that people are changing or pushing back on those customs?

How do people who create or use this art express their own unique identity while also identifying with their larger culture?

How has the history and larger culture of this nation, including interaction with other cultures, shaped or changed this art form?

EVALUATE

Evaluate the art presented in this article. Write a short evaluative paragraph about it that responds to the following prompts.

Do you like it? Why?

What do you find interesting about it, or why does it not interest you?

What criteria or standards do you use to judge art? How do they apply in this case?

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ARTS OF BRAZIL: HIP-HOP & THE FUNKEIROS



In your groups, read the text below and then use what you learned to complete your **Analyzing Art worksheet**.

In the favelas of Brazil, funk rules. Funk, in this context, is hip-hop-informed music with a Brazilian flavor. Favelas are the sprawling, low-income communities that have sprung up informally around most major Brazilian cities.

Favelas are densely populated areas, often struggling with poverty, drug trafficking, gangs, and violence, but also full of cultural innovation, art, and a strong sense of pride, community, and resistance. Brazilian funk provides an outlet for frustration and anger in these communities, but also an opportunity for celebration and living for the moment.

Funkeiros are the up-and-coming hip-hop artists and rappers of the favelas, and many of them use their music to analyze and critique the living conditions and problems of the favelas. The *funkeiro* scene includes the music, but also breakdancing and graffiti art. Large parties and concerts regularly occur in the favelas where rappers and break dancers perform and new artists seek to break out and make a name for themselves. Social media is also very important in the scene as artists share their music and fans follow their favorite artists.

Despite their popularity in the favelas, the *funkeiros* are also under political attack by law enforcement and conservative politicians who connect the parties and music with drugs, gangs, and crime. Indeed, some sub-genres of Brazilian hip-hop, like Miami bass-inspired funk *proibidão*, do glorify these things in much the same ways as gangsta rap in the United States. Other sub-genres are criticized because of their sexually explicit lyrics and objectification of women.

Despite these critiques, the music is only increasing in popularity, and female *funkeiras* are beginning to take charge of their own role and representation in the genre even though the genre has been largely dominated by men. Female artists are now staking their own claim and creating music that celebrates their sexuality while also laying claim to power, resistance to oppression and marginalization, and independence from patriarchy. Their music often addresses sex and sexuality, but in ways that assert female control over their own bodies and choices, opening up new dialogues about the role of women in society in general, and in music in particular. Some still criticize the *funkeiras*, arguing that they are objectifying themselves and promoting hyper-sexualized identities among younger women and girls.

But performers like Karol Conka push back on those critiques and work to find a balance of expressing social critique and having a good



Funkeira Karol Conka uses hip-hop to express social critique.

FESTIVAL CONTATO

Listen to some *funkeiras*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbOG2HS1WKo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rX2rlxwxa_A

<https://genius.com/8327480>

For more information on hip-hop in Brazil

<http://www.thefader.com/2016/08/04/9-brazilian-mcs-mc-bin-laden-karol-conka>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-24642328>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/rap-in-rio-why-hip-hop-is-the-new-sound-in-the-city-of-samba/2015/07/05/f9a32eec-1a7d-11e5-bed8-1093ee58dad0_story.html?utm_term=.e45491781916

<http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2011/06/16/de-funkification-the-fight-for-the-right-of-the-funkeiro/>

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ARTS OF BRAZIL: HIP-HOP & THE FUNKEIROS (continued)



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time. Conka was quoted in an interview with Afropunk, saying, “Music for me is a kind of resistance to many forms of prejudice that I have suffered in life [for] being black, female, and poor.” Her music promotes her own self-assurance and models confidence and self-worth for young women, perhaps influencing up-and-coming *funkeiras* like MC Soffia.

MC Soffia is gaining popularity already at the young age of 12 years old, and uses her music to challenge racism and empower other girls. She raps, “I’m black and I’m proud of my color,” in the song *Menina Pretinha*. In the video for the song, she is surrounded by even younger girls, positioning herself as role model and conveyor of a strong, fun message of self-acceptance and power, and perhaps shaping the direction of new musical expressions in the favelas.

As you watch the film, look for examples of art in the favelas.

Graffiti, like the mural by the street artist “Toys” (above), is considered part of the hip-hop movement in Brazil, and woven into the fabric of everyday life.

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ARTS OF INDIA: POETRY



In your groups, read the text below and then use what you learned to complete your **Analyzing Art worksheet**.

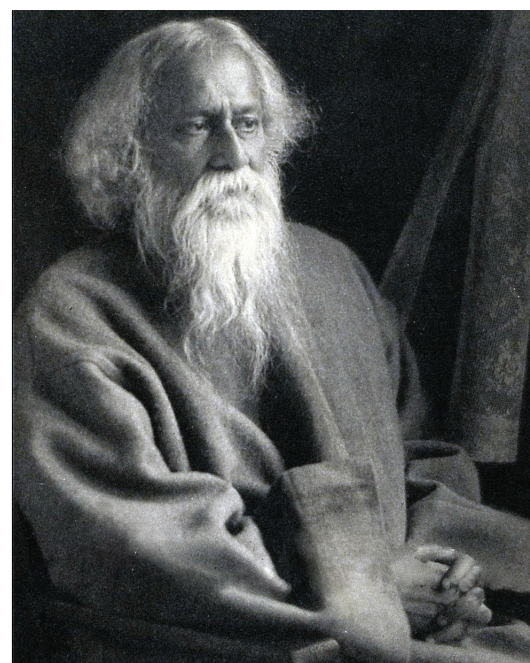
Art and culture in India, especially in the city of Kolkata, the capital of the state of West Bengal, can't really be explored without considering the impact of Rabindranath Tagore.

Tagore was a globally recognized song-writer, novelist, poet, painter, educator, and political commentator who had a deep and powerful impact on India as well as on neighboring Bangladesh. He is an icon and hero in both of these nations, and was the first Asian winner of a Nobel Prize, which he won for literature. He wrote the national anthems of India and Bangladesh, and is seen in many ways as the greatest figure in Bengali culture (Bengal is a region that includes India's West Bengal state and Bangladesh, and has a unique ethnic identity and language). Tagore produced forty volumes of poetry that represent this culture and a collection of more than 5,000 songs that are still sung and performed regularly today.

Tagore was born in Bengal in 1861 into a large family with 13 siblings. He grew up surrounded by art, poetry, and politics, and began producing his own poetry when he was only 10 years old. He died at the age of 80 in 1941, but his work lives on.

Tagore was a nationalist who spoke out against British colonialism in India, but he also cautioned against extreme nationalism and promoted a vision of universal acceptance and a value for human rights and freedom. Tagore was so influential, and his ideas so powerful, that his work helped motivate the independence movement that led to the creation of the nation of Bangladesh. In 1967, what is now Bangladesh was still part of Pakistan (called East Pakistan), and the government of Pakistan banned Tagore's music on the state controlled radio, likely threatened by the Bengali pride he generated. In response, Bengalis in Pakistan began playing his music and reading his poems in protest, and they became important sources of inspiration in their struggle to create an independent nation (which they did in 1971 after a war with Pakistan).

His poems were lyrical and innovative, although also informed by traditional Bengali folk music, and took up themes of romance, divinity, and human nature. His short stories and novels were both personal and political and dealt with issues of identity, poverty, patriarchy, and colonialism. He often portrayed women as struggling under the burden of patriarchy and having to make difficult, almost impossible choices as they sought to claim their own independence.



Nobel Prize-winning poet Rabindranath Tagore is a globally recognized song-writer, novelist, poet, painter, educator, and political commentator from West Bengal.

For More Information on Tagore

https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1913/tagore-article.html

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/freedom/tagore.htm>

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/rabindranath-tagore>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/rabindranath-tagores-legacy-lies-in-the-freedom-seeking-women-of-his-fiction-2279473.html>

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Celebrating-Rabindranath-Tagores-legacy/article13894877.ece>

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ARTS OF INDIA: POETRY *(continued)*

Fruit-gathering LV by Rabindranath Tagore

Tulsidas, the poet, was wandering, deep in thought, by the Ganges,
 in that lonely spot where they burn their dead.
 He found a woman sitting at the feet of the corpse of her dead husband,
 gaily dressed as for a wedding.
 She rose as she saw him, bowed to him, and said, "Permit me, Master,
 with your blessing, to follow my husband to heaven."
 "Why such hurry, my daughter?" asked Tulsidas. "Is not this earth also
 His who made heaven?"
 "For heaven I do not long," said the woman. "I want my husband."
 Tulsidas smiled and said to her, "Go back to your home, my child.
 Before the month is over you will find your husband."
 The woman went back with glad hope. Tulsidas came to her every day
 and gave her high thoughts to think, till her heart was filled to the brim
 with divine love.
 When the month was scarcely over, her neighbours came to her, asking,
 "Woman, have you found your husband?"
 The widow smiled and said, "I have."
 Eagerly they asked, "Where is he?"
 "In my heart is my lord, one with me," said the woman.

Tagore also painted, even though he did not start this until he was in his sixties. He generated thousands of works and his art was shown across Europe and the United States. His paintings included innovative, fantastic images of animals and mythical creatures that are at times comic and strange. He also produced many portraits, often serious and somber in tone, as well as a smaller number of landscapes. In general, his art is bold but relatively simple, and often very imaginative, dramatic, and expressive.

As you watch the film, look for the poem that inspired Sohini.

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ARTS OF KENYA: FASHION & DESIGN



In your groups, read the text below and then use what you learned to complete your **Analyzing Art worksheet**.

The *kanga* is an important piece of fashion and design in Kenya, as well as throughout the Great Lakes region of East Africa. Kangas are rectangular, printed cloths with unique designs that are worn by women, and occasionally men, in Kenya and across the region in a variety of ways. Kangas are often sold in pairs and make up a woman's entire outfit, being used as a sort of body wrap, but can also be worn as a skirt, like a sari, or even as a turban or scarf. Their standard size is around 64 x 44 inches.

Kangas, also called *leso*, have their origin in ancient trade networks that connected India, Europe, and East Africa, and have influences from a wide range of cultures in the patterns and prints they display. Kangas were first produced on the east coast of Africa in the mid-1800s, perhaps by fashionable women who sewed together colorful handkerchiefs brought by Portuguese traders in order to make larger pieces of fabric for use (at least that is one origin story). They are produced today in textile mills in Kenya and Tanzania, and some are even made in India, but for a time in the early 1900s many were actually made in Europe and imported to Africa.

Kangas are an important form of communication and personal expression. A traditional kanga has a wide border called a *pindo*, a central design called the *mji*, and writing on the border called the *ujumbe* or *jina*. The *ujumbe* generally contain Swahili sayings, such as "In this world we are all passengers, God is the driver" (*Sisi sote abiria dereva ni mungu*). These sayings allow women to display ideas and messages that are important to them.

Kangas are generally printed as repeated patterns on long rolls of cloth, and individual kangas are then cut off of the roll and sold. In Kenya, kangas unify women across religion, ethnicity, and social class, and play an important cultural role as they are used in so many different ways, from swaddling and carrying newborn babies to wrapping and covering the bodies of women who have died.

As you watch the film, look for examples of *kanga*.



LITTLE STONES

In the documentary *Little Stones*, a woman in the James 127 Foundation Sewing Training Program wears a dress that she made out of kanga fabric.

For More Information

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1735&context=tsaconf>

http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/complete_projects/kanga_and_printed_textiles.aspx

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOnG7Aa1UsY>

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/fashion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/kanga>

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ARTS OF SENEGAL: MUSIC



In your groups, read the text below and then use what you learned to complete your **Analyzing Art worksheet**.

The *kora* is a string instrument that is very important in the musical history of Senegal and other nations of West Africa, and in today's music as well. Traditionally, the kora was carried by griots, or *jali*, the oral storytellers of West Africa. The *jali* used the kora to help them sing and tell traditional stories. It is considered to be a lute-harp, having the straight shaft and resonating chamber of a lute and the perpendicular strings of a harp.

The body of the kora is made from a large gourd, or calabash, that is cut in half, hollowed out and dried, and then covered with goat or calf skin that is stretched and tied with leather laces (at least traditionally). Two handles run under the skin and stick out from the sides, and a bridge is connected to the center of this handle. A long neck made of hardwood, with twenty-one strings, extends out from the gourd. In the past, strings were made from animal materials, like thin strips of antelope skin, but they are now typically made from nylon fishing line. The strings connect to a traditional hide 'konso ring,' or in modern versions to a guitar machine head, at the end of the neck.

Players use their left hand to play the eleven left strings, and the right hand to play the remaining ten. The music of the kora sounds something like a harp, though the music can resemble flamenco or even blues guitar. Strings are plucked by the musician using only their index finger and thumb.

Historically, primarily men played the kora, but that is beginning to change. Sona Jobarteh, whose music is featured in *Little Stones*, is the leading female kora player in the world right now, and is generally recognized as an extremely gifted musician.

If you want to hear more Senegalese music, explore the music of Youssou N'Dour, perhaps Senegal's most globally known artist. His music mixes a traditional style of Senegalese music, *mbalax*, with global influences including Cuban rumba, hip-hop, jazz, and soul. N'Dour has collaborated with artists like Peter Gabriel, Sting, Neneh Cherry, Wyclef Jean, Paul Simon, Bruce Springsteen, Tracy Chapman, and Branford Marsalis, among others.

As you watch the film, listen for the music of the *kora*.



Gambian musician Sona Jobarteh performs the kora live at the Brave Festival in Poland, 2015.

SLAWEK PRZERWA

Listen to Sona Jobarteh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oToZfPGMMBY>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtmmlOQnTXM>

Listen to Youssou N'Dour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-p7DZ3NeQg>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqCpjFMvz-k>

For More Information

<http://www.thekoraworkshop.co.uk/kora-information/history/>
<http://kouraba.org/kora/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcVOrIpEiMM>