

CULTURAL APPRECIATION VS APPROPRIATION*

A GUIDE FOR THE CLASSROOM ART TEACHER.

NYC ART TEACHERS ASSOCIATION/UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

Making Art With Children Is What We Do As Art Educators. Effective art education uses multi-sensory approaches to engage students socially, academically and most importantly creatively. In teaching art we often teach and tie in empathy, critical thinking, multiple perspectives, social studies, language arts, science, math, history and culture. Multi-disciplinary learning through art is most effective when the connections to what is learned are made meaningful and memorable by students partaking in hands-on experiences.

Recently these questions have been raised: Should art teachers have their students make art that originates from and belongs to non dominant cultures? Is making art with children that explore other cultures and their art forms considered appropriation or appreciation?

The idea that educators should not engage their students in art projects that explore other cultures can be troublesome. This logic can easily rob our students of meaningful instruction and personal art making experiences designed to foster understanding, awareness and empathy with others. It allows children whose race and culture may not always be represented in their school books, texts and classrooms to see that art of various world cultures is as meaningful and important as the Eurocentric art and artists that have been traditionally introduced and taught in our schools.

In today's divisive and politically charged environment it is understandable why there is a needed debate about appropriation, but for the same reason that copyright and reproduction laws are not held to the same standard when they are used for educational purposes, the same should apply for thoughtfully teaching world cultures and tolerance. Teaching about a culture and its art forms and making art to honor a culture and to allow children to be creative and express themselves through the techniques and media used by the people of that culture is not the same as personal, commercial or entertainment endeavors that seek to profit from or from activities that serve to stereotype, marginalize or demean people.

Students learn most effectively when they have a chance to listen, see and do. They should be allowed to honor and show an understanding of other cultures as well as investigate and expand on their own ideas by making their own art inspired by others. When introducing art projects that originate from various cultures teachers should strive to give students a mindful introduction to a culture and its people:

The following guidelines and resources are suggested for teachers when they are incorporating world cultures in their curriculums:**

- Respectfully teach the origins, significance, meanings and methods of a culture's art forms with reverence and look for authentic sources that speak first hand on the creator's vision and purpose.
- Seek to differentiate between stereotypes of a culture's art forms versus authentic traditional and historical art forms as well as contemporary art made by members of that culture.
- Be mindful of how many non dominant cultures have historically been marginalized. Strive to introduce students to a culture's struggle along with their spiritual, the practical and personal implications of their symbols, process, techniques and materials and the importance of the culture's art, customs and traditions in their daily lives, traditions and rituals.

A proper lesson as we know an effective art educator would conduct would enlighten and teach students about world cultures as well as stereotypes and bias, it will enlighten students to broaden their perspective and to differentiate between appropriation and appreciation. Most importantly, it will give students a chance to remember more than reading a text, listening to a lecture or looking at reproductions would have by offering them the ability to express themselves and what they learned through a memorable hands-on experience.

***AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT WWW.NYCATA.COM**

****SEE ATTACHED LINKS TO MATERIAL ON THE SUBJECT OF TEACHING MULTICULTURALISM, DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE IN THE ART CLASSROOM.**

RESOURCES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS WHEN TEACHING MULTICULTURALISM, DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE

FROM NAEA POSITION PAPER (<https://www.arteducators.org/advocacy-policy/articles/551-naea-position-statement-on-use-of-imagery-cultural-appropriation-and-socially-just-practices>)

- acknowledge the multiple world views and voices of people and communities.
- respect, value and integrate different perspectives in pedagogical practices.
- advance insightful understandings of the context and meaning of cultural belongings and cultural art practice.
- authentically reflect both historical and contemporary cultures and philosophies of diverse people.
- confront issues around cultural appropriation and move toward greater cultural equity and inclusivity, valuing the ownership and significance of cultural images.
- eliminate the perpetuation of stereotypes, social inequities and assumptions of cultural homogeneity in educational settings.

ARTICLE FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION dealing with ways multiculturalism has been traditionally been taught in the classrooms
https://www.nameorg.org/learn/what_is_the_potential_of_multi.php

FROM THE ART OF EDUCATION – Article with practical approaches to teaching about diverse cultures
<https://theartofeducation.edu/2020/10/23/considering-cultural-appropriation-in-the-art-classroom/>

As art teachers, it is our responsibility and obligation to constantly reflect on what and how we teach. Teaching cultures in the context of art is a foundational piece in art education. When we fear teaching something incorrectly, we unintentionally silence our world's rich cultural history that we borrow from on a daily basis. Helping our students gain awareness of these diverse connections through their own artwork develops a deep appreciation for all cultures and their world. In doing so, we demystify the differences and engage in teaching through an anti-racist lens.

A LESSON ON APPROPRIATION VRS APPRECIATION FROM ORGANIZATION "ANTI-RACIST ART TEACHER"
<https://www.antiracistartteachers.org/anti-racist-art-lessons/middle/appropriation-vs-appreciation>

ANTI RACIST ART TEACHER MAIN SITE: <https://sites.google.com/view/antiracistartteachers/anti-racist-art-resources/cultural-appropriation>

ADAPTED FROM THE KLUGE-RUHE ABORIGINAL ART COLLECTION, THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA:
<https://kluge-ruhe.org/cultural-appropriation-101/>

HOW DO I AVOID CULTURAL APPROPRIATION?

Where is the line between appropriation and appreciation? There is not a simple answer. The line is constantly moving and it depends on the circumstances. Here are some questions to help you identify whether something is appropriation or appreciation:

- **Are you involving Indigenous people or their voices in what you are doing?** If there is a way to involve Indigenous people from the group you are representing. It is always better when people are representing themselves and their own culture. If this is not possible, we suggest you do research on the artist and their artwork, and incorporate direct quotes or videos whenever possible.
- **Are you perpetuating stereotypes or challenging them?** There is a long history of non-Indigenous people representing Indigenous as "backwards," "primitive" "uncivilized" and other factually inaccurate and derogatory ideas. If your project supports these deeply troublesome stereotypes, you might be committing the offense of cultural appropriation.
- **Are you giving credit where credit is due?** Crediting the Indigenous artist or movement whenever possible allows you to be inspired while simultaneously respecting the culture and promoting the artist, language group or movement.
- **Have you done research on the art form to discover what is sacred and what is public?** You should read about the artist, artwork or movement before using it as a starting point for inspiration. If you read anything that addresses the subject matter or patterning as sacred, or secret/sacred, or ceremonial in nature, you should not be using that material as inspiration.
- **Are you copying directly or using something as inspiration?** Representing one's own story, using one's own symbols and iconography, and trying, exploring or learning about the art-making techniques of another culture is a way of appreciating that culture. Copying symbols or copying the entire composition of an artist's work is considered cultural appropriation.

Statement of respect for indigenous people can be included with artwork when displayed:

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which they meet, work and live. We recognize and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and to (fill in the name of the culture you are studying with your students) peoples.