

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Story Theme: Legacies

Subject: Julia Parker

Discipline: Visual Arts (Basket Weaving)

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Artist Julia Parker at work on a basket.
Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

SECTION I - OVERVIEW

EPISODE THEME

Legacies

SUBJECT

Julia Parker

GRADE RANGES

K-12 & Post-secondary

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Visual Arts & Social Studies

OBJECTIVE

To introduce educators to the Native American art form of basket weaving and its historical traditions in Native American culture.

STORY SYNOPSIS

For nearly fifty years, Julia Parker has generously shared her knowledge of the traditional Native American basket weaving techniques as a Yosemite Park cultural interpreter. Now approaching her 75th birthday, she is known as one of the few remaining weavers in California. We learn some of Julia's secrets as she gathers the natural materials for her baskets deep in Yosemite Valley. Then we'll see how she's passing on her knowledge to the next three generations of family as they visit the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at UC Berkeley – home to more than 9,000 North American baskets.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Group discussion, review and analysis; peer review and group aesthetic valuing
Teacher-guided instruction, including demonstration and guidance
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 help students –
Understand the development of personal works of art and their relationship to broader social themes and ideas, abstract concepts, and the history of art.
Develop basic observational drawing and/or painting skills.
Develop visual, written, listening and speaking skills through looking at, creating and talking about visual artworks.
Develop an expressive visual vocabulary with which to address personal and/or social themes and ideas.
Develop observational and representational skills by looking at and reproducing images of people, places and things accurately and thoughtfully.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

SPARK story about Julia Parker on DVD or VHS and related 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
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

SECTION II – CONTENT/CONTEXT

CONTENT OVERVIEW

For Julia Parker, weaving baskets connects her to the lives and traditions of her ancestors, telling the story of a people that for more than 4,000 years populated villages throughout the Yosemite Valley. In the Spark episode “Legacies,” the artist guides viewers through the area where her village had once been as she explains the traditional process of making her baskets.

Born in 1929 in Sonoma County of the Coast Miwok and Kashaya Pomo Indians, Parker moved to the Yosemite Valley in 1949 to live in the village of her husband, a Miwok Paiute man. As a young woman, Parker was compelled to learn everything she could about the old ways of basket weaving. She studied basketry with the elders of her village, including her husband's grandmother Lucy Telles. Telles was a highly innovative and celebrated weaver, whose masterpiece -- a colossal 3-foot-by-19-inch storage basket -- is now on display at the Yosemite Museum. Parker remained in her husband's Yosemite Valley village until 1969, when the government bulldozed the region to make way for campsites.

Concerned that these ancient methods of making baskets would die out with the weavers of Telles' generation, Parker dedicated her life to passing on the knowledge and skills she'd gained. Since 1960, Parker has demonstrated basket weaving behind Yosemite's Indian Museum, in the same spot where Telles used to weave and sell her baskets and beadwork to tourists. She graciously answers visitors' questions in an effort to share her culture with others.

Parker is an innovator in her own right, with samples of her work in the Smithsonian Institution and in the collection of the Queen of England. Her baskets demonstrate a staggering complexity of design that is unparalleled in the work of her colleagues. She makes every one of her baskets by first collecting the

needed grasses and sticks, then treating them with moisture and heat in order to make them supple. She prepares dyes also prepared from natural materials, and since there are no established patterns for different types of baskets, the entire design of the basket has to be formed in Parker's mind before she begins weaving. The process is slow and labor-intensive, which means that a single basket can take several months and sometimes well over a year, to complete.



Julia Parker collects material for a basket in Yosemite, California. Still image from SPARK story, February 2004.

Parker, now in her 70s, has inspired her daughter, Lucy Parker, and her granddaughter, Ursula Jones to continue making traditional basketry. SPARK follows Parker and her family as they make the 350-mile trip to the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at UC Berkeley to view some of the impressive pieces in the collection. Just as Parker herself was taught to weave by her elders, she hopes to pass her legacy onto subsequent generations of her family.

THE BIG PICTURE

All aspects of traditional Native American life were involved with basketry. Baskets were used for the

collection and storage of food, for transporting, food, objects, and infants, in ceremonies, and given as gifts. After Native American contact with European-Americans, it also became common to produce miniature baskets to sell to non-Natives.

Traditionally, basket weaving was done by the women of the tribe, who passed the trade on from generation to generation. In the Yosemite Valley, women were taught to use primarily willow, redbud, Sumac, strips of bark from redbud, bracken fern, brake fern, bunch grass, and other native plants as materials for basket weaving. It was important to be able to identify all the plants for basket-making, which were best to use for different kinds of baskets, where to find them, and the best time to gather them. Once the materials had been gathered, the basket weaver also had to know how to prepare the fibers for use. The plant materials had to be peeled, trimmed to correct thickness and length, soaked in cold water, boiled, or buried in mud, according to their use. The colors used in designs also came from plants. Roots of the brake fern were boiled or soaked to obtain black, while redbud was employed for the red color.



Profiles of Yosemite mountains. Still image from SPARK story, March 2004.

The size, shape, and weave of each basket were determined by its particular function. Large, cone-shaped baskets, known as burden baskets, were used for carrying heavy and bulky loads. These baskets were worn on the back and supported by a strap passing over the wearer's forehead. Another common basket was a large, deep family mushbowl basket around which families gathered to dip into acorn mush, a staple of Yosemite Indians. Small,

closely-woven baskets were used to serve food. Basket weirs were used for catching fish, while a tightly woven disc-shaped winnowing basket was used to separate leaves, skins, and hulls from foodstuff. A seed beater basket was used for beating seeds into a carrying basket, and a small, tightly woven dipper basket was used for drinking water or manzanita cider. A cradle of openwork basketry, sometimes covered with deerskin, was used for covering babies. Special baskets were also made for use in wedding and dance ceremonies.

Yosemite Indian women used primarily twining and coiling methods of weaving baskets. Twined baskets use a heavy, vertically twined foundation called a "warp," and a horizontally twined "woof" made of a lighter material. In coiled baskets, the heavy foundation warp is laid in horizontal coils around the basket with the vertical woof running spirally in turns around or through the foundation coils, fastening them together. The twining method was used mostly for burden baskets, triangular scoop shaped winnowing baskets, elliptical seed-beaters, and baby-carriers. Burden baskets were often treated with an application of soaproot, which hardened in a thin brittle sheet, and made the baskets seed-tight. A scrubbing brush for cleaning the cooking baskets was also made from the dry outer layers of the soaproot.

In this sense basket weaving connects the weaver to the environment: basket weavers need to know where the land is healthiest so they can gather materials without destroying the natural balances of the ecosystem. Basket weavers also learn a great respect for the materials they use, for it has traditionally been believed that it is the fibers and not the weaver that makes a beautiful basket.

What is perhaps most impressive about Native American basketry is the careful coordination of design and color that appears executed with mathematical accuracy. Amazingly, this is accomplished without any form of written guide. Before beginning a basket a weaver has to know exactly where to place each stitch of each figure of the design, and as the bowl of the basket continues to flare, the size of each figure has to be correspondingly increased.

RESOURCES – TEXTS

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Bates, Craig and Martha J. Lee. Tradition and Innovation: A Basket History of the Indians of the Yosemite-Mono Lake Area. Yosemite National Park, California: Yosemite Association, 1990.

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Moser, Christopher L, ed. Native American Basketry of Central California. Riverside, CA: Riverside Municipal Museum, 1986.

O'Neale, Lila. Yurok-Karok Basket Weavers. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932.

Ortiz, Beverly R. It Will Live Forever. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books, 1991.

Porter, Frank W. III, ed. The Art of Native American Basketry: A Living Legacy. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Porter, Frank W. III. Native American Basketry: An Annotated Bibliography. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.

RESOURCES – WEB SITES

ACF News Source – An article about the continuing tradition of Native American basket weaving. - http://www.acfnewsresource.org/religion/sacred_basket.html

Basketmakers.org – Organizational Web site dedicated to basket makers, including several links to picture of Native American baskets and basket weavers. - http://www.basketmakers.org/topics/graphics/graph_historicindex.htm

Burke Museum of Natural History & Culture – Web site for this Washington museum, including pages about an exhibition of Native American Basketry, with a fun basket game. - <http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/baskets/>

California Baskets – Pages of a Web site dedicated to Julia Parker. - <http://www.californiabaskets.com/juliaparker.html>

CIBA – Web site of the California Indian Basketweavers Association. - <http://www.ciba.org/>

Native Tech - Web site about Native American Basketry, technology, and art. - <http://www.nativetech.org/basketry/>

Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology - <http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/>

Smithsonian Institute - Native American basket weaving Web pages from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian. - <http://www.americanindian.si.edu/exhibitions/basket/subpage.cfm?subpage=intro>

UC Berkeley – Cal’s published pages on Native American baskets. -

<http://www.mip.berkeley.edu/cilc/basket.html>

UC NewsWire – An article about Julia Parker for the UC news service. -

<http://www.ucnewswire.org/events/may31art4.htm>

Web City Press – Web site about Central Californian Yokut Indian Basketry from the Sanger Depot Museum. -

<http://www.webcitypress.com/sanger/baskets.html>

Yosemite Basket Weavers – Web site about Yosemite basket weavers, including Julia Parker. -

<http://www.kstrom.net/isk/art/basket/yosemite.html>

Coyote Hills Regional Park
8000 Patterson Ranch Road
Fremont, CA 94555
510 795 9385

<http://www.ebparks.org/parks/coyote.htm>

UC Botanical Garden
200 Centennial Drive
Berkeley, CA 94720
510 642 3352

<http://botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu>

Kule Loklo Miwok Village
Point Reyes National Seashore
Point Reyes, CA 94950
415 464 5139

http://www.nps.gov/pore/history_miwok.htm

BAY AREA RESOURCES

Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology

UC Berkeley

102 Kroeber Hall

Berkeley, CA 94720-3712

510-642-3682

pahma@berkeley.edu

Hours:

Wednesday to Saturday

10am - 4:30pm

Sunday 12pm - 4:00pm

<http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/>

Sanger Depot Museum

1700 7th St.

Sanger, CA 93657

(559) 875-2848

Hours:

Friday 9:30am-12:30pm

Sunday 1:00-4:00pm

<http://www.webcitypress.com/sanger>

California State Indian Museum

2618 K Street

Sacramento, CA 95816

916/324.0971

Hours: 10am – 5pm Daily

http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=486

SECTION III – VOCABULARY

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

Aboriginal

Having existed in a region from the beginning; of or relating to indigenous peoples of a region

Anthropology

The scientific study of the origin, the behavior, and the physical, social, and cultural development of humans

Basketry

The craft or process of making baskets or other woven objects

Beaded

Covered with beads, jewels, sequins or similar small, often round pieces of material pierced for stringing or threading

Elder

An older, influential member of a family, tribe, or community

Generation

A group of individuals born and living about the same time.

Grinding Rock

Outcropping of bedrock with mortar holes, traditionally used in Native Americans villages to grind acorns and other seeds into a meal

Legacy

Something handed down from an ancestor or a predecessor or from the past

Native

Being a member of the original inhabitants of a particular place

Occupy

To dwell or reside in

Oral

Spoken rather than written

Performative

Relating to an utterance that performs an act or creates a state of affairs by the fact of its being spoken under appropriate or conventional circumstances

Pilgrimage

A journey to a sacred place or shrine

Rooted

To come into existence, originate

Sacred

Of or relating to religious objects, rites, or practices

Spiritual

Of, concerned with, or affecting the soul

Teepee

A portable dwelling of certain Native American peoples, especially on the Great Plains, consisting of a conical framework of poles covered with skins or bark

Traditional

Of or pertaining to practices or beliefs communicated from ancestors to descendants by word only

Variation

One of a series of forms based on a single theme

SECTION IV – ENGAGING WITH SPARK

STANDARDS-BASED ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Native American Culture

Using the following Web site <http://www.nativeculture.com/lisamitten/nations.html> on Native American nations, invite students to respond to the following questions:

- Who are Native Americans?
- What are the five Indian culture areas in North America? Locate the areas using a map of North America.
- What are some of the defining traditions of the Intermountain Culture, or Californian Indians?

Working in pairs, ask students to research one Native American tribe or nation. Ensure the Pomo Indians and the Miwok are assigned. Students should identify defining cultural features of the community such as language, clothing, food, activities, music, dance, visual crafts, and other cultural traditions. Trace the original and present

Finally invite each pair to present their research giving an overview of the nation they explored. Photographs or other illustrative material would enrich the presentations. Encourage questions and discussion after each presentation and draw out, as a key theme, the importance of craft to the Indian way of life.

Visiting Native American Sites

For students who are interested in field trips to further explore Native Californian culture, the Hearst Museum of Anthropology offers a list of places that provide age specific tours. Invite students to visit the Ohlone Park where there are workshops on Indian skills and crafts such as basketry, cordage and stone tools. (These are offered for 4th grade and up through the Schools Program, Coyote Hills Regional Park). Additionally Marin was the home to the Coast Miwok people and

students can learn about their traditional ways of life by visiting the replica village (Kule Loklo Miwok Village, Point Reyes National Seashore). The UC Botanical Garden offers further insight into how Indians used plants for food, medicine, clothing and shelter. See Bay Area Resources section for locations and contact information.

Encourage students to develop the first exercise into an extended research project on Native American culture and display the projects at a class event on Native Californian culture inviting the whole school to attend. The event can be elaborate and celebratory if students are motivated to organize displays, food, music or even speakers who can be contacted through the different Californian Indian resource centers in the Bay area.

RELATED STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

Grade 4

1.0 ARTISTIC PERCEPTION

Analyze Art Elements and Principles of Design

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (color, shape/form, line, texture, space and value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

4.0 AESTHETIC VALUING

Make Informed Judgments

4.4 Identify and describe how various cultures define and value art differently.

Grades 9-12 Proficient

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.

Diversity of the Visual Arts

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.

The Craft of Craft

Ask students to bring in objects that are examples of a craft. Can they find a handmade object at home? For example, students could choose a bottle or vase as an example of glass blowing, a silver pin, a knitted scarf or sweater, a woven shawl, a piece of pottery, an example of a textile such as an item of clothing or a cushion cover. It may be that all these objects are manufactured, in which case use the objects as prompts to discuss the craft that has been displaced by an industrial process and why that might be.

Students should introduce their object explaining:

Which craft is represented by the object?
What processes are involved in the production of the object?

Ask students to research the craft represented by the object and to write a 500 word descriptive piece on the process. In addition, they should write a concluding paragraph explaining the way the craft has been replaced by manufacture – if that is the case.

Looking at Baskets

As a follow up to The Craft of Craft activity, invite students to bring in examples of baskets they have at home or suggest they view the different baskets displayed in the SPARK story, particularly in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley. If students are inspired by the display encourage them to visit the museum in Berkeley.

Julia Parker describes how the designs on her baskets were never based on a guide or taught, but came from the picture or idea in her head. Invite students to share their responses to the different patterns on the baskets including any symbolism they detect in the designs. Challenge the class to draw or paint patterns or designs that they think would work well on a basket creating their own individual shapes and motifs. Finally students should review the designs produced and display them around the classroom.

Craft, Culture & History

Julia Parker talks of the spirituality of her craft. Basket weaving connects her with her history, her people and the land. The craft signifies continuity in tradition.

As a creative writing exercise, invite students to write a short story or poem about something or someone who offers that sense of history in their own lives. It could be an object that has been passed down over generations, a song or rhyme, a photograph or a person, but should tap into a spiritual sense of tradition and history. To trigger this exercise it may be useful to read from a literary source - such as *Like Water for Chocolate* in which food provides the link with history and tradition.

Holders of Nature

Basket weaving connects the weaver to the environment. Invite students (9-12th grades) to write a 1,000 word essay in response to this statement exploring all the ways in which this is the case, and providing detailed examples to substantiate each point. Students will need to research both the process and materials used in basket weaving to fully respond to this question.

Follow up this exercise in a later class by reviewing the key points outlined in the essays and initiating a discussion on the ways in which modern products and processes have transformed the craft into a commercial enterprise rather than a traditional art motivated by necessity.

Art & Craft

As a group, initiate a discussion on art versus craft. How would students differentiate between them? What defines an art and what defines a craft? Do they overlap? Is this a cultural distinction? Is there a difference in perception of art and craft by the art world and public opinion?

Students should work in groups to think about these questions before embarking on the discussion and should be encouraged to use examples wherever possible to support their arguments and observations.

Yosemite

Native Americans lived in the Yosemite region for as long as 8,000 years. The first people that we have record of was a band of Miwok that called the Valley “Ah-wah-nee” and themselves the “Ah-wah-nee-chee.” This group had trading and family ties to Mono Paiutes from the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada.

Have students research the process of displacement by constructing a class timeline recording landmarks and key historical moments

Secondly have students research the factors that led to the displacement of Native Americans from Yosemite.

To conclude the exercise, introduce a discussion on the social and ethical questions involved. Is the displacement of tradition a necessary part of progress? Is co-existence a workable solution? What are some of the competing historical pressures that threaten traditional ways of life? Can students think of other examples? Encourage students to explore the arguments on both sides and to identify the different interest groups involved as a way to really understand the issues.

Let Us Now Praise

As an empowering concluding exercise, introduce the matrilineal praise prayer as an example of personal affirmation of identity and history. This kind of citation originated in Haiti as a political affirmation and may be adapted in a non-gender specific way. For an example of the power of this exercise, view *We Just Telling Stories* produced by The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women, PO Box 156680, San Francisco, CA 94102 Phone: 415-292-1850, Fax: 415-346-9163

Students should form a circle and in turn recite the formulation or variants of it:

I am the daughter of.....the mother of.....
the granddaughter of....the sister of....etc
And if I live and do not die, I will.....

Invite students to review the exercise and the feelings it generated.

RELATED STANDARDS

VISUAL ARTS

Grade 5

3.0 HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Role and Development of the Visual Arts

3.1 Describe how local and national art galleries and museums contribute to the conservation of art.

Grade 6

2.0 CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools

2.1 Use various observational drawing skills to depict a variety of subject matter.

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.

Diversity of the Visual Arts

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

RELATED STANDARDS

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Grade 4

2. Students describe the social, political, cultural, and economic life and interactions among people of California from the pre-Columbian societies to the Spanish mission and Mexican rancho periods.

1. Discuss the major nations of California Indians, including their geographic distribution, economic activities, legends, and religious beliefs; and describe how they depended on, adapted to, and modified the physical environment by cultivation of land and use of sea resources.

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>.



For more information about the California Visual & Performing Arts Standards, visit the CA Dept. of Education at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>.