

Objectives

- Students will examine the works of Fletcher, Smith, Shah, Mehr, and Ringgold.
- Students will discuss and identify horizontal identities and vertical identities.
- Students will define and apply the concept of community.
- Students will identify attributes that create community, and those actions that destroy it.
- Students will create a personal story quilt block based on a personal experience.
- Students will recognize how the concept of community affects their daily life.
- Students will compare and contrast Ringgold quilts with traditional quilts.
- Students will internalize and appreciate their own life experiences.



Jacqui Biggs Larsen, *Cottage Industry* 1997

Introduction

Begin by asking students to raise their hands if they have ever formed or been part of a “club.” What are the rules for being in a club? Who decides who is included and who is excluded? Are there any other qualifications?

Next write the word “Community” on the board. Do “Communities” and “Clubs” have anything in common? List the commonalities. Ask students to define “Community” in many different ways:

- What does a community encompass?
- Who is part of a community?
- Do communities look differently all over the world?
- What qualifies someone to be a part of a community?

Have them describe the rights and responsibilities inherent in being a contributing member of a community. Remind students that sometimes the rules for generating a community can be extremely diverse.

Extended Learning Activity

Explain the concept of “Horizontal Identities” and “Vertical Identities” as explained by author Andrew Solomon. Our “Vertical Identities” are formed by traits and traditions that our parents and grandparents pass along to us. Our “Horizontal Identities” are formed in part by those individuals around us who have common interests, are experiencing similar things, living in similar ways, or have other traits in common.

Materials

- Images of Portraits (See Images from the Museum)
- Children’s book *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold
- Construction Paper
- A color medium such as crayons, markers, paint, etc.
- Pencils
- Scissors

Images from the Museum

- Calvin Fletcher, *Wash Day in Brigham City*
- Gary E. Smith, *Youthful Games*
- Arch D. Shaw, *Twice Told Tales*
- Judith Ann Mehr, *Grandma was a Storyteller*
- Jacqui Biggs Larsen, *Cottage Industry*

Other Images

- Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach*

Utah Core Standards

Social Studies Standard III

Students will understand the principles of civic responsibility in classroom, community, and country.

Social Studies Standard III Objective 1

Describe the rights and responsibilities inherent in being a contributing member of a community.

Social Studies Standard III Objective 3

Apply Principles of Civic Responsibility

Come back to the concept of “Community.” Explain that communities can be found in horizontal clusters or vertical clusters. Have students gather in groups and make a list of different communities they have observed or experienced—in both horizontal and vertical circumstances. Have students discuss how these communities might affect their lives and identities.

What happens when an individual no longer respects the rules of a community? You may choose to share current events about local events in an effort to engage in meaningful dialogue about how rules and responsibilities help a community to function properly. What happens when a driver does not respect the community rules drives on the wrong side of the road? What happens when an athlete does not respect the rules of his/her community/game and chooses to cheat? There are consequences in both cases.

Looking at Art

Show students the following artworks from the Springville Museum’s permanent collection: Calvin Fletcher’s *Wash Day in Brigham City*, Gary Smith’s *Youthful Games*, Arch D. Shaw’s *Twice Told Tales* And Judith Ann Mehr’s *Grandma was a Storyteller*.

Ask students to identify the communities that are shown in the artworks. Could they be considered horizontal or vertical communities? What types of rules make these communities run smoothly? What types of things do we learn in these communities? What happens when we don’t respect the opinions, backgrounds and cultures of others?



Jacqui Biggs Larsen, *Cottage Industry* 1997

Explain that Faith Ringgold is an artist who has devoted much of her creative energy to the cause of equal understanding among the races. She has a very strong vertical identity of culture. Her cultural heritage is important to her identity and her artwork. But, her horizontal identity is also important to her. Sometimes our neighborhoods and our peer groups can be our strongest community. Explain that Faith Ringgold is an artist who works with fabric and paint. She tells stories of her own life by painting and sewing them into quilts. These quilts are not for beds, or for sleeping—they are fine art pieces for display in museums.

Read the children’s book *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold. Explain that the book was based on one of Ringgold’s true-life experiences. In the book, Cassie Louise Lightfoot is eight years old and has a dream: to be free to go wherever she wants for the rest of her life. One night, up on “tar beach”—the rooftop of her family’s Harlem apartment building--her dream comes true. The stars lift her up, and she flies over the city.

Ask students to identify the different communities represented in *Tar Beach*. (Answers may include neighborhood, ethnic family, personal family, city, people who make the same amount of money, and so forth.)



Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach* 1988

Art Making Activity

1. Explain that students will be producing a work that will be a personal narrative about their own lives, but just like Faith Ringgold, they can add a fun twist. Only part of their narrative needs to be true. Students may also choose to include what they WISH would have happened. Explain that students will be making a paper quilt block that will be part of a larger “community” of quilt blocks. Point out that in this case students will be using similar methods and techniques so that the class “quilt” will be a representation of their classroom community.

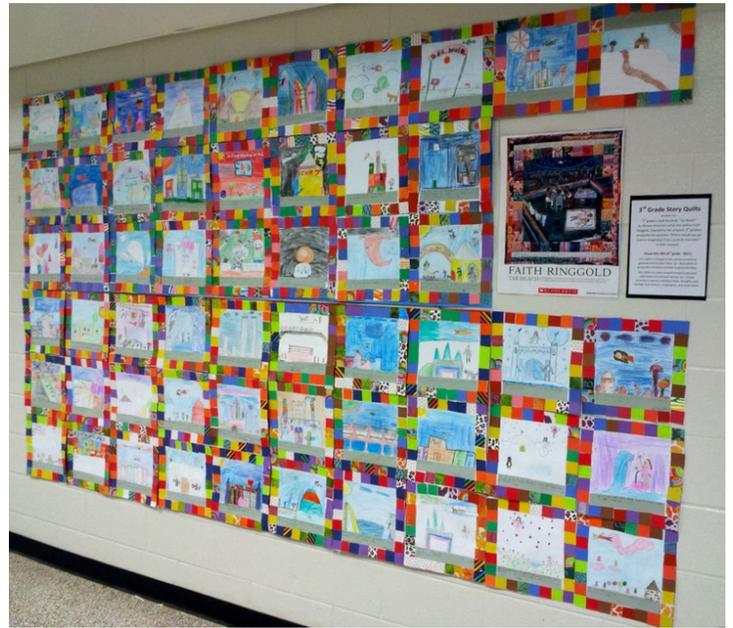
2. Students should brainstorm in order to identify memorable experiences that they would like to translate into a visual representation. Ask them to think about the different communities or groups that are important in their lives. How could they involve these communities in their artwork? Once they have decided on a memory to explore, they should complete another brainstorming session in order to extract key images and shapes that would help them illustrate their message.

3. Show students traditional quilt blocks and emphasize how contour shapes are usually simplified in order to facilitate the sewing. Point out that traditionally with quilts repetition, variation, and pattern are crucial in order to create a balanced piece. Display Ringgold’s Tar Beach story quilt next to a traditional quilt block. Point out the similarities and differences between the two.

4. Now that students understand the concept behind narrative quilts they can begin the creation process. On construction paper, students will draw contour lines of basic shapes in their artwork. For example, maybe the memory that the student chose to explore is “Camping with my Scout Troop.” The student might draw and cut out several contour shapes of people, trees, tents, fire, and so forth. Encourage students to think in layers and also encourage them to use principles of repetition, variation, and pattern and glue them in place.

5. When the glue has dried, students can add details to the contour shapes with paint. Point out that many times Ringgold’s works also include text, so students may choose to add text or a simple narrative to complete their quilt block. Remind students that they can also add a creative twist to their artwork. For example, even though it didn’t happen, the student may choose to add Big Foot coming out of the woods and joining the campfire.

6. When they are complete, pin up all of the quilt blocks to create a large paper quilt in the classroom, and invite students to report on their quilt block to the class.



Assessment

During the discussion component, the teacher should carefully monitor class participation, being careful to involve the whole class in some way. During group work the teacher will choose a “team leader” to write down thoughts and encourage participation.

For the quilt block artwork, the teacher will discuss and evaluate student thought processes and execution of those processes on a scale of 1-5. Five=Magnificent, Four=Great, Three=Good, Two=Standards were not met, One=Needs Improvement. Possible criteria may include: quality work, shows evidence of repetition, variation, pattern, contour shapes, painted details and unique narrative elements.

Extensions

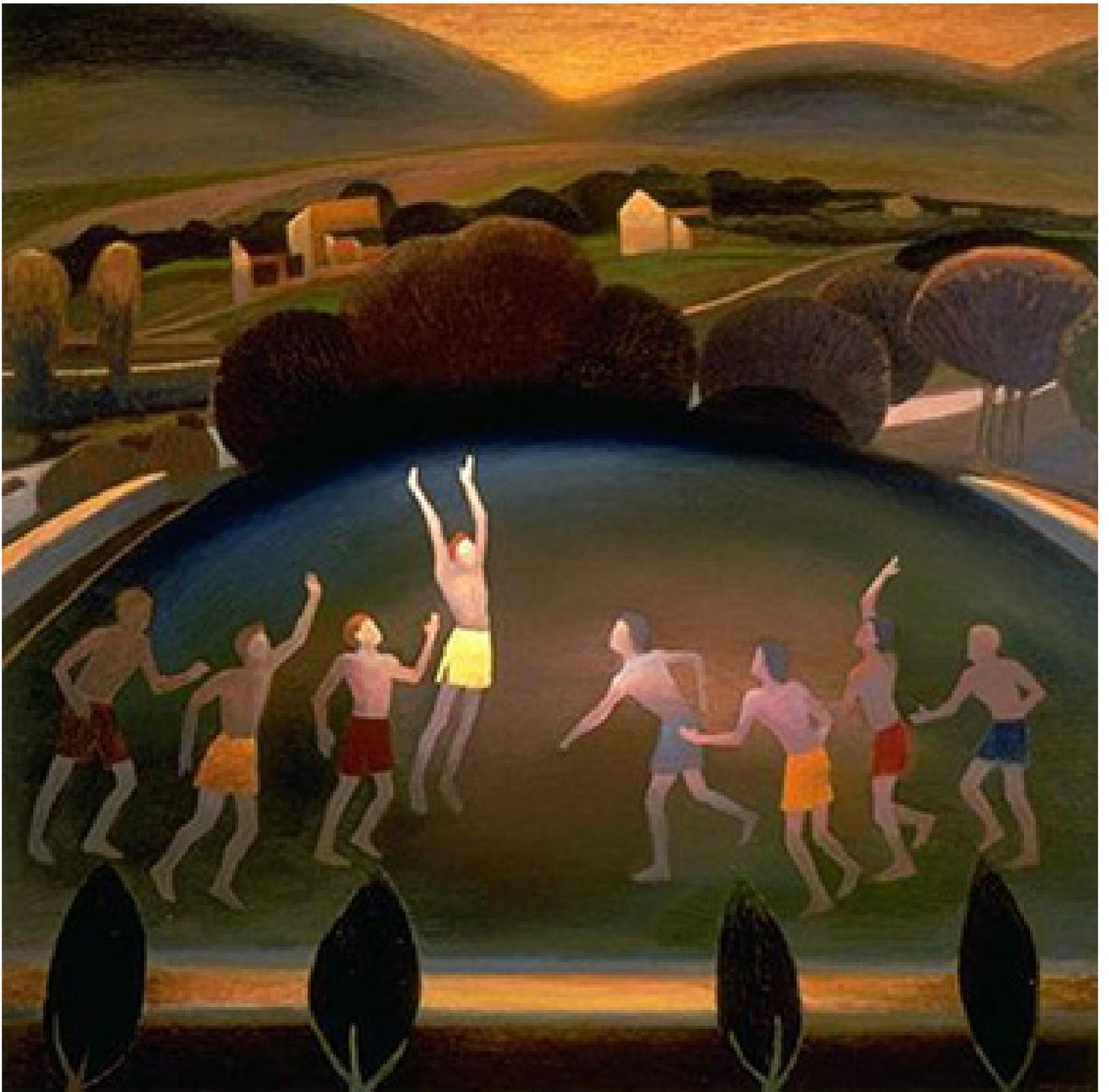
Have members of the community come to class and discuss their various roles in the society. You may choose to have the mayor come in, or the principal of the school, or a member of the school board. Have students identify key players in different communities and correspond with those individuals via email or written letters. Then have students reach out and perform an artwork in the community. They could create a class mural in a grocery store, or perform an act of service for those in need. Encourage students to think of ways that they can be contributing members of their unique communities.

RESOURCES

Faithringgold.com, Far From The Tree, Andrew Solomon



Calvin Fletcher, *Wash Day in Brigham City* 1929



Gary Ernest Smith, *Youthful Games* 1984



Arch D. Shaw, *Twice Told Tales* 1993



Judith Ann Mehr, *Grandma was a Storyteller* 2000



Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach* 1988