

An Introduction to Inuit Art

- GRADE LEVEL** This lesson plan is designed to be used with students aged 12-15 years.
- OBJECTIVE** Students will be introduced to two kinds of Inuit art, sculpture and printmaking. In groups, students will be assigned a topic and series of activities to research and complete. Students will present their final products to the class.
- TIME REQUIRED** 2-3 class periods (estimated)
- MATERIALS**
- ❑ Students will need to access the following websites:
http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/cape_dorset/index.html
 - ❑ Print several copies of “Man Carrying Reluctant Wife” by Pudlo Pudlat prior to lesson:
<http://www.freespiritgallery.ca/articles.htm>
 - ❑ Copies of poem by Uvavnuuk (included)
 - ❑ Various art supplies
- ACTIVITY**
- 1 Write on the board “Man Carrying Reluctant Wife.” Explain that this is the title of a piece of art by the Inuit artist Pudlo Pudlat. Pass out small squares of paper and allow small groups several minutes to discuss and sketch their interpretation of the piece.
 - 2 Ask volunteers to share their pieces. Once everyone who wishes to share has done so, pass around several copies of the piece.
 - 3 Explain that every artist’s inspiration is different. The inspiration for this piece by Pudlo Pudlat comes from the Inuit tradition of arranged marriages. According to interviews done with Igloodik elders, many people were betrothed to someone even before they were born. Frequently, the women to whom the men were betrothed did not wish to marry.

“There was never a time when the woman showed any signs of willingness at all. Both parents of the man and the woman would have agreed to the marriage before you even knew about it. They would tell you afterwards that you are to marry a certain woman. The woman would not want to be married off and would really be really against the marriage, but the parents had agreed that she should be married.”

An Introduction to Inuit Art (cont'd)

- 4 Explain another common theme in Inuit art is respect for the land and animals. Read the following quote:

“It is not only to make money that we carve. Nor do we carve make believe things. What we show in our carvings is the life we have lived in the past right up to today. We show the truth... We carve the animals because they are important to us as food. We carve Inuit figures because in that way we can show ourselves to the world as we were in the past and as we are now... we carve to show what we have done as a people.”

~ PAULOOSIE KASADLUAK, INUKJUAK 1976
- 5 Break students into five groups. Explain to the groups that they are to research their topic and decide how to share the information with the rest of the class. Groups must have both a written element and an artistic element.
- 6 Assign or allow groups to randomly select one of the following topics:
 - Materials used in Inuit Sculpture
 - Different Styles of Inuit Sculpture
 - The Inukshuk
 - James Houston and the Birth of Inuit Art Prints
 - Prices of Inuit Art.
- 7 Make the list of websites under **MATERIALS** available to students for research purposes. Explain that the Free Spirit Gallery offers articles on most of the topics, so it may be a good place to start their research.
- 8 Allow students approximately two class periods to complete their research and work on projects. Groups may have to complete their work as part of a homework assignment.

EVALUATION

Have groups share their projects with the rest of the class. As a follow-up homework assignment, share the following poem. Explain that in the early 1900s, Knud Rasmussen recorded this poem composed by Uvavnuq, an Igloolik Inuit (students should already be familiar with Knud Rasmussen). Students are to create a piece of art in response to the poem. Their piece may be inspired by what they’ve learned about Inuit art if they choose.

*The Great Sea has set me,
In motion
Set me adrift
And I move as a weed in the river.
The arch of sky
And mightiness of storms
Encompasses me,
And I am left
Trembling with joy.*

REFERENCES

Isuma Publishing – a division of Igloolik Isuma Productions: <http://isuma.ca/buy>
 Kessler, Deirdre, *Isuma Teacher's Resource Guide*, Montreal: Isuma Publishing, 2004
 Robinson, Gillian, *Isuma Inuit Studies Reader*, Montreal: Isuma Publishing, 2004