

Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers (installation view), The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, June 25, 2023 to January 7, 2024. Photo by Jason Mandella.

LESSON PLAN: ELEMENTARY (GRADES 3–5)

RAVEN HALFMOON: FLAGS OF OUR MOTHERS

OKLAHOMA CONTEMPORARY

SHAPE THE STORY: DISCOVERING WHO WE ARE THROUGH STORIES

Time: 1 class period
Subjects: Visual Art, English Language Arts, Social Studies
Video Resource: *Shape the Story featuring Raven Halfmoon*
Produced by: Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Raven Halfmoon is an artist and sculptor from Norman, Oklahoma. She is a citizen of the Caddo Nation and also Choctaw, Delaware and Otoe Missouria. She creates monumental ceramic sculptures that connect to her family, identity, experiences and community.

Learn more: ravenhalfmoon.com
Explore the exhibition: *Raven Halfmoon: Flags of Our Mothers* | Oklahoma Contemporary

A NOTE FOR EDUCATORS

Native peoples and nations are diverse, contemporary communities with distinct histories, cultures and governments. Raven Halfmoon speaks from her own experiences and identities. Center what the artist shares about herself rather than asking students to make generalizations about Native peoples or cultures.

Encourage students to keep their interpretations grounded in evidence. Help students distinguish between **what they notice, what Halfmoon tells us and what they think or wonder.** When discussing the artist's identity or cultural connections, return to her words, artwork and supporting resources.

The goal is not to make artwork that looks like Halfmoon's work. Instead, students investigate how artists draw from their experiences, relationships and communities and make choices that communicate ideas. Encourage students to begin with what matters in their own lives rather than imitate Halfmoon's imagery, symbols or culturally specific traditions.

OKLAHOMA ACADEMIC STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

Visual Art | Grades 3–5

- **VA.CHP.1 | Cultural and Historical Perspectives:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.
- **VA.CP.3 | Creative Process:** Apply concepts, vocabulary, techniques and skills to make creative choices and practice individual expression.
- **VA.P.1 | Production:** Utilize a variety of ideas and subject matter in the creation of original works of visual art.

English Language Arts | Grades 3–5

- **Standard 1 | Listening and Speaking:** Students listen and speak effectively, contributing ideas and responding to others through collaborative discussion.
- **Standard 7 | Multimodal Literacies:** Students comprehend and communicate ideas through visual, written, spoken, spatial and/or gestural content.
- **Standard 3 | Critical Reading and Writing:** Students apply critical thinking to interpret texts and communicate ideas for different purposes and audiences. *Best used when students engage with the artist's written or spoken words as part of the lesson.*

Social Studies | Grades 3–5

- **Social Studies Practices | Inquiry + Perspective:** Students ask questions, consider how human experiences shape point of view, examine information and communicate their understanding through discussion and authentic tasks.
- **Grade 3 Oklahoma Studies | 3.C.1:** Students examine American Indian Tribal governments, cultures, traditions and symbols, including how Tribal flags and seals reflect the unique culture and history of individual Tribes.
- **Grade 3 Oklahoma History | 3.C.3:** Students examine Oklahoma's American Indian history while recognizing the distinct traditions and ways of life of the 39 American Indian Nations in Oklahoma today.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Identify ways Raven Halfmoon uses art to communicate ideas about herself, her experiences and her community.
- Observe how choices such as material, shape, scale and surface contribute to meaning.
- Discuss how experiences, families, places and communities can shape the stories people choose to tell.
- Communicate something meaningful from their own life through intentional visual, written or combined choices.

MATERIALS

- Access to *Shape the Story*
- Images of Raven Halfmoon's artwork
- Paper
- Pencils, markers or crayons
- Optional: clay or other modeling material

LESSON STEPS

1. Engage | 10 minutes

Begin with a conversation:

- What are some ways people can tell a story without using words?
- What people, places, experiences or communities are important to you?
- How could an artist show that something is important?
- What choices can an artist make to help communicate an idea?

Introduce Raven Halfmoon as an artist and sculptor from Norman, Oklahoma. Halfmoon is a citizen of the Caddo Nation and also Choctaw, Delaware and Otoe Missouria.

Show students one or two examples of her sculptures before offering additional interpretation. Invite students to look closely.

Ask:

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder?
- What choices do you notice the artist making?
- What do those choices make you think about?

Help students distinguish between something they can **observe** in the artwork and something they are **inferring or wondering** about.

2. Watch + Discuss | 10–15 minutes

Play *Shape the Story.*

Ask students to listen for things Halfmoon shares about herself, her artwork and why she makes it.

After viewing, discuss:

- What did Halfmoon tell us about herself?
- What people, places, experiences or relationships does she connect to her work?
- What did she tell us about why she makes art?
- What do you notice about the size, shapes, surfaces or materials in her sculptures?
- How do those artistic choices affect what you notice or feel?
- What does Halfmoon's story make you think about in your own life?

Keep interpretation grounded in Halfmoon's words and what students can observe in the artwork. When students make an inference, encourage language such as **"I think…", "I wonder…" or "I noticed ___, which makes me think…"**

3. Create + Reflect | 20–25 minutes

Introduce the central question:

What is part of the story of you?

Invite students to identify a person, place, memory, experience, tradition or community that is meaningful to them.

Students choose the format that best communicates their idea:

Visual: Create an original artwork that communicates something meaningful from your life. Make choices about color, shape, line, imagery, material or size based on what you want others to notice or understand.

Written: Write a few sentences, a poem or a short story about a person, place, experience or memory that matters to you. Think about which details will help communicate why it is meaningful.

Visual + Written: Combine artwork and writing. Consider what the image communicates and what the words can add.

Remind students that they are telling **their own story.** The goal is to learn from how Halfmoon makes intentional choices, not to copy her sculptures, symbols or imagery.

4. Share + Connect | 10 minutes

Invite students to share with a partner or small group. Students may choose how much of the personal story behind their work they are comfortable sharing.

Ask:

- What did you choose to communicate?
- What choices did you make to help communicate your idea?
- How did your choice of colors, shapes, materials or words affect your work?
- What did you notice about how someone else communicated their idea?
- What questions do you have after seeing someone else's work?

Conclude with:

Artists make choices based on the ideas and experiences that matter to them. What stories help shape you?

ASSESSMENT

Look for evidence that students:

- Observe closely and contribute ideas or questions during discussion.
- Distinguish between what they notice and what they infer.
- Use information from Halfmoon's words or artwork to support an interpretation.
- Make intentional visual and/or written choices to communicate an idea.
- Connect their creative decisions to an experience, relationship, place or community from their own life.
- Reflect on how artistic choices can shape meaning.

Optional Exit Ticket: Complete the sentence: *A story can take shape through…*

EXTEND THE LEARNING

English Language Arts

- Develop a personal narrative or poem about family, place, memory, experience or community.
- Compare how the same idea can be communicated through words and images.
- Explore how artists and writers choose details based on what they want an audience to understand.
- Translate an idea from one form to another, such as turning a short written story into an image, and discuss what changes.

Social Studies

- Investigate the Caddo Nation through age-appropriate resources produced by or in partnership with the Nation.
- Explore the American Indian Nations represented in Oklahoma today, emphasizing that each nation has its own history, government, citizens and cultural traditions.
- Examine Tribal flags or seals as sources and consider what information can be learned from them using resources produced by the nation.
- Connect stories to place by investigating how individuals and communities understand the places where they live.

Visual Arts

- Analyze how Halfmoon uses clay, scale, shape and surface to communicate meaning.
- Explore other contemporary Native artists, identifying their specific nations or communities when relevant.
- Compare how different artists make choices about materials, imagery, scale and subject matter to communicate ideas.
- Create a classroom display that highlights the different choices students made to communicate their own stories.

STEM/STEAM Extension

- Investigate where clay comes from and how drying and firing transform the material.
- Experiment with texture by pressing, carving or building surfaces and compare the results.
- Investigate how artists construct large forms so they remain stable.
- Explore how shape, scale, balance and structure influence three-dimensional design.



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This exhibition is organized by
The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum
and Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts.

Curated by Amy Smith-Stewart and Rachel Adams.

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