FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 6–8 / 06

Portrait Through Objects: Many Stories

CULTURE & SOURCES • context, care & extension

Why this place, why this lesson?

New Orleans has layered African American, Indigenous, Caribbean, Vietnamese, Latin American and many other histories. Rather than assigning identities by category, students explore actual objects and stories with consent.

Broader perspectives

A student may use a fictional subject or an admired artist researched from credible sources; no one must disclose religion, immigration history, family income, disability, or personal trauma.

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

Respect privacy, consent and agency. Never assign students a cultural identity to depict; require accurate attribution when depicting another person.

Verified starting points for teachers

• **New Orleans Vietnamese community background and place-based history**
https://www.neworleans.com/things-to-do/multicultural/cultures/vietnamese/

• **Chitimacha Tribe: cultural information from the community itself**
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

Create two portraits of one person in different settings; compare the social assumptions each invites.

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.