



- THE NATIONAL NETWORK FOR FOLK ARTS IN EDUCATION

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 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 An art teacher pondered how a classical Indian dancer would fit into her high school sculpture curriculum. As she and the artist talked, the idea of gestures, mudras, as sculptural expressions took hold. Folk arts are inherently interdisciplinary, making traditional art forms, ways of teaching and learning, and artists' passions easy to integrate into most content areas and engaging for all ages. No matter the genre, learners can answer, Where is something like this in my life? See how a high school drama teacher collaborated with another classical Indian dancer to create a dramatic theater lesson [here](#).

TITLE Hand Mudra Ceramic Sculpture Interpreting Classical Indian Dance

AUTHOR and TEACHER Susan Pabody, 10th-12th Grade sculpture teacher, Elmira High School

ARTIST COLLABORATOR Apoorva Sonavani (Kathak dance teacher)

SUBJECT AND GRADE LEVEL High School Sculpture

LENGTH Two 80-minute class periods for the artist residency. Five 80-minute class periods to model the clay hand mudras.

HANDOUTS Artist Statement, Artist Portrait, Questions for Traditional Artists

MATERIALS/RESOURCES Videos of Kathak dance, hand mudra photographs, sculpture clay, various clay tools, clear glaze. Artist interview question handout, history of Indian classical dance worksheet, Artist Statement and Artist Portrait.

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VOCABULARY

Mudra, Kathak, gesture, modeling, plastic, leather hard, bisque, glaze

RESOURCES FOR BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Students viewed videos on the Kathak form of classical Indian dance. They also read Apoorva Sonavani's Artist Statement and viewed her Artist Portrait prior to her first visit. They reviewed the Questions for Traditional Artists handout to consider interview questions to ask Apoorva.

PURPOSE/CONNECTION

Teaching classical Indian dance history and hand mudra meanings provides students with an authentic art experience under the guidance of a local classical Indian dance artist, Apoorva Sonavani. Students experienced an ancient dance form and learned the importance and meaning of hand mudras, or gestures.

Students worked with Apoorva to develop a series of hand mudra sculptures that tell a story. Apoorva demonstrated the mudras during her classroom visit. Each student modeled one hand mudra in clay resulting in a permanent three-dimensional interpretation of either an individual meaning or a part of a group meaning.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit 1

Engagement: Students viewed several videos of the Kathak form of classical Indian dance. They read Apoorva's Artist Statement, viewed her Artist Portrait, and chose interview questions from the handout to ask her.

Model/Demonstration: Apoorva provided photographs of hand mudras common in the Kathak form of classical Indian dance. She demonstrated the use of various hand mudras in dance and helped students interpret the meanings.

Interview: Students asked Apoorva questions regarding their hand mudra interpretations. Apoorva showed a video of her performing a dance.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit 2

Engagement: Students shared their ceramic hand sculptures and process with Apoorva.

Interview: Students asked Apoorva about her involvement in the Kathak form of classical Indian dance. Questions were provided for students, but they also asked many other questions as ideas for the sculptures were developed.

Model/Demonstration: Students were guided by the teacher in solid modeling techniques to create their hand mudra sculptures. Apoorva's hand mudra photographs and student hand models were used for reference.

Share/Closure: Students wrote a reflection about their experience working with the artist. These were sent to Apoorva.

NEW YORK STANDARDS ADDRESSED

HS Proficient

VA: Cr3.1.HSI

- a. Apply relevant criteria and the feedback of others to revise and refine works of art and design in progress.

HS Proficient

VA: Cr1.HSI

- a. Generate and develop work in a self-directed manner.

HS Proficient

VA: Cr1.2.HSI

- a. Consider a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

HS Proficient

VA: Pr5.1.HSI

- a. Analyze and evaluate how decisions made in the preparation and presentation of artwork affect a viewer's perception of meaning.

HS Proficient

VA: CN11.1.HSI

Investigate ways that art and design from one culture or time period can influence artists and designers from a different culture or time period.





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