

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. CCC uses a three-phase series model, starting with a 12-hour professional development workshop that includes artists, culture bearers, and regional educators learning together. The second phase pairs artists and teachers working together in a classroom. The final phase brings everyone who participated together in a program showcase to reflect on what was learned and to strengthen peer networks and connections. 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 “Have you ever flown a kite?” Sometimes, the simplest questions can be the entry into profound learning. In this residency, students not only learned about the craftsmanship required to create a kite that is visually pleasing and capable of flying, but they also learned about the kite’s cultural significance in Afghanistan. By inviting artist Ahmad Shah Wali into the classroom, students learned firsthand how art and design contribute to quality of life within a culture, including their own.

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND THE CLASSROOM GUEST ARTIST LESSON PLAN

LESSON TITLE: Afghan Kites

AUTHOR AND TEACHER: Ariana Schrader-Rank, Elementary Art Teacher at Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Elementary School in Schenectady, NY

ARTIST COLLABORATOR: Ahmad Shah Wali

ART FORM: Kite making

LENGTH: Two class periods of 60 minutes

NEW YORK STANDARD(S) ADDRESSED:

4 VA:Pr5.1., VA:Re9.1.5, VA:Cn11.1.5, VA:Cr1.1.4, VA:Cr2.2.5
Standard 4 Element 4b of the NYS K-8 Social Studies Framework

MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

2-mm bamboo sticks (cut to desired length)
Heavyweight tissue paper (35 gsm)
Nylon thread
Visual Journal
Scissors
Ruler

Pencil and eraser
Gluesticks
Artist Statement
Artist Portrait

USING THIS LESSON IN YOUR LEARNING SPACE *Local Learning is committed to fair use and open access of educational materials. We, as Publisher, also look to protect the work that we publish from unauthorized, commercial use. This lesson is shared via a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, CC-BY-NC-SA. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>. This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as they credit the Author(s) (the teacher and/or artist) and the Publisher (Local Learning), and license their new creations under the identical terms.*

This CCC project was supported in part by the New York State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Individual Donors to Local Learning.

THE TEACHING POINT:

During this lesson, students will learn new vocabulary, including *airborne* and *kite*. Students will review vocabulary such as *geometric shape*, *craftsmanship*, and *culture*. Students will learn the concept and then employ the skill of how to construct and fly a kite. Students will build on their knowledge of local cultures and how works of art and design contribute to quality of life within a culture.

PURPOSE/CONNECTION:

Students will explore how works of art and design contribute to the quality of life within a culture. Our guest artist Ahmad Shah Wali will explain how kite making and kite flying are common practice for adults and children in Afghanistan. Students will demonstrate high-quality craftsmanship through care for and use of fragile materials (bamboo sticks and tissue paper) and tools.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit One (first hour)

Engagement:

Begin by asking students “Have you ever flown a kite?” and allow them to share their own experiences with kites.

Explain that kite making is over 2,000 years old and began in China when a military general created a “square shaped assemblage of bamboo and cloth into the air above enemy territory. [The general] was trying to measure how much ground his men would need to tunnel through in order to breach their adversaries’ defense line...Through trade, kites were brought from China to Korea, Japan, Myanmar and later India, where they can be seen in Mughal miniature paintings from the turn of the 17th century” (Brara, 2021).

Introduce the guest artist, Ahmad Shah Wali, using his **Artist Portrait** and **Artist Statement** (this can also be done ahead of the visit to build anticipation and curiosity among students).

MODEL/DEMONSTRATION:

Ahmad Shah Wali will demonstrate how to measure tissue and cut it to desired length. Then he will show how to draw geometric shapes on the tissue using a pencil and cut the shapes out. Next he will demonstrate how to apply glue to the bamboo sticks and then press diagonally to the tissue paper. We will wait for the tissue to adhere to the bamboo for about three minutes. While the tissue is drying, he will demonstrate how to create the bowed cross bar for the kite. Then he will demonstrate how to wrap tissue over the ends of the bowed bamboo cross bar and glue the edges down. Afterward, he will show how to poke small holes into the body of the kite for the thread to be inserted into and how to tie off thread. Finally, the artist will tie on a thread for flying.

Share/Closure:

Students will review their visual journals on facts that they learned during class. In small groups students will verbally share their reflections of the art of kite making and pose possible questions they want to ask the artist.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit Two (second hour)

Engagement:

The artist will review what students have learned about kite making. The artist will speak about the sport of kite fighting and how both children and adults in Afghanistan often participate in the sport. “As kite remains on top, our goals in life must be our topmost priority. We need to hold our heads towards the kite while flying, similarly we must be focused towards our goals” (Ahmad Shah Wali).

Interview:

Students will brainstorm questions to ask the artist based on Ahmad Shah Wali’s Artist Statement and previous kite making demonstration. Students will work in small groups to produce questions they will ask him during his second visit. Students will document their questions and answers from Ahmad Shah Wali in their visual journals.

Independent Exploration:

Students practice and apply their new learning of kite construction independently.

Share/Closure:

Students fly their kites outside with guidance from Ahmad Shah Wali.

Assessment:

Students write thank-you notes to the artist, which will demonstrate what teaching points have meant most to them.

Student manipulation of thread around bamboo sticks

Student ability to identify, draw, and cut at least three organic/geometric shapes

Students will design and construct a handmade kite

Students will learn how a kite flies.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/29/t-magazine/kites-art-history.html>.



Local Learning is committed to fair use and open access of educational materials. We as Publisher also look to protect the work that we publish from unauthorized, commercial use. JFE is freely available to individuals and institutions and is housed at

<https://JFEpublications.org>. Authors grant to the Journal of Folklore and Education the right to license all work with the exception of only alternatively copyrighted media under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0>. This license lets others remix, tweak, and build upon your work noncommercially, as long as they credit you the Author and us the Publisher, and license their new creations under the identical terms.