

# THEME NINE: THE INDIVIDUAL

## THEME IN LIFE

We are all, each one of us, unique individuals.

## THEME IN ART

Art expresses individual differences.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Every person is different from every other person in some way. There have never been two people who were exactly alike in every way. That means that every person alive today and every person who ever lived in the past is an individual.

We come from different families and grow up in different cultures and times. The things that happen to each of us are never exactly like what happens to anyone else. So even if we try to be just like other people, we never can be exactly the same. Each of us has the potential to share something special with the rest of the world. And each of us learns how to appreciate the specialness of other individuals.

Individualism has strong roots in Europe and the United States going back to ancient Greece and revived in the Renaissance. In some other cultures, the group is more important than any one person.

In many cultures in Europe and America, modern artists have believed it was very important to “do their own thing,” to break away from tradition, to follow their personal feelings and ideas, and to make new artworks that are different from the art of earlier times.

## KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

### Questions about Artworks:

#### SENSORY ELEMENTS:

What sensory elements (line, shape, color, light and dark, mass and space) are most important in this artwork?

#### FORMAL ORGANIZATION:

How do the elements in the artwork work together (for example, are parts repeated, balanced, emphasized, contrasted)?

### Question about Artworks in Context:

#### INFLUENCE:

What art ideas of earlier artists did the artist either learn from or react against in this artwork?

## KEY CULTURES

Modern European American  
20<sup>th</sup> Century African American

# ACTIVITIES

## UNIT ORIENTATION



Introduce students to the Theme Title, the Theme in Life, the Theme in Art, and the Key Inquiry Questions to help guide their independent or small group investigation.

## DISCUSSION ON THEME AND KEY QUESTIONS



Use the following questions to guide your discussion.

### Students' Experience with the Theme:

Help students identify how the theme relates to their own lives.

- Of which of your qualities are you most proud? Why?
- What are the one or two most important events in your life? Why?
- Can you think of a time when you thought you had to choose between your own good and the good of a larger group?
- Can you think of ways that you can do what's best for you and contribute to the larger group at the same time?

### Inquiry into Students' Experience:

Use the key questions to help students make connections to their own experiences.

- What is something that you do well (for example, story telling, joke telling, playing sports, singing, driving, baking, dancing, etc.)?
- Do/did you have a teacher? Is there someone you try to imitate?
- Do you do that thing exactly as the person who influenced you?
- Now think of someone who does the same sort of thing, but in a way you do not like or admire. Do you think it's possible to learn, or get ideas, from someone you do not like or admire?

## TRANSFER TO DIVERSE CULTURES



The following instructions are written for students who are able to work independently. If you teach younger students, the instructions offer helpful guidelines as you gather and present information in order to optimize transfer potential for your students. Depending on the grade level of your students and their access to appropriate library and Internet sources, you can choose to build transfer across cultures either 1) through student investigation or 2) through your own investigations and presentations to students.

### Inquiry about Artworks:

- Divide half the class into small groups and ask each group to select an important European American modern artist they would like to learn more about (for example Georgia O'Keeffe, Helen Frankenthaler, Louise Nevelson, Jackson Pollack, Mark Rothko, or George Segal). Ask them to locate

reproductions of several artworks by the chosen artist. Have them discuss which one or two sensory elements is/are most important in that artist's work or what principle the artist tended to use to organize elements within his/her artworks.

- Divide the other half of the class into small groups and ask each of them to select an important twentieth century African American artist they would like to learn more about (for example John Biggers, Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, Faith Ringgold, or Bette Saar). Ask them to locate reproductions of several artworks by that artist and to discuss which one or two sensory elements is/are most important in that artist's work or what principle the artist tended to use to organize elements within his/her artworks.

#### Inquiry about Artworks in Context:

- Ask students to continue to work in their groups focused on an individual European American modern artist or an important African American artist. Ask them to extend their investigations into the life and times in which that artist lived (for example the political, social, and economic situation in which the artist lived). Also ask them to learn what they can about the artists or artworks that influenced the artist they selected.
- Finally ask students to work together to plan a group presentation that tells the story of the artist, her/his artwork, and culture. Presentations might take various forms: role playing, mock interview, dramatic scene, performed biography. Ask students to be sure to include reproductions of the artist's artworks in their presentation and to show influences that earlier artists had on his/her artwork.

## TRANSFER TO STUDIO



Review the unit themes and key questions to help students transfer what they have learned to their own art making.

#### Thematic artwork:

- Challenge students to relate the theme to their own experiences or an imaginary experience to develop an idea for their own artwork. For example, ask students to make self-portraits. Or ask them to make sculptures that express their individuality symbolically (for example through animals, plants, actions, or environments selected as subject matter). Help students to select one or two sensory elements upon which to focus as they produce their pieces and to organize the elements in their work effectively.

#### Exhibition:

- Display student artwork with Unit Information (Unit Title, Theme in Life, Theme in Art, and Key Questions). You may also want to exhibit sample student reports.





## INTERDISCIPLINARY TRANSFER



### Social Studies:

- ▣ Collectivist, socialist, communist, democratic, libertarian, anarchist, theocratic, tribal, and other systems or philosophies with different visions of how individuals should live together

### Language Arts:

- ▣ Constructing a narrative by developing characters; establishing a setting; and organizing a plot with a beginning, middle, and end. Biographical and autobiographical forms

### The Arts:

- ▣ Play writing and acting