FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 9–12 / 08

Culture Bearers, Visual Archives

CULTURE & SOURCES • context, care & extension

Why this place, why this lesson?

Louisiana State Museums documents Black masking cultures through oral histories and objects; the Chitimacha Tribe preserves basket traditions. These are living practices with knowledge holders, not generic motifs available for copying.

Broader perspectives

Use first-person sources when possible. Welcome Black masking, Chitimacha weaving, Vietnamese American traditions, Louisiana craft, and students' own community practices, while recognizing distinct ownership and permissions.

A culturally responsible teaching protocol

Name the makers — Identify artists, communities and cultural bearers by name where sourced and relevant.

Differentiate study from appropriation — Students may analyze techniques and contexts without copying sacred, ceremonial, or culturally restricted imagery.

Avoid a single story — Offer multiple identities, geographies and points of view, including everyday life rather than only festivals.

Give students agency — Students can choose a different relevant subject and retain the same artistic learning goal.

Check the record — Distinguish primary testimony, museum interpretation, observation and speculation; cite the actual source.

Ask permission — Obtain permissions for interviews, photographs, student work displays and public sharing when required.

Lesson-specific caution

Do not make replica Black masking suits, headdresses, regalia, or tribal baskets in a generic class activity. Prioritize specific community voices, credit cultural bearers, obtain image permissions, and distinguish study from participation.

Verified starting points for teachers

- **Louisiana State Museums: Mystery in Motion, including culture-bearer oral histories**
https://louisianastatemuseum.org/exhibit/mystery-motion-african-american-spirituality-mardi-gras

- **Louisiana State Museums: The Sewing Uprising**
https://louisianastatemuseum.org/mystery-motion-sewing-uprising

- **Chitimacha Tribe: information about living basket-weaving practices**
https://chitimacha.gov/

- **Louisiana Department of Education, Louisiana Arts Content Standards**
https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/academic-curriculum/louisiana-arts-content-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=4

• **Studio Thinking framework: Eight Studio Habits of Mind**
https://www.studiothinking.org/the-framework.html

Student reference log

Who created the image, object, quote or source?

When and where did the work or event occur?

What does the source actually say or show?

Which elements are my own interpretation?

Do I have permission to reuse the material?

Extension for advanced or returning artists

Develop an exhibition label set with separate “what the source says,” “what I infer,” and “what remains unknown” panels.

About the instructional design

This lesson is a free original adaptation of the teacher-provided 2026 Artistic Investigations document. Its ten-stage inquiry structure and reflective goal-setting are preserved. The accompanying author resource, Fostering Artistic Growth: A Teacher’s Guide to Instilling Studio Habits of Mind, informs the studio-habit emphasis. The full text of that published book was not supplied or reproduced.

The eight Studio Habits of Mind originate with Project Zero / Studio Thinking research. This independent resource does not imply endorsement by the book publisher, Louisiana Department of Education, cultural organizations, or Studio Thinking.