

## EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Threads  
Subject: Consuelo Jimenez Underwood  
Discipline: Visual Arts

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Fiber artist Consuelo Jimenez Underwood  
working on the sewing machine.  
Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

## SECTION I - OVERVIEW

### EPISODE THEME

Threads

### SUBJECT

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood

### GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Language Arts

### OBJECTIVE

To introduce educators and students to fiber arts and the work of Consuelo Jimenez Underwood.

### STORY SYNOPSIS

SPARK takes a look at weaver and teacher Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, who constructs histories of indigenous and non-indigenous conflict through her works on exhibit at the San Jose Museum of Art.

### INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group oral discussion, review and analysis, including peer review and aesthetic valuing  
Teacher-guided instruction  
Hands-on individual projects  
Hands-on group projects  
Critical reflection on personal expressions and how they are seen and received by others

### INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

To introduce to the concept of fiber arts (artwork made with fibers, textiles, threads and other materials) through the works of Consuelo Jimenez Underwood  
To provide context for the understanding of fiber arts as an expressive media with its own visual language  
To inspire students to explore textiles as a expressive medium

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

TV and SPARK story “Loose Threads” about Consuelo Jimenez Underwood on VHS or DVD and appropriate equipment  
Computer with Internet access, navigation software, speakers and a sounds card, printer  
Cassette player, CD player, or computer audio program

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Access to libraries with up-to-date collections of periodicals, books, and research papers  
Pencils, pens, and paper

### INTELLIGENCES ADDRESSED

Bodily-Kinesthetic - control of one's own body, control in handling objects  
Interpersonal - awareness of others' feelings, emotions, goals, motivations  
Intrapersonal - awareness of one's own feelings, emotions, goals, motivations  
Spatial - ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems  
Logical-Mathematical - ability to detect patterns, reason deductively, think logically



See more information on [Multiple Intelligences](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education) at [www.kqed.org/spark/education](http://www.kqed.org/spark/education).

## SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

### CONTENT OVERVIEW

In "Threads," Spark follows Consuelo Jiménez Underwood as she installs new works at the San Jose Museum of Art for "Un/Familiar Territory," an exhibition that includes 10 artists addressing the relationships between place, culture, and personal identity. Discussing her roles as both artist and teacher at San Jose State University, Underwood raises two important issues that have surfaced in textiles recently -- the contemporary interest in textiles as an expressive art form and the legacy of textiles as a craft traditionally practiced by women.



Textile artist Consuelo Jimenez Underwood works with a student in one of her classes at San Jose State University. Still image from Spark story, 2003.

Underwood does not create textiles in the traditional sense, but rather uses textiles to express ideas the same way that a painter or sculptor might. She combines traditional textile materials with those not commonly used --such as barbed wire, plastic coated wire, and safety pins-- pushing the boundaries of a traditional craft into new and different territories.

In her piece Frontera Rebozo's Noche/Día, Underwood uses safety pins to hold together hundreds of swatches of fabric. Each of the small square pieces in this work are screen-printed with the

### CONTENT OVERVIEW (continued)

same image of a family running--an image found on the highways along the border between the United States and Mexico, serving as a warning to motorists that people and families might be running across the road. As a cultural symbol, this image neatly evokes the political lines that divides the peoples and cultures of North America, though it has a personal significance as well: Underwood uses this symbol to represent her own history as a migrant agricultural worker, and to signify her mixed, hybrid culture.

Underwood studied art at San Diego State University, where she received a Bachelors of Art in 1981 and a Masters degree in 1985. In 1987, she received a Masters of Fine Arts from San Jose State University, where she has been a faculty member since 1989. She has shown her work nationally and internationally, in Mexico and Spain.

### THE BIG PICTURE

Textiles include all fabrics made by weaving, felting, knitting, braiding, or netting, from various textile fibers. Different forms of textiles are classified according to the composition of their fibers: silk, wool, linen, cotton, synthetics (rayon, nylon, and polyesters), and fabricated fibers (gold, glass fiber, and asbestos cloth). They are also categorized by the weave, according to how the warp and weft cross each other in a loom. Quality and price of textiles depend on the quality of the raw material and the character of the yarn. Yarns can be clean, smooth, fine, or coarse, hard, soft, or medium. The density of weaving and finishing processes also play a role in determining the quality of fabrics.

Though the fiber arts--such as quilting, weaving, basketry, and knitting--have been practiced since the very beginnings of civilization, they have long been considered a "craft," secondary to the "fine arts" such as painting and sculpture.

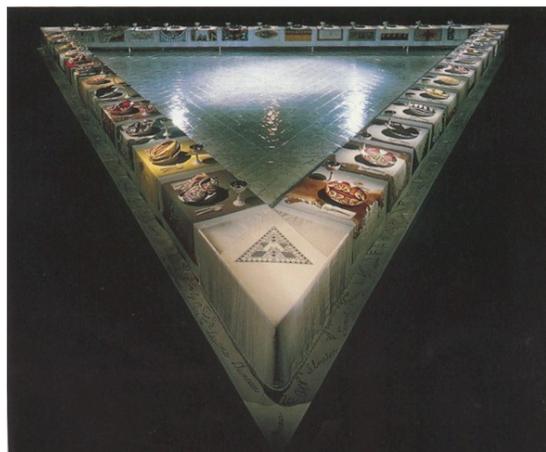
## THE BIG PICTURE (continued)

As part of the many upheavals of the 1960s and 70s, many artists began re-examining this traditional art form, and sought to elevate the fiber arts to the status of a fine art. Central to this movement was the work of two other Bay Area artists, Charles “Ed” Rossbach and Katherine Westphal. Rossbach was known for researching older civilizations' examples of textiles and baskets and combining these ancient techniques with images from contemporary popular culture, such as Mickey Mouse or John Travolta. He was a pioneer in the use of non-traditional textile and basketry materials such as newspaper, plastics, metal foils, rice paper, twigs, plastic film, natural wood fibers, foil, staples, and twine. Westphal's work demonstrates a mastery of a very difficult color photography heat-transfer process, which she often used in her work as a way to incorporate photography into her quilts and garments.

Westphal and Rossbach taught weaving at the University of California, Berkeley for nearly 30 years. Both are considered pivotal figures in developing the San Francisco Bay Area as a center for fiber arts and involved their students in the activities of fiber arts centers, schools and galleries throughout the region. The proliferation of university programs in fiber arts in recent years can in part be credited to their influence as many of their students have since gone on to become prominent members of the next generation of artist-teachers across the country.

Since the fiber arts were often thought of as “women's work,” the movement to elevate these practices was also closely associated with the first wave Feminist Movement of the 1970s. Artists such as Faith Ringgold, Judy Chicago, Joyce Weiland, and others incorporated the fiber arts in their pieces, which often dealt with the subjugation of women within the patriarchal order. Though it most often thought of as sculpture, Chicago's iconic The Dinner Party incorporated quilting and embroidery as fundamental components to the monumental ceremonial banquet piece. In The Dinner Party, the clay and textile materials serve a practical function as usable objects (plates, silverware, tablecloths, napkins, etc.), and they also have a symbolic function, referencing women and women's work.

Chicago also organized the International Quilting Bee, a project that brought together over 700 quilt blocks made by women from all over the world. Faith Ringgold's many quilts and tapestries similarly work to advance the cause and work of women, but also that of people of color, linking the fiber arts to traditional African and African-American folk history.



Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party, 1974-79. Painted porcelain, fabric, and needlework. 48 x 48 x 48 feet. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Gift from the Elizabeth A. Sackler Foundation. Photo: Donald Woodman

## SECTION III - RESOURCES

### TEXTS

American Craft (monthly periodical). Published by the American Craft Council, the magazine celebrates contemporary craft, focusing on masterful achievements in the craft media---clay, fiber, metal, glass, wood and other materials---with the goal to create intellectual and visual interest for the reader on today's craft. - <http://www.craftcouncil.org>

Asian Costumes and Textiles from the Bosphorus to Fujiyama: The Zaira and Marcel Mis Collection. Mary Hunt Kahlenberg, Mauro Magliani (Photographer). Skira Press, 2001.

Clothes and Your Appearance. Louise A Liddell and Carolee S Samuels, CFCS. (This book is designed to help students understand the role clothing plays in their lives, how to make the best decisions regarding the selection and care of clothing, and how to construct apparel. In addition, students learn about textiles and design, the textiles and apparel industry - its history as well as the latest trends, and the many career opportunities in the textiles and apparel fields. Available from VMS at

[http://www.vmonline.com/Clothes and Your Appearance P2547.cfm](http://www.vmonline.com/Clothes_and_Your_Appearance_P2547.cfm)

An Educator Guide is also available from VMS for focused and intensive textile and sewing classes.)

Encountering Medieval Textiles and Dress: Objects, Texts, Images. Desiree Koslin and Janet Snyder, eds. Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Fiberarts Magazine (monthly periodical) - <http://www.fiberartsmagazine.com>

From the Rainbow's Varied Hue: Textiles of the Southern Philippines. Roy W. Hamilton, editor. UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, 1998.

Fuzz Does It! Vicki Cobb, ill. Brian Schatell. Lippincott, 1982.

### TEXTS (continued)

Southwest Textiles: Weavings of the Pueblo and Navajo (Book and CD-ROM ). Kathleen Whitaker, et al. University of Washington Press, 2002.

Textiles from Mexico. Chloë Sayer. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002.

Textiles in America, 1650-1870: A Dictionary Based on Original Documents. Florence M. Montgomery. Norton, 1984.

Understanding Textiles. Billie J. Collier and Phyllis G. Tortora. Prentice Hall, 2001.

Unraveling Fibers. Patricia A. Keeler and Francis X. McCall, Jr. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1995.

Weaving China's Past: The Amy S. Clague Collection of Chinese Textiles. Claudia Brown and Robert D. Mowry, et al. Phoenix Art Museum, 2000.

### WEB SITES

American Textile History Museum – Museum housing a diverse collection of American household textiles, clothing, decorative objects, machinery, tools, and books. -

[http://www.athm.org/home\\_framemiddle2.htm](http://www.athm.org/home_framemiddle2.htm)

Anne Wanner's Textiles in History – Resource center offering information on historic textiles, book-reviews, exhibitions, artists, and the CIETA-embroidery newsletter (Centre International des Textiles Anciens). - <http://www.annatextiles.ch/>

Fabric Workshop and Museum – Organization that creates and exhibits new works in fabric and experimental materials in collaboration with emerging and established international artists. - <http://www.fabricworkshop.org/>

## WEB SITES (continued)

Francis Burke Textile Resource Centre - houses a collection of information and materials to aid research into Australian 20th century fashion and textile design. -

<http://www.rmit.edu.au/departments/af/>

Hooser Weaving Centre - Museum featuring hand-woven textiles, equipment, and reference library of Honey Hooser, a well-known pioneer, teacher, and master weaver. - <http://www.surreyweaving.com/>

La Jolla Fiber Arts – Museum devoted entirely to the textile arts in La Jolla, CA that exhibits local and national artists. - <http://www.lajollafiberarts.com/>

Latimer Quilt and Textile Center - Fiber arts museum in Oregon with a collection including quilts, woven pieces, lace, and fabric samples. -

<http://www.oregoncoast.com/latimertextile/>

Musee des Tissus est des Arts Decoratifs de Lyon – Outstanding Web site for Lyon, France based-collection tracing the history and development of textiles and weaving over the last 2,000 years, including detailed images and information about Egyptian and Coptic, Eastern, Far Eastern, and European textiles, costumes, and decorative arts. -

<http://www.musee-des-tissus.com/>

New England Quilt Museum – Lowell, Massachusetts based Museum dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and celebrating historic and contemporary American quilting. -

<http://www.nequiltmuseum.org/>

Textile Art from Southern Appalachia: The Quiet Work of Women – Special exhibition at the McClung Museum of Textiles of the University of Kentucky made by handweavers in Southern Appalachia, exploring design, composition, color, and technique issues. -

<http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/specex/textlart/textlart.htm>

Textile Museum, The – Museum in Washington, D.C. dedicated to the exhibition, study, and preservation of the handmade textile arts. -

<http://www.textilemuseum.org/>. Refer to Symmetry and Patterns: The Art of Oriental Carpets, a section of the Textile Museum's online gallery exploring the relationship of math and rug weaving through information and educational resources. -

<http://mathforum.org/geometry/rugs/>

UNITE (formerly the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees) and HERE (Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union) - <http://www.unitehere.org>

Weaving Art Museum and Research Institute, The – An online exhibition gallery displaying masterpiece examples of historic textile art. -

<http://www.weavingartmuseum.org/>

## MEDIA

### VIDEO:

Woven By The Grandmothers: Navajo Textiles from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. WETA, Chicago, IL: Home Vision, 1998. (available through Amazon at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).)

Textiles - Birth of an American. A & E Entertainment, 2001. (available through Amazon at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).)

## BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS

### CLASSES:

Art Institutes of California – San Francisco - <http://www.theartinstitutes.com>

California College of Arts and Crafts - <http://www.ccac-art.edu/>

City College of San Francisco - <http://cloud.ccsf.cc.ca.us>

Livingstone Dyeworks (Oakland)  
[dyework@yahoo.com](mailto:dyework@yahoo.com), 510-536-4244

## **BAY AREA FIELD TRIPS (continued)**

Mendocino Art Center (Mendocino) 707-937-7799 -

<http://www.mendocinoartcenter.org>

Peggy Osterkamp (Larkspur) 415-925-8666 -

<http://www.weaving.cc>

Richmond Art Center (Richmond) -

<http://www.therichmondartcenter.org>

San Francisco State University – <http://www.sfsu.edu>

San Jose State University – <http://www.sjsu.edu>

SCRAP – Scrounger’s Center for Reusable Art Parts

(San Francisco) -<http://www.scrap-sf.org>

The Caning Shop, (Berkeley) 510-594-3710 -

<http://www.caning.com>.

The Names Project/Aids Quilt (San Francisco) -

<http://www.aidsquilt.org>.

The Rug and Yarn Hut – (Campbell) 408-354-9316 or

408-871-0411, e-mail: [rughut@mindspring.com](mailto:rughut@mindspring.com)

### COLLECTIONS:

Fiber Scene – (San Francisco) Artists and gallery

dedicated to fiber. - <http://www.fiberscene.com>

Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco – Collections of textiles at both the Legion of Honor and the de Young Museum, including carpets, clothing, tapestries, and upholstered furniture. –

<http://www.thinker.org/index.asp>

San Francisco Quilters Guild - <http://www.sfqg.org>

San Jose Museum of Quilts and Textiles – San Jose Museum exhibiting historical and artistic quilts and

textiles. - <http://www.sjqmilmuseum.org>

## SECTION IV – VOCABULARY

### DISCIPLINE-BASED VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS IN THE SPARK STORY

**Barbed Wire**

Twisted wires armed with barbs or sharp points

**Border**

The outer part or edge, in this case, the line dividing the United States from Mexico.

**Corridos** (*Spanish – pronounced corr-eeed-dos*)

Popular songs that are political and/or social in nature, usually near epic stories that portray different tragedies or challenges that are recognizable in the life of Mexican peoples

**Craft**

An occupation, trade or pursuit requiring manual dexterity and the application of artistic skill

**Diaspora**

The breaking up and scattering of a peoples, or peoples settled elsewhere than their homelands.

**Dye**

A soluble or insoluble coloring matter

**Etched**

To delineate or mark upon clearly. In artwork, to reproduce an image or picture by engraving metal plate with acid usually in order to print copies

**Hardship**

A challenge or difficult situation

**Harsh**

Something grating or harmful that causes a disagreeable or painful sensory reaction

**Hideous**

The state of being offensive to the senses and especially to sight, exceedingly ugly

**Industry**

A department or branch of a craft, art, business, such as large textiles company which employs personnel and machines to manufacture goods

**Intimidate**

To make timid or fearful

**Migrant**

A person who moves in order to find work, especially in agrarian industries

**Primal**

Original, primitive, innate, or indigenous

**Pueblo**

A community dwelling of flat-roofed stone or adobe houses built side-by-side in a village in Arizona, New Mexico, and nearby areas

**Rebozo**

While there is no exact English equivalent, a rebozo is essentially a throw (similar to a shawl) worn by women in Mexico, and Central and South America. It is also used to carry a baby. In the SPARK story, it is the title of one of Underwood's works – *Frontera Rebozo*. Roughly translated = *Border Rebozo*.

**Symmetry**

Correspondence in size, shape, and relative position of parts on opposite sides of a dividing line or median plane or about a center or axis

**Trendy**

Defined by fleeting or superficial appeal, such as a fad

**Weaving**

To form cloth by interlacing strands of yarn or other materials

**Yarn**

A continuous plied strand of natural or fabricated fibers used in weaving and knitting to make cloth

## SECTION V – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

### STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

#### Talking about textiles

Initiate a conversation with students about textiles. Ask them to name different types of textiles (such as carpets, clothing, upholstery, quilts, etc.), and write a list on the board. Then brainstorm specific types for each category (such as corduroys, linens, embroidery, silks, patchworks, twill, cottons, etc.). Challenge students to think of a situation or environment in which textiles are not present.

Bring in examples of different textiles, such as towels, clothing, furniture upholstery, rugs, place mats, hats, tablecloths, linen napkins, aprons, fake fur, etc. Discuss the examples using the following questions as prompts:

- What does the name of the object mean?
- What can we know about the object from its name?
- What is the textile used for?
- How was the textile made? From what and by whom?
- What colors are present in the textile and why were they chosen?
- What textures are present in the textile and why were they chosen?
- What imagery is present in the textile?

Have students select a textile or fiber object from their homes. Challenge them to research the textile in terms of these questions and to write a 500-word descriptive piece, including the origin of the textile, its form, colors, patterns, textures, colors, and uses.

#### Textiles and Culture

Ask students what they can tell about a culture from looking at textiles produced in that culture? What do colors have to do with culture? What do textures and/or patterns have to do with culture? Choose a particular textile about which you know the cultural origin and fabrication process.

#### RELATED STANDARDS

##### VISUAL ARTS

##### Grade 5

##### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

*Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary*

1.2 Identify and describe characteristics of representational, abstract, and nonrepresentational works of art.

*Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design*

1.3 Use their knowledge of all the elements of art to describe similarities and differences in works of art and in the environment.

##### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

*Diversity of the Visual Arts*

3.3 Identify and compare works of art from various regions of the United States.

##### Grade 6

##### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

*Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design*

1.4 Describe how balance is effectively used in a work of art (e.g., symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial).

##### Grade 8

##### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

3.2 Compare, contrast, and analyze styles of art from a variety of times and places in Western and non-Western cultures.

3.3 Identify major works of art created by women and describe the impact of those works on society at that time.

##### Grades 9-12 Proficient

##### 1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

*Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary*

1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

##### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

*Role and Development of the Visual Arts*

3.1 Identify similarities and differences in the purposes of art created in selected cultures.

3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.

## Textiles and Culture (continued)

Working in groups, ask students to “read” the textile naming the colors and textures present, the weaving style, size, proportions, uses, etc. Encourage students to research what they don’t know using texts, the Internet, or videos, to research that culture, including how the colors are made, and why the size, patterns, and textures are reproduced. Consider any symbolism in the patterns or colors, articulating what they mean(t) for the culture that produced it. Invite each group to share their ideas with the whole class.

Develop this activity by discussing embroidery and other forms of needlework, including cross-stitching, needlepoint, and lace making. Show examples from two or three different cultures, including samples, tablecloths, clothing, and lace. Ask students to identify the similarities and differences. Depending upon your student group, an instructive comparison might include Navaho American Indian needlework and bead decoration, early American samples and quilting, and European embroidery. How can we tell which textiles come from which culture?

If students are able, ask them to bring in interesting examples of textiles from different cultures to display around the classroom. Include information about each piece so that it can be clearly identified.

### SPARKLERS:

\* Research the needle-workers? Were they men or women? How were they viewed by other members of their culture? Does this have a relationship to gender?

\* Bring in articles of textiles with interior tags. As a group write the words and/or draw the symbols from the tags on the board (one of each). Talk about what each symbol or descriptive word means. Why are these symbols important? Why should people read the tags and follow instructions?

## Textile Design

Review examples of different patterns in textiles and talk about the differences between symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns. Challenge students to make a symmetrical design and repeat it within the grid on a sheet of graph paper.

## Textile Design (continued)

Using graph paper and colored pencils, ask students to design their own carpets, taking into account symmetry, asymmetry, and symmetry-breaking.

Invite students to choose a costume from an historical time period or from a mythical time or place. Challenge them to map the drawing into a pattern using his/her measurements. Help students to cut out the pattern and to assemble the pieces into a paper costume. If you have access to sewing machine(s) help students to actually cut the pattern out of fabric and to make the costume.

If they would enjoy bringing their costumes to life, encourage them to act out a scene of history or story in costume

### SPARKLERS:

\* Choose sample textiles with patterns to bring into class. Encourage students to reproduce the patterns and designs from one of the textiles by drawing it, and then to paint or fill in the areas with the appropriate colors and textures. .

\* Take a simple dishtowel and explore where the materials that make up the towel (cotton, rayon, polyester) come from (natural, manufactured). Explore further questions about the dishtowel, such as why was rayon or polyester produced? Do these materials help or hurt the environment?

### RELATED STANDARDS

#### VISUAL ARTS

Grades 9-12, Advanced

#### 3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

*Role and Development of the Visual Arts*

3.1 Identify contemporary styles and discuss the diverse social, economic, and political developments reflected in the works of art examined.

*Diversity of the Visual Arts*

3.3 Investigate and discuss universal concepts expressed in works of art from diverse cultures.

3.4 Research the methods art historians use to determine the time, place, context, value, and culture that produced a given work of art.

For more information about SPARK and its educational content, including the Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the Web site at <http://www.kqed.org/spark/education>.



Or see the full VAPA Standards at the California Department of Education Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/>