

THE MAKINGS OF A MASTER

KENTUCKY FOLK ART APPRENTICESHIPS

EXHIBITION EDUCATOR PACKET



Apprentice Barbara Kuhns
with master fiddler J.P. Fraley



Apprentice Charlene Long with
master basket maker Leona Waddell



Apprentice Susan Mullins with
master musician Arnold Richardson



Apprentice Jeri Katherine Howell with
master musician Carla Gover



Master storyteller Dorothy Dukepoo-Goode
with apprentice Bernadette Wells



KentuckyHistoricalSociety



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EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

Kentucky is filled with communities, or folk groups, that carry on traditions, old and new. All of us belong to folk groups such as families, friends, people who work or play together, or people from the same cultural groups or regions.

In everyday life, people express culture with art, such as songs, stories, crafts and food. You have probably heard of master chefs, master golfers, and kung fu masters. What about master artists in your community? How do you spot a master? Masters are considered the best, most skilled tradition-bearers in their community. A master not only creates art, but shares traditional knowledge with others. To find a master artist, ask members of a folk group, "Who is the best? Who is the greatest maker or performer of this art? Who best understands the history and culture of the group?"

Masters share their legacy by building a teaching relationship with someone in their community. This commitment to spend time teaching skills and sharing culture is a folk art apprenticeship. Apprentices make a commitment to learn techniques, as well as the culture, stories and values of the community from masters. An apprentice's goal is to work toward becoming a master.

Apprenticeships can happen anywhere the art form can be practiced. Usually, they occur in informal, face to face settings like kitchens, living rooms, garages or backyards. Becoming a master does not happen quickly; an apprenticeship may last many years. The master decides when, where and for how long training sessions occur. This is the apprentice's chance to use all the senses, ask questions, improve skills, learn from mistakes and gain a deeper understanding of the stories and history behind the art.



SUGGESTED VOCABULARY

- Folk or Traditional Culture** Culture and knowledge passed on over time informally, usually by word of mouth, or face to face learning and observation. It can also be called folklore or folklife.
- Folk Art** The material culture (the things) made by members of a group that share an identity, that reflect those beliefs and identity in a physical form.
- Folk Arts Apprenticeship** A long-term, informal relationship between a master tradition-bearer and an apprentice who are both members of the same folk group.
- Folk Arts Apprentice** Someone who works with a folk arts master within the same folk group to learn an art form, trade or profession, especially for a recognized period of time.
- Folk Arts Master** A folk artist who is recognized as achieving a certain standard of aesthetic and functional quality and skill; deemed excellent within his or her folk group.
- Folk Group** A group of people who share some identity and cultural expressions, a community.
- Folklife** Used like the word folklore, folklife refers to the living traditions practiced in the here and now and passed down by word of mouth, imitation or observation over time and space with a group, such as a family, ethnic group, social class or regional population to name a few. Everyone and every group have folklore.
- Folklore** Traditions, which are not necessarily old, that are passed on informally over time and through space.
- Material Culture** A broad genre or form of folklore including a vast array of traditional artifacts or objects.

WHAT IS FOLKLIFE?: UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES A FOLK GROUP

Big Idea: Culture and Societies

Learning Targets:

Students will (I can) define “folk group.”

Students will (I can) list three examples of folk groups. (name/area of the folk group)

Students will (I can) define “folk culture.”

Students will (I can) list three examples of traditions that could be included in a folk culture.

Students will (I can) explain the reason that the examples could be a part of a folk culture.

Students will (I can) identify and explain three personal examples of folk culture.



ACTIVITY:

1. Print and copy the “folk patterns” cards.
2. Divide the students into groups with a stack of cards face down.
3. The students may take turns drawing and responding to the cards.
4. If a student does not have an answer – any student may answer the question.
5. Students should play for 15-30 minutes – or until most of the cards have been used.
6. The teacher may choose to have the students work as a class to discuss the activity, share their initial reactions or respond to the questions below:
 - Were there activities/traditions on the cards that multiple people had experienced in the same way? Why do you think that is?
 - Were there activities/traditions on the cards that only you had experienced? Why do you think that is?
 - How were you taught some of the activities on the cards? Did you learn from a book, from friends, family or something else?
7. Provide students with the definitions of folk culture and folk groups.
8. Facilitate a discussion about how the definitions fit into their experiences with the activity and their conclusions to these follow-up questions:
 - What are some folk groups you know about?
 - How do you know they are folk groups?
 - What folk traditions or cultures do they have?
9. Students can diagram the traditions of their family, community and school. They could use the diagram to identify different folk groups that they belong to.

* folk patterns cards taken from “Teacher’s Guide to Kentucky Folklife”

WHAT IS FOLK ART?: UNDERSTANDING FOLK ART AND THE TRADITION OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Big Idea: Humanities in the Arts and Purposed for Creating the Arts

Learning Targets:

Students will (I can) define “folk art.”

Students will (I can) list three examples of folk art traditions.

Students will (I can) identify how folk art is usually taught. (apprenticeships)

Students will (I can) define “apprenticeship.”

Students will (I can) explain how apprenticeships are different from taking lessons.

ARTIFACT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

South central Kentucky basket making is a tradition that developed over generations of families that live along US Highway 31W near Mammoth Cave. Members of this community find and harvest local white oak, shave it into splits and weave baskets into a variety of shapes and sizes. This art form is still going strong thanks to the Mammoth Cave Basket Makers Guild and the Hart County Fair Basket Contest.

Alfombras de semana santa – Holy Week sawdust carpets – are part of a Central American tradition that is new to Shelbyville, Ky. There, Latino members of the Church of the Annunciation make a large alfombra out of brightly-colored sawdust every year. This work of art is on display in the chapel for several days and then swept away after Easter.

ARTIFACT LIST

Egg basket by Lestel Childress (master)

Egg basket by Beth Hester (apprentice)

Carrying basket by Leona Waddell (master)

These three white oak baskets represent a folk art that developed over generations in the Mammoth Cave area.

Basketmaker Lestel Childress (1927-2010), recipient of the 2003 Governor’s Awards in the Arts for folk heritage, taught Beth Hester with the understanding that she would help pass on his family tradition to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Beth especially wanted to learn to make what Lestel called “Kentucky Egg Baskets” as he had learned from his mother. These two, loaned by Beth, were made in the mid-1990s around the time of their apprenticeship.

Leona Waddell’s carrying basket shows the influence of travel and tourism along Highway 31W. During Leona’s lifetime, useful baskets made in her community became collectible art objects. Her personal style and attention to detail have won her many “Best in Show” ribbons at the annual Hart County Fair Basket Contest. Leona shared these values with apprentices Charlene Long and Sam Peters, members of the Mammoth Cave Basket Makers Guild.

(ARTIFACT LIST CONTINUED)

Alfombra - bucket, sawdust, dye, stencil

People from Guatemala and other Central American countries make large, outdoor carpets, or alfombras, on city streets during Holy Week. Latinos living in Shelbyville, Ky., brought this tradition with them, changing it to an indoor artwork made in the middle of the Church of the Annunciation's chapel. Patterns and images in an alfombra are made freehand or by using stencils.

Master artist Jose Neil Donis and his apprentice Edgar Tumax have led the design and construction of alfombras over the years. They collect sawdust from local furniture manufacturers and mix it with special dyes from Guatemala. With help from other parishioners, they use this colorful medium to create a path of symbols with spiritual meaning and themes related to their community experience.



Questions for Discussion: Egg Baskets (white oak)

Describe

1. What color(s) is the object?
2. What material(s) do you think it is made of?
3. What do you think it feels like?
4. List any patterns or designs you see on the object.

Analyze

1. How do you think the object could have been used?
2. Who might have used it?
3. Do you think this basket was used for decorative purposes or for work? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. How is the master's basket different from the apprentice's? How are they similar?

Interpret

1. What does this artifact tell us about the tradition of basket making in Kentucky?
2. Why do you think the master and apprentice relationship is important to keeping folk arts traditions like basket making alive in Kentucky?

Questions for Discussion: Alfombra

Describe

1. What size is the alfombra?
2. What materials is it made out of?
3. Describe the texture of the alfombra. How would it feel to the touch?
4. What images do you see in the alfombra design?

Analyze

1. How is the alfombra made and used?
2. How does the location (indoor versus outdoor) affect the alfombra?
3. Who do you think is the intended audience? What do you see that makes you say that?
4. If you were going to make an alfombra, what images would you include?

Interpret

1. Why would it be important for these Central American artists to continue this art making tradition in Kentucky?
2. Are the materials the artists use important to the artwork? How would the alfombra change if the materials were different?

Follow-Up Activities

1. Write a letter explaining a folklife tradition in your family, neighborhood, school or community to someone who has never experienced it. (explores explanatory writing and knowledge of audience)
2. Draw or paint a picture showing a folk tradition from one of the folk groups to which you belong.
3. Write a personal narrative about how family folk culture has affected you – what the traditions mean or how they have changed over time. (better for older students)
4. Interview family or community members about folk traditions in your community. Write a report or create a poster that shares what you learned.
5. Invite a local community member to share or talk about folk traditions in the community or their family.
6. Apply for a Teacher Initiated Program (TIP) grant to bring a professional folk artist to share and teach students about a specific part of folk culture.
<http://artscouncil.ky.gov/Grants/TIP.htm>

Curriculum Connections

SS-4-CS-S-1; SS-4-CS-S-4; SS-H-CS-S-5; AH-7-HA-U-1; AH-7-HA-U-2; AH-7-HA-U-3; AH-7-PCA-U-1; AH-7-PCA-U-2; AH-HS-HA-U-2; AH-7-PCA-U-3; AH-HS-PA-U-3



Alfombra



Egg Basket by Lestel Childress (master)



Egg Basket by Beth Hester (apprentice)