

**CONTEXT** Since piloting our [Culture, Community, and the Classroom](#) (CCC) series in 2018, we have engaged traditional artists from diverse communities and connected them with public school teachers and museum educators in learning residencies. This lesson was developed as part of the statewide Pennsylvania Local Learning Culture, Community, and the Classroom initiative that began with a three-day workshop in July 2021. The workshop offered training for K-12 educators and folk artists to introduce the interview process, explore teaching and learning through a cultural lens, and provide curricular resources to help students identify their personal traditions. We funded a number of folk artists for two classroom visits in the fall. The project culminated with a showcase at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Harrisburg in October 2021.

This lesson plan was shared with us by a teacher who participated in the CCC program. It can be adapted for use with a local artist in another region. Or, [Contact Us](#) to learn how to invite the named artist in this lesson to your learning space.

**WHAT WE LOVE** By asking students to dig deeper than they usually might to consider their personal traditions and identities and sharing their responses with the artist, this teacher created a pathway to a deep connection between students and the artist. During their planning conversations, the teacher and the artist found similarities in their passions, drama and dance, and developed a close rapport. The teacher introduced the artist by asking students to read her Artist Statement and closely observe her Artist Portrait, which the artist developed during the summer workshop. This allowed them to inventory their assumptions and prepare questions.

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**LESSON** Introduction to Sattriya, A Monastic Traditional Dance from Northeastern India

**AUTHOR AND TEACHER** Andrea Roney

**ARTIST COLLABORATOR** Madhusmita Bora

**SUBJECT AND GRADE LEVEL** North Penn High School Drama Major Class, Lansdale, PA.  
Note: The pre-visit scaffolding would work well for any subject area or grade level.

**LENGTH** Multiple 45-minute classes over two months (pre-visit activities, artist demonstration, artist interview, reflection)

*Because of Covid restrictions, classroom visits were virtual.*

**HANDOUTS** Cultural Iceberg, Cultural Suitcase, Artist Statement, Artist Portrait

**MATERIALS/RESOURCES** Chromebooks/Shared Google Docs, Worksheets, Madhu’s Artist Statement, Google Browser for Student Research

**TEACHER AND ARTIST REFLECTION** <https://youtu.be/Z6okjMavdgk>



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This CCC project was supported in part by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Hershey Corporation, The National Endowment for the Arts, and Individual Donors to Local Learning.

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## ACTIVITIES

**Pre-Work for Artist Visit #1: Cultural Suitcase** (September 10-15. Four 45-minute classes)  
CULTURE? FOLK ART? WHAT ARE THEY? HOW DO THEY INFLUENCE MY ARTISTIC EXPRESSION?

- These are the beginning questions for our next couple of weeks as we explore ourselves/yourselves and our/your art. Remember, questions are the beginning of creativity, of art, of you!
- There are probably many things that you don't even think of as your culture that find expression in your art.
- You may be doing folk art -- and don't even know it!
- Let's go digging -- and exploring -- and imagining!

Task 1 DUE Thursday, September 9 Who were the original inhabitants of the Lansdale area?

- Discuss and go Googling with the partner I give you!
- Create a Google Doc of your findings that you can post below.

Task 2 CHECK-IN Friday, September 10 For homework, create a Cultural Suitcase that goes beneath the surface of your cultural identity. Think outside the "box"! Here's something to help you think deeply.

### Cultural Iceberg

You may have seen this before in one of my classes and said, "How nice" and then ignored it and put the usual stuff in your suitcase: flag of nationalities, holidays you celebrate, photos of your family. All quite nice; however, all on the surface! Really look at the various characteristics of culture and dive into them.

Cultural Suitcase Do NOT use this handout. It is a reference. Present September 15.

- CREATE your own suitcase--real or digital--that reflects your culture. Think BIG!
- PACK your suitcase with many items or pictures of items that you explore with your family. Which means:
  - Start texting (or other modes of communication--phone calls being wonderful) your family members, especially those who carry your history.
  - Has anyone done some genealogy about any "side" of your family? What did they find out? Any surprises?
  - What stories do you collect and tell around the dinner table? What myths/legends do you hold and treasure? How do they inform decisions or values or faith your family holds?
  - What things do you have that are important to your family and why? Photos? A vase? A medal? Something that traveled with your family from here to there that preserved your history or sense of identity?
  - What crafts or art has your family done? Do you have any of the items? What do they represent? What stories do they hold? Who practices them? How does the rest of the family look at them?
- See what I'm doing? Think through some things that might seem commonplace or routine or that you don't even notice anymore and explore your culture. It's there. It's rich. It makes you, you. It sustains and nurtures and grows who you are. Have fun finding you!!!!

**Pre-Work to Artist Visit #1: Introduction to Artist Statement and Portrait** (September 17 and 20. Two 45-minute sessions)

Your task for today is to complete the following:

- READ the attached Artist Statement that Madhu has shared with us. [Madhusmita Bora's Artist Statement](#)
- CONNECT her artistic philosophy and work with at least three experiences in your own life or artistic work.
- OBSERVE Madhu's Artist Portrait and note three elements that impress you. (You may share more than three!)
- SHARE those experiences and/or connections in the text box below. (You can share more than three!)
- WHAT QUESTIONS do you have about what Madhu has shared in her statement?
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**EXAMPLES OF STUDENT QUESTIONS FROM MS. RONEY'S CLASS**

1. Who is/are your mentor(s)? Introduce us please!
2. Did you expect to do this with your life when you were a little girl?
3. Did you ever study any other styles of dance?
4. Where was your schooling? Where did you learn this dance?
5. Where does the name *sattriya* come from? What is the meaning?
6. What is the significance of the clothing you are wearing to perform the dance?
7. Did you start your own dance company? Where do you teach? Who do you teach?
8. When did you start teaching?
9. Can you perform some of the dance?
10. Is it a group or individual dance?
11. How simple or complicated are the technical aspects of performing the dance? Lights? Sound? Sets?
12. How long does it take to create a dance piece?
13. How many people have you taught or influenced with the dance?
14. What is the significance of what is on your fingertips and how is it used in the dance?
15. How did your growing up influence the stories of the dance?
16. What stories do you tell?
17. What is the range of age of dancers in the dance? that you teach?
18. How big is the demographic of your dance style? of your culture?
19. What are your favorite "moves" in your dance?
20. Your name is lovely? What is the meaning of it?

**Pre-Work to Visit #1: Ritual, Dance, Theatre: The Sacred, the Spiritual, and the Secular Origins Exploration** (September 21-28. Six 45-minute sessions)

- COPY this topic into your Google Browser: cultural dance and theatre rituals with spiritual or religious origins
- PICK ONE source or topic from the list. You cannot choose a topic someone else has selected.
- DIVE into what you have chosen.
- DISCOVER what it is about.
- CREATE a slideshow of words and images that define, introduce, and explore what you have chosen and the dramaturgy you do.
- SHARE your discoveries and work with the class as soon as we can!
- Slideshows posted here: [Create student folder or dropbox]

**NEXT STEP**

- CREATE a shared Google Doc and include me (teacher email).
- SHARE what you found in the dramaturgy that you completed.
- FIND commonalities and patterns (or compare and contrast) your information.
- POST on the Google Doc putting like things together in groups and individual information listed by itself
- ANSWER the questions below and POST to the Text Box:
  - WHAT are the patterns you see?
  - HOW are patterns repeated?
  - WHO was involved in the activity or ritual?
  - WHERE and WHEN did these patterns appear?
  - HOW do they relate to what you know about Madhu's art so far?
- COPY the Questions and your answers.
- POST to the text box below.

**Visit #1: Madhu's Presentation** (September 30. One 45-minute session)

The first part was Madhu presenting her art. This part has some interaction with the students.

**Pre-Work Visit #2: Preparation for Interview** (September 30-October 5. Five 45-minute sessions.

OUR TURN! It's up to you to plan our Google Meet Interview with Madhu!!!

- HOW?
- WHAT?
- WHY?
- WHEN? October 8, 2021
- WHERE: F41

Students brainstormed their responses to Madhu and collected them on a shared Google Doc

- NOTES from September 30, 2021 [CLICK HERE](#)

Using the Notes from above, students created the following Storyboard/Spreadsheet for the Interview. They were charged with:

- Combining like items (the colors you see on the Notes above).
- Deciding who asks questions.
- Give each question a time framework.
- Organize the questions in a logical order.
- Create a shared spreadsheet
- Proofread their work.

Ms. Roney review: I changed a few words and re-ordered a few questions. This was shared with Madhu October 5 so she could prepare answers or have any pictures, items, etc. to go with her responses given our 45-minute schedule.

- Storyboard/Spreadsheet created by the students for Interview:

<b>Example of Storyboard for Interview with Madhu Bora by North Penn High School Drama Major Class</b>		
<b>Time</b> in minutes	<b>Question</b>	<b>Student Name</b>
5	<b>Introduction and Invocation</b>	Mrs. Roney & Madu Bora
3	What made you start each session with meditation and is it related back to your dance form?	Student 1
4	What other instruments are traditionally used tp accompany this dance?	Student 2
4	What challenges did you face trying to become a performing artist? How did you know that this was the career path that you wanted to follow?	Students 3 & 4
3	Being one of the few women to start practicing this art, what kind of pressure came with that, and how did it change your approach to learning?	Student 5

3	Who is your biggest role model and inspiration?	Student 6
4	It was very inspiring to see you teaching your dance to us and you were very open about doing so. Why do you think sharing your art to the world is important for you? For the world?	Student 7
3	Do you take any inspiration in your method for your dance style from any others? from artists practicing other forms of art?	Student 8
3	Your storytelling through dance is so immersive and intricate, with each movement reflecting a certain part of a story. What is your favorite story to tell through dance	Student 9
5	Are there any hand gestures or movements that you would be able to teach us?	Student 10
3	<b>Conclusion &amp; Thank You</b>	Mrs. Roney & Madhu Bora
40	<b>Total Interview</b>	
	We have a 5 minute window to get started and if something goes a bit longer.	

**Visit #2: Recording Interview** (October 8. One 45-minute session)

## **Post-Visit Reflection and Critique** (October 11, 12, 14, 15. Four 45-minute lessons)

October 11: Sharing previous slideshows with Ms. Roney.

October 12-15: REFLECTION OR as we always say: How'd we do?! What did we learn?! How does it inform my art?

### **BEGIN WITH YOUR THOUGHTS**

- COPY the following questions into the Text Box.
- RESPOND with full sentences and/or paragraphs.
- POST to the assignment by October 13 at 11:59 PM
- DIG Deep! Don't just go for quick answers to get through the assignment. Continue with the really good thinking and creating you have all been doing.
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### **QUESTIONS and PROMPTS**

- Compare and contrast the questions/prompts below to your experiences with:
  - Your Cultural Suitcases
  - Ritual, Dance, Theatre--the Sacred, Spiritual, and Secular Origins
  - The interview
- Reflect on what you have experienced. Possible trigger questions. Develop with students.
  - How did you look at your art and yourself as an artist before this experience?
  - How do you look at your art and yourself as an artist now that you have had this experience?
  - Has your artistic eye or filter or lens changed?
  - What do you bring to new experiences now?
  - What might or will be your first questions to yourself or to collaborators as you being a new artistic journey or endeavor?
  - What do relaxation, thoughtfulness, and mindfulness have to do with your art and you as an artist?

### **CONTINUE with OUR COLLABORATIVE or COLLECTIVE THOUGHTS**

- We will end this interaction with Madhu and the Culture, Community and the Classroom unit by using your thoughts to focus and drive our class discussion. I will be recording your discussion on Google Meet.
- If we can't finish our work October 14 since we are performing in RIF that day, we will finish Friday, October 15.

## **STANDARD(S) ADDRESSED**

### **National Core Arts Core Standards - Theatre**

#### Creating

- HS Accomplished. Evidence/Conceptualization. TH:Cr1.1.1. a. Apply basic research to construct ideas about the visual composition of a drama/theatre work.
- HS Accomplished. Evidence/Conceptualization. TH:Cr2.1.1. a. Refine a dramatic concept to demonstrate a critical understanding of historical and cultural influences of original ideas applied to a drama/theatre work.

#### Responding

- High School Accomplished. Reflect. TH: Re7.1.II. a. Demonstrate an understanding of multiple interpretations of artistic criteria and how each might be used to influence future artistic choices of a drama/theatre work.
- High School Advanced. Reflect. TH: Re7.1.III. a. Use historical and cultural context to structure and justify personal responses to a drama/theatre work.
- High School Accomplished. Interpret. TH: Re9.1.II. b. Apply concepts from a drama/theatre work for personal realization about cultural perspectives and understanding.
- High School Advanced. Interpret. TH: Re9.1.III. b. Use new understandings of cultures and contexts to shape personal responses to drama/theatre work
- High School Accomplished. Interpret. TH: Re9.1.II. c. Debate and distinguish multiple aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs through participation in and observation of drama/theatre work.
- High School Advanced. Interpret. TH: Re9.1.III. c. Support and explain aesthetics, preferences, and beliefs to create a context for critical research that informs artistic decisions in a drama/theatre work
- High School Accomplished. Evaluate. TH: Re9.1.II. a. Analyze and assess a drama/theatre work by connecting it to art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines using supporting evidence and criteria.
- High School Advanced. Evaluate. TH: Re9.1.II. a. Research and synthesize cultural and historical information related to a drama/theatre work to support or evaluate artistic choices.