

LESSON PLAN: Exploring Dress, Culture and Identity in American Indian Objects and Dress

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Discovery Questions

- What can contemporary and historical articles of dress and adornment reveal about the makers or wearer's identity?
- What influences did the makers draw on for design inspiration? What do the designs reference?
- How can these objects help us understand the multiplicity of cultural identity?
- What kinds of designs or materials might you incorporate in clothing or adornment that could reflect your identity(s)?
- How would you feel if someone (outside of your identity group) used your identity design references in a clothing line? What might change how you feel about this use?
- How can exploring these questions help students to build research, observation, and analysis skills, as well as develop respect of different people's expression of and ownership of identity?

Materials:

- **Three Image Sets:** Cher Thomas, Teri Greeves, James Fendenheim
- **Images (8):** Clothing by Cher Thomas
- **Images (5):** Akimel/Tohono O'odham baskets and pots, 1900-1920
- **Images (6):** Teri Greeves beaded heeled high tops (3 pairs)
- **Image:** Child's Vest, Lakota, 1880-1900
- **Image:** Crow beaded moccasins, 1870
- **Image:** Eastern Sioux beaded leggings, 1900
- **Images (2):** Jingle Dress
- **Image:** TO Highway Serpent Necklace by James Fendenheim (Tohono O'odham)
- **Image:** Tohono O'odham Mountain Bracelet and Earrings by James Fendenheim
- **Image:** Highway Serpent bracelet by James Fendenheim
- **Image:** Man in the Maze necklace by James Fendenheim
- **Image:** Map showing location of Tohono O'odham Nation and Tucson

- **Image:** Seal of the Tohono O’odham Nation
- **Image:** Entering the Tohono O’odham Nation landscape, photo by Terrol Dew Johnson
- **Images (2):** Roadside crosses
- **Images (3):** Sonoran desert, barrel cactus, saguaro cactus
- **Image:** Rattlesnake drawing
- **.pdf** of all images grouped for projection and class discussion
- **Student Worksheet:** Observation/Questions/Deductions Form
- **Student Worksheet:** Fieldwork Observation Form
- **Student Worksheet:** Identity Worksheet
- **Background Information:** Cher Thomas, fashion designer
- **Background Information:** James Fendenheim, jeweler
- **Background Information:** Teri Greeves, beadwork artist
- **Background Information: Image Info (5 sheets: 1 Thomas, 2 Greeves, 1 Fendenheim, 1 on Tohono O’odham Nation** for use with Fendenheim and Thomas): Image information sheets for teacher, or to be given to older students to read after they have looked at the images
- **Background Information: Image Info:** Flag Design-“Some History / Independence Day” - for teacher, or to be given to older students after looking at images, in conjunction with the Lakota vest with the Greeves images.
- **Background Information:** “Much Need Primer on Cultural Appropriation” by Katie Becker - for teacher, or to be given to older students to read in conjunction with final discussion on cultural appropriation (part 5 of lesson plan)
- **Background Information:** “But Why Can’t I Wear a Hipster Headdress” by Dr. Addriene K - for teacher, or to be given to older students to read in conjunction with final discussion on cultural appropriation (part 5 of lesson plan)

Preparation:

- Download .pdf of all images.
- Either use the .pdf with whole class, *OR* break it into three .pdfs for different groups to use at their own computers, *OR* download images and print sets for use by students in small groups (for bigger classes create two sets of each image group).
- Download and print Image Observation/Questions/Deductions Form, one for each group.
- Download and print Identity Worksheet, one for each student.
- Download and print Fieldwork Observation Form, one for each student.

Download Information Sheets on the images and on artists for your own background (with younger students) or for older students to read in conjunction with looking at their images.

- Download “Much Need Primer on Cultural Appropriation,” and “But Why Can’t I Wear a Hipster Headdress” for either your own background in facilitating the final discussion or to give to older students to read and discuss with you.

Activities:

PART 1

1. Break students into smaller groups and give each group a set of images to look at along with an Image Observation/Question/Deductions Form. They can also work as partners if you choose to project the .pdf instead.
2. Ask each group to pick one student to serve as the scribe to write their answers on the sheet. Ask them to also choose one person to be their spokes person for presenting their observations to the class.
3. Ask students to *make observations* (What do you see?) Have them list the materials, design motifs, and images they see in the clothing, shoes or jewelry. Tell them to look at the related images in their packet (or in the .pdf). Explain that these are clues that help us better understand the symbols on the items of contemporary fashion and help us learn about the maker or wearer.
4. Ask students to use their observation clues to *analyze*:
 - What might these observations tell us about the cultural identity of the maker or wearer of these clothes, shoes or jewelry?
 - What might the object help us learn about *where* and *when* the person lived?
5. Ask students to try list any questions they have about their object of adornment.
6. As students analyze the images in small groups, teacher should walk around share information about the image (or give older students the readings after they have looked at the images) to affirm, encourage, and supportively redirect student analyses.

PART 2

7. Project the .pdf of images on the board and lead a class discussion of each group's findings. Use the Background Information sheets to add details to student ideas and push them to think deeper.
8. As each group explains what they saw in their objects of adornment and explains the relationship they saw with the other related images in their packet, ask the class to consider:
 - What influences did the makers draw on for design inspiration? What do the designs reference?
 - What can contemporary and historical articles of dress and adornment reveal about the makers or wearer's identity?
 - How can these objects help us understand the multiplicity of cultural identity?

PART 3

9. After you have gone through the images, ask students to think about the many groups they belong to, such as a sports team, music group, school club, hobby, religious group, ethnic group, family, or the community where they live or where their family is from. Ask them to consider what kinds of designs or materials they might incorporate in clothing or adornment that could reflect their identity(s).
10. Explain that they will each design a piece of clothing or adornment that will incorporate clues about their identity, but first they are going to do some observations at school or in the community, as well as some thinking about their own identities.
11. Give each student the Fieldwork Observation Form. Ask them to do some observations of the ways people dress as they go through their normal routines—at school, the mall, in their community, or wherever they happen to go—and to take notes on what they see.
12. To help students come up with symbols, colors or materials for their identity-based design for a dress or adornment, have them individually fill out the Identity Worksheet.
13. Assign a due date for both of these to be completed and brought to class.
14. On the due date: Hold a class discussion about what the students discovered from their fieldwork: How are people expressing identity

through their dress and adornment?

PART 4

15. Break students in to pairs and have them share their notes on their Identity Worksheets and discuss how they might express their own identity by what they are wearing or designing for someone else to wear.
16. Ask each student to write a description of a piece of clothing or adornment that reflects his or her identity. They should explain how and why they have designed it this way. They can include sketches of the piece.
17. Have students present their design ideas.

PART 5

18. Hold a class discussion focusing on cultural appropriation. Ask students to consider how they would feel if someone (outside of their identity group) used a design reference that is from your identity in a clothing line. Would they be happy or upset about this? Would they feel proud, offended, ripped off, or? Why would they feel the way they do? What might change how they feel?
19. Either assign the “Much Need Primer on Cultural Appropriation” and “But Why Can’t I Wear a Hipster Headdress” as class readings or use them for the basis of guiding your discussion.