Congo Square: Evidence and Voice

NEW ORLEANS CULTURAL STUDIO | LESSON 67 | GRADES 6–8 | CULTURE & SOURCES

Context before technique

The meaning of Congo Square changes across eras and demands attention to the voices recording its history.

Whose story is being told?

Teach this lesson through identified New Orleans institutions and, where possible, community-authored testimony. Name the people, places, and historical context in your examples. Explain what remains unknown or contested.

Responsible artistic engagement

Identify source bias and avoid fictionalizing the experiences of enslaved people as fact.

Visual permissions

Do not download photographs or artwork from source websites for public display unless permission or a valid license is confirmed. A live research link is not a license. The included lesson illustration is original conceptual artwork and not historical evidence.

Starter research sources

HNOC: Congo Square history

https://hnoc.org/presentations/congo-square

HNOC: Educator presentations and primers

https://hnoc.org/learn-explore/educators/presentations

Louisiana Visual Arts Benchmarks

Louisiana Department of Education arts standards (official PDF)

Discussion prompts

- Who created or maintains this tradition, space, or object?
- What do outsiders often overlook?
- Which images would require permission, and whose voices are missing?

Teaching note

These starter sources support inquiry, not a complete ethnography. Prioritize up-to-date local perspectives and appropriately compensated cultural partnerships when possible.