

EARTH TO VIK: WHERE ART & NATURE MEET

Fall 2021 Evening for Educators Workshop

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Materials:

- Possible natural materials: soil samples, pebbles, rocks, wood-chips, sand, sawdust, etc.
- Containers to hold materials: bins, buckets, bags, Dixie cups, “hot dog” trays, and sample cups
- Sturdy sheets of cardstock or construction paper, school glue, pencils, paintbrushes, water
- Camera (optional)

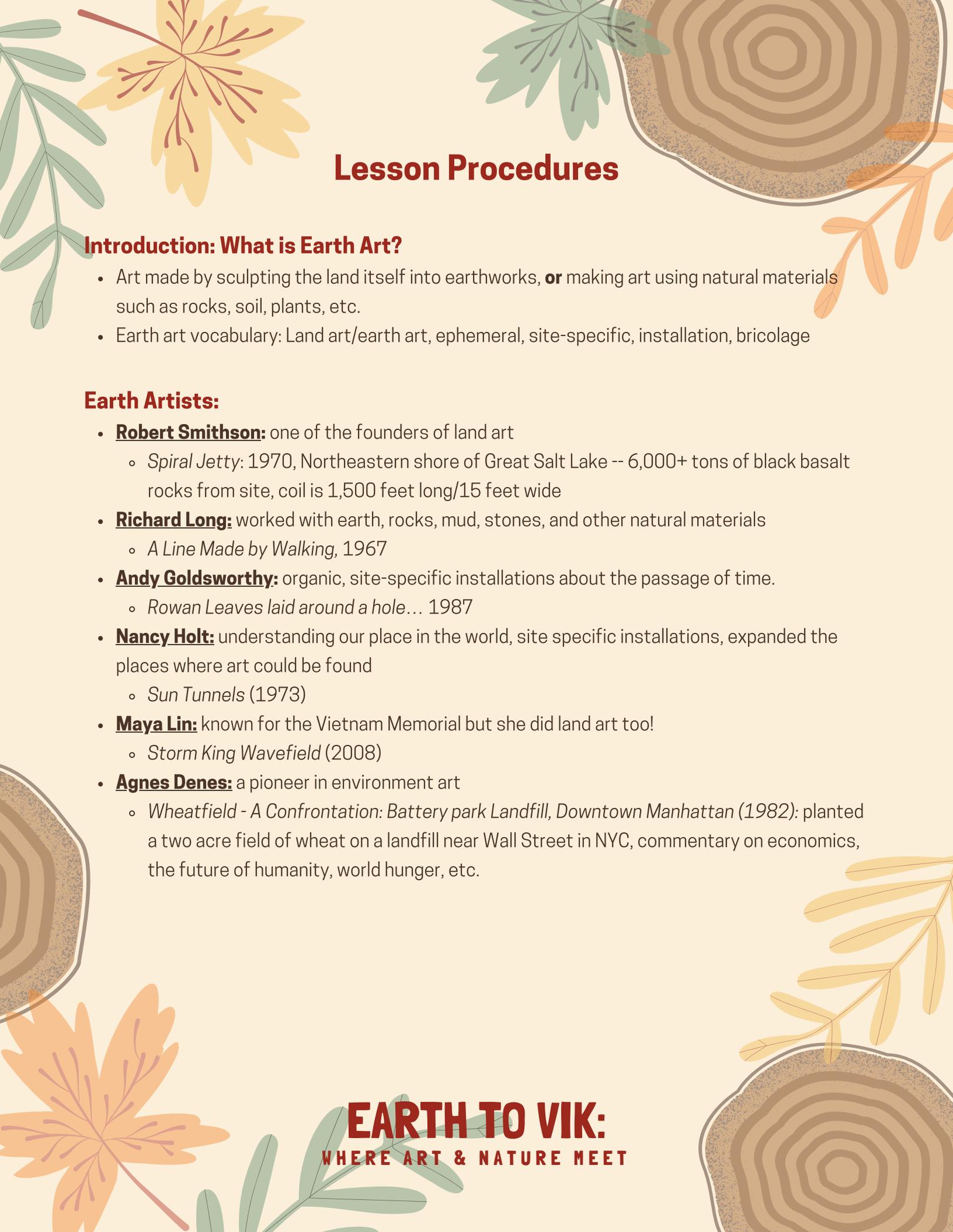
Learning Goals:

Students will be able to:

- Define earth art and identify prominent earth artists
- Experiment with a new art-making technique (earth art)
- Further develop their artistic vocabulary in relation to earth art

Standards:

- Standard 5.V.C.2: Experiment with and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice
- Standard 5.V.C.3: Create artistic statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in art-making
- Standard 5.V.CO.1: Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through art-making
- Standard 5.V.CO.2: Identify how art is used to inform or change beliefs, values, or behaviors of an individual or society
- This lesson may be adapted for all ages and grade levels (see differentiation section)



Lesson Procedures

Introduction: What is Earth Art?

- Art made by sculpting the land itself into earthworks, **or** making art using natural materials such as rocks, soil, plants, etc.
- Earth art vocabulary: Land art/earth art, ephemeral, site-specific, installation, bricolage

Earth Artists:

- **Robert Smithson:** one of the founders of land art
 - *Spiral Jetty:* 1970, Northeastern shore of Great Salt Lake -- 6,000+ tons of black basalt rocks from site, coil is 1,500 feet long/15 feet wide
- **Richard Long:** worked with earth, rocks, mud, stones, and other natural materials
 - *A Line Made by Walking,* 1967
- **Andy Goldsworthy:** organic, site-specific installations about the passage of time.
 - *Rowan Leaves laid around a hole...* 1987
- **Nancy Holt:** understanding our place in the world, site specific installations, expanded the places where art could be found
 - *Sun Tunnels* (1973)
- **Maya Lin:** known for the Vietnam Memorial but she did land art too!
 - *Storm King Wavefield* (2008)
- **Agnes Denes:** a pioneer in environment art
 - *Wheatfield - A Confrontation: Battery park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan (1982):* planted a two acre field of wheat on a landfill near Wall Street in NYC, commentary on economics, the future of humanity, world hunger, etc.

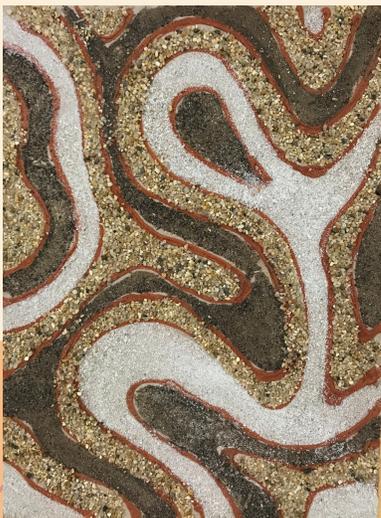
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Earthworks Series by Vik Muniz:

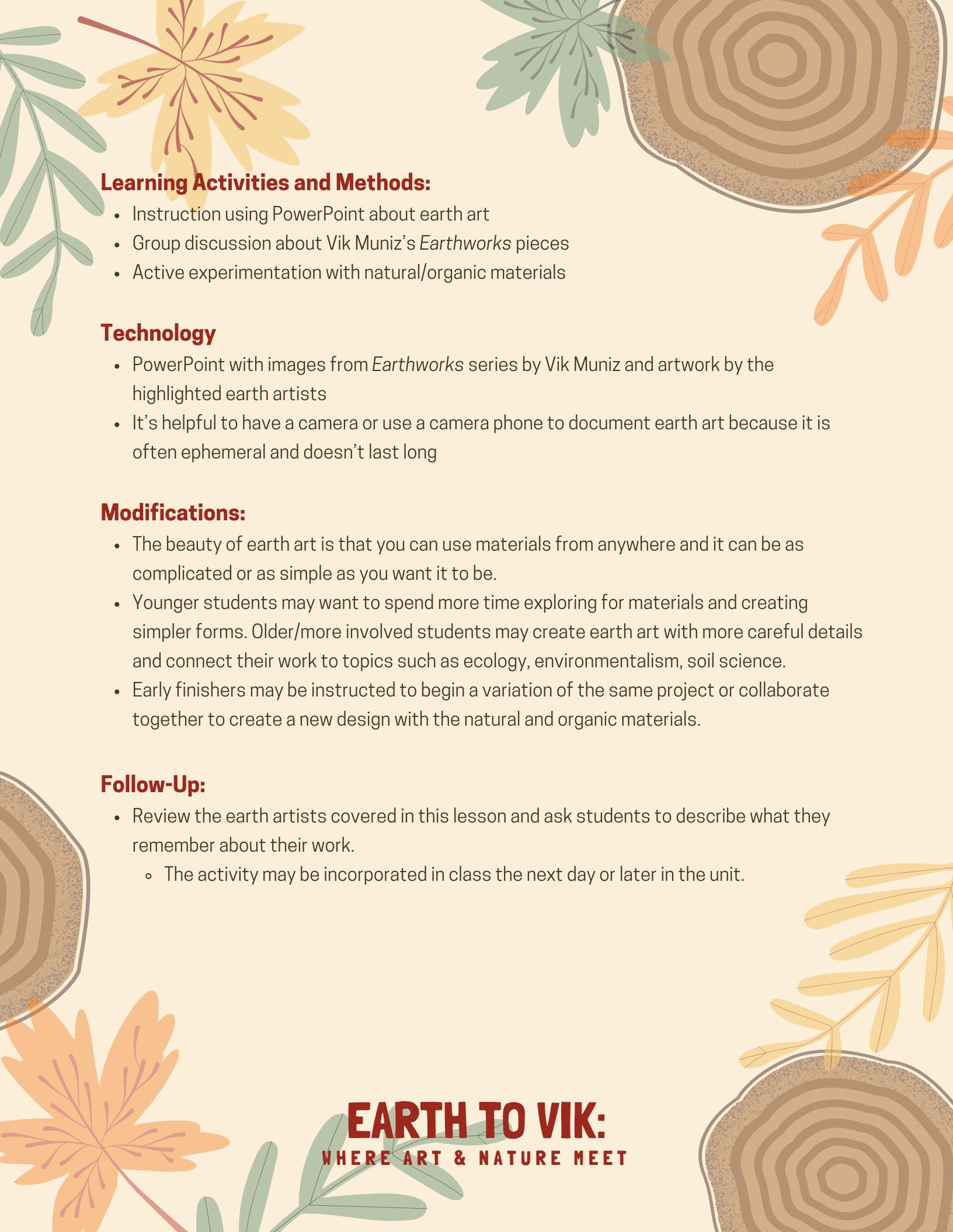
- Muniz was inspired by the work of previous artists like Robert Smithson. His *Earthworks* include drawings up to one half mile long, carved using bulldozers and photographed from a helicopter. He also creates small-scale "fake" earth art in his studio on a table. Vik purposely makes it difficult to spot the difference between the two, illustrating what he calls "the gap between the scales of reality and representation." (Kenneth Hartvigsen, Curator at BYU Museum of Art)
 - How do photographs let you lie and tell the truth?
 - What are some clues that indicate whether the images are "real" or "fake" earthworks?

Art Project:

- Students will use organic materials like soil samples, pebbles, rocks, wood-chips, sand, sawdust, etc. to create a small earth art piece.
- Materials may be stored in containers such as bins, plastic bags, or buckets. During the project, it may be helpful for students to store materials in smaller containers such as Dixie cups, "hot dog" trays, or sample size cups.
- Students may create pictures/scenes using a template related to a topic that they are discussing in class or have the option to create an image of their choice.
- Students will write an artist statement using age-appropriate grammar structure and punctuation describing the process and meaning of their art piece.



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Learning Activities and Methods:

- Instruction using PowerPoint about earth art
- Group discussion about Vik Muniz's *Earthworks* pieces
- Active experimentation with natural/organic materials

Technology

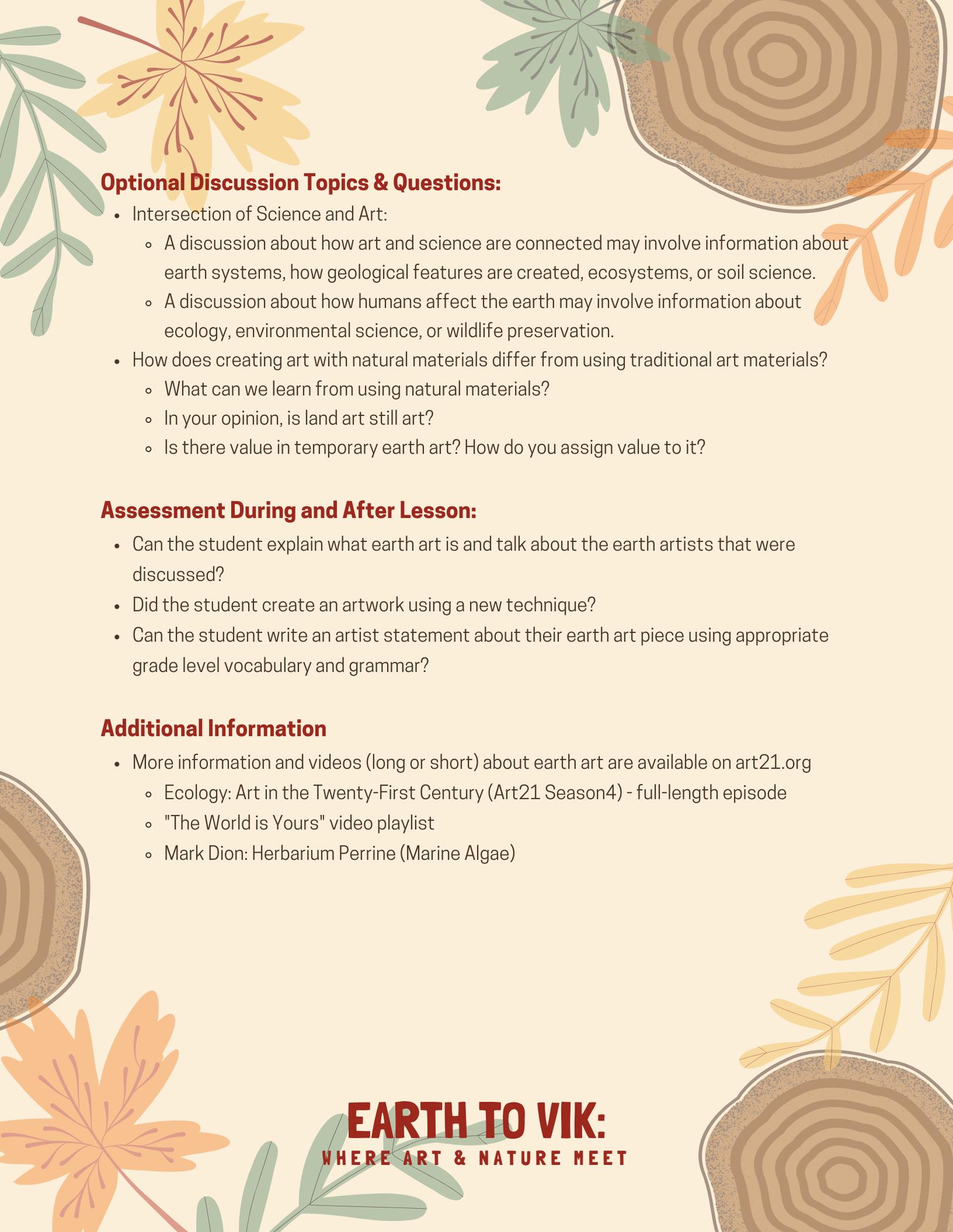
- PowerPoint with images from *Earthworks* series by Vik Muniz and artwork by the highlighted earth artists
- It's helpful to have a camera or use a camera phone to document earth art because it is often ephemeral and doesn't last long

Modifications:

- The beauty of earth art is that you can use materials from anywhere and it can be as complicated or as simple as you want it to be.
- Younger students may want to spend more time exploring for materials and creating simpler forms. Older/more involved students may create earth art with more careful details and connect their work to topics such as ecology, environmentalism, soil science.
- Early finishers may be instructed to begin a variation of the same project or collaborate together to create a new design with the natural and organic materials.

Follow-Up:

- Review the earth artists covered in this lesson and ask students to describe what they remember about their work.
 - The activity may be incorporated in class the next day or later in the unit.



Optional Discussion Topics & Questions:

- Intersection of Science and Art:
 - A discussion about how art and science are connected may involve information about earth systems, how geological features are created, ecosystems, or soil science.
 - A discussion about how humans affect the earth may involve information about ecology, environmental science, or wildlife preservation.
- How does creating art with natural materials differ from using traditional art materials?
 - What can we learn from using natural materials?
 - In your opinion, is land art still art?
 - Is there value in temporary earth art? How do you assign value to it?

Assessment During and After Lesson:

- Can the student explain what earth art is and talk about the earth artists that were discussed?
- Did the student create an artwork using a new technique?
- Can the student write an artist statement about their earth art piece using appropriate grade level vocabulary and grammar?

Additional Information

- More information and videos (long or short) about earth art are available on art21.org
 - Ecology: Art in the Twenty-First Century (Art21 Season4) - full-length episode
 - "The World is Yours" video playlist
 - Mark Dion: Herbarium Perrine (Marine Algae)