FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 9–12 / 08

Culture Bearers, Visual Archives

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 9–12 | 6–8 studio sessions of 50–70 min	Media: Research-based visual essay, zine, print, collage or digital story

The artistic problem

Study how a Louisiana cultural tradition carries knowledge through images, materials, performance and community. Produce an original visual archive about a tradition you belong to, or an evidence-based interpretive project focused on the role of cultural bearers rather than reproducing sacred or restricted visual forms.

Essential question: How can artists document living cultural traditions without claiming ownership of them?

Place-based cultural lens: 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.

Learning targets

- Distinguish historical evidence, lived testimony, interpretation and speculation.
- Create an original visual argument or archive with attribution and permission.
- Document revisions made for cultural accuracy and artistic effectiveness.

Student-visible success criteria

- At least three attributable sources including one from the represented community when available.
- A written ethics/permissions statement.
- Three distinct composition or sequence concepts.
- Original images or legally/ethically used reference materials.
- A feedback-informed revision and a final source/limits note.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana 9–12 cluster: VA-CE-H1, VA-CE-H4, VA-HP-H1, VA-HP-H3, VA-AP-H2

Studio Habits of Mind: Understand Art Worlds, Observe, Express, Reflect, Engage & Persist. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Community-approved images or museum sources

- Research notebooks and annotation sheets
- Art supplies or zine-making tools
- Attribution/consent template
- Optional audio captions or digital layout tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Compare an object label written by an outsider with the voice of a cultural bearer; ask who has authority to tell the story.

02 / Investigate Research selected tradition using community-led sources, museum oral histories and current information; document uncertain claims.

03 / Skill Studio Model interpretive visual essay structure, captioning, visual sequence and fair-use/permissions decisions.

04 / Generate Create three layout or storyline options using student-original imagery and citation plans.

05 / Plan Select one approach; complete an ethics check before using specific cultural references.

06 / Produce Develop a zine, visual essay, collage or print series centering process, people, meaning and authorship.

07 / Critique Peers flag uncredited images, flattening of distinct traditions, and claims without evidence.

08 / Revise Revise caption, imagery, framing or attribution to correct one substantive concern.

09 / Present Present as a source-labeled visual archive; invite visitors to identify what they learned and whose voice is present.

10 / Reflect Reflect on what the artist may represent, what requires permission, and what remains outside their knowledge.

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Authority and representation** Museum oral history comparison; ethics conversation.	Evidence vs. assumption annotations.
Day 2	**Source investigation** Research community-led materials; locate 3 credible sources.	Source and permission log.
Day 3	**Narrative skill studio** Sequence, caption, design and visual ethics.	Three storyboard concepts.
Day 4–6	**Produce evidence-based art** Create original archive; source check and conferences.	Process record and citations.
Day 7	**Ethical critique + revision** Accuracy, representation, viewer interpretation.	Corrections log and before/after.
Day 8	**Exhibit + reflect** Share source-labeled work and limitations.	Final rubric + artist responsibility reflection.

Key technique to model

Research-led composition, sequential images, captions, montage, critical interpretation and revision.

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Offer transcript alternatives to audio, screen-reader-friendly source texts, student-chosen cultural or noncultural subject, supported source evaluation and different output formats.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

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.

Stretch & explore

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

Design provenance: High-school expansion of source investigations 4 and 6: Object With a Secret and Visual Transformation Series, plus cultural-research ethics.