



PURPOSE

To teach the value of art as not only a means of expression but a manifestation of culture.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Exhibit appreciation for how **culture** and **art** can be an expression of one's dignity.
2. Identify experiences of their own wherein culture helped show identity.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- ***The Monuments Men | Official Trailer*** video (see Materials)
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyQtc309Y9M>)
- ***The World's Homes*** images (see Materials)
- ***School of Athens*** image (see Materials)
- ***My Culture*** worksheet (see Materials)

VOCABULARY

- **culture**: the individual or collective expression of a society, including its beliefs and values
- **art**: a work created by a human person with the intent to express, stir, and uplift the human spirit, or show something of the human experience

PROCEDURE

Step 1: Review the previous lessons. Explain: We've learned about human dignity, which is our unique value as human persons. We have learned that it is **universal**, since every person has it, **intrinsic** since it is with us our entire life, part of who we are, and it's **inalienable**, since it cannot be given to us nor taken away from us.

In our previous lesson, we also learned about how we use our powers. Which three make up our internal senses? [instinct, imagination and memory] And what do we call the reactions to the world we experience? [emotions] Our internal senses and emotions have a huge role in shaping the human experience, especially with the creation of art and culture. We will learn more about this today.

Step 2: Introduce culture.

Ask: Why is art from different cultures so important? Then discuss.

Explain: Culture is made up of a group of people with similar beliefs and traditions, who relate to the world in a similar fashion. Art is a form that different cultures use to relate to the world—a form of communication, a form of storytelling. If you look at art through all the stages of history, they tell stories. Often art is the best way a group of people can fully express themselves, as it has the ability to capture a person's innermost feelings.

So, what happens if I take a group of people, and I destroy all of their artwork? Use your imagination. Let's pretend that each of you painted a picture, and it was the most beautiful picture in the world. The picture showed the things that are most important to you, you used your favorite colors, it showed the way in which you see the world, etc. Let's say you all painted such a picture, and then I came through the room, and I took all of your art. I took everything you have ever created, and I destroyed it. What would happen? Discuss.

If I take away all of your art, everything you have ever created, then I take away your legacy. I take away part of your story. People in the future might not even remember you because I destroyed everything that you ever created. Isn't that sad? Well, guess what? That actually happened.

Show the [***The Monuments Men | Official Trailer***](#) video as an example of how culture survived despite trials.

Explain: World War II took place from 1939-1945. It led to an enormous loss of life on all sides of the war. World War II brought new technologies to war that resulted in a devastating loss of life. Entire groups of people were slated for persecution, most notably European Jews but also others. Hitler understood that in order to conquer nations and peoples, you not only have to win battles, but you have to control the ideas, culture and history. He accomplished that largely through the seizure of art owned by those his regime targeted, as well as censorship of both news and artistic works. He even held a special exhibition in 1937 to mock forms of art he labeled "degenerate." Memory and identity is critical to a culture and for solidarity. It arms people against propaganda and helps them to fight tyranny and dictatorship.

There were some who recognized the importance of preserving the cultural heritage Hitler sought to control, and realized that important works of art were at risk both from the Nazis and from war itself. A book and film were made about these men, calling them the Monuments Men. During the war, their mission was to save and protect artwork. They risked their lives for the art of the people

because they knew that if the art was destroyed, great monuments to cultural memory and value would be lost.

Write on the board:

- **culture:** the individual or collective expression of a society, including its beliefs and values

Explain: Now that we know the importance of culture, we will learn more about how we use it to truly live. Throughout history, culture has been a way for human beings to show how we can adapt to our surroundings. We have used culture not only to make our communities more livable, but also to show who we are as a society. Good examples of these are how different countries build and design their homes in different ways.

Show *The World's Homes* images, explaining them via the accompanying descriptions.

Explain: Every single one of these homes we have looked at are built to provide shelter, but each culture has developed different ways to build homes. This responds to the values, challenges and needs of people living in different times and places. These differences shape the culture around us and the way we live!

Step 4: Introduce art.

Explain: When we talk about culture, the most familiar representation of it is the art created by its society. Art can come in many different forms, may it be in literature, visual arts, theater, dance, or music. What are some works of art you are familiar with?

Write on the board:

- **art:** a work created by a human person with the intent to express, stir, and uplift the human spirit, or show something of the human experience

Show the *School of Athens* image. Ask them what they see and how it makes them feel.

Explain: Raphael's *School of Athens* portrays many prominent ancient Greek and Roman philosophers in one building. Each of these philosophers had his own ideas and philosophies that were different from one another. Raphael's painting shows that, even though each of these ancient thinkers possessed his own unique opinions, they all made valuable contributions to philosophy and culture. The portrait shows how these ideas have changed us in shaping our understanding of the human person.

The two figures in the center represent Aristotle (on the right) and Plato (on the left). Both ancient

thinkers provided the foundations for Western philosophy, but in different ways. Plato’s approach was more abstract, and he focused more on the inner life of the human person. Aristotle, on the other hand, concentrated on the more tangible, concrete elements of human life. This painting is important because it shows us the power of creation, art, culture, and human thought. Portraying these human ideas are so powerful since they can change us for the better: how we think, what we create, and even how we act. Art and philosophy can make important positive changes in our own human lives.

Step 5: Summarize: In this lesson, we saw how our human dignity manifests in our different cultures. We learn more about who we are as people in the kinds of cultural traditions, customs, and practices we have decided to retain throughout generations. This can be so powerful to the point that we can carry this within us despite harsh circumstances, like war, sickness, and other misfortunes. We also learned how art is directly a product of one’s culture and it can be used to express ourselves, stir emotions within us, or uplift our spirits. Art and culture also help us to learn who we are, through a specific time, location and link to those who have lived before us.

FOLLOW-UP & HOMEWORK

Ask students to complete the *My Culture* worksheet.

SUPPLEMENTS

None.



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THE WORLD'S HOMES #1



This small village in Spain, Mijas, showcases many traditional Spanish-style homes.

This style of home is seen throughout Spain, in both the larger cities as well as the smaller towns.

THE WORLD'S HOMES #2



These ancient cave paintings offer a glimpse into the life of our ancient ancestors.
Cave paintings provide evidence of human life and expression.



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THE WORLD'S HOMES #3



This traditional Japanese-style home exemplifies a type of architecture especially prevalent in Japan during the 19th and 20th centuries, and these homes are still very common today.



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THE WORLD'S HOMES #4



These colorful houses are unique to Burano, Italy. A small island off the coast of Venice, Burano is famous for its lace and fishing industry. Every house is painted a bright and vibrant color. The houses are pressed tight together with a simple wooden boardwalk holding everything afloat, as the canals weave in and out throughout the city.

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THE WORLD'S HOMES #5



This home is a typical American family home, many of which have a small yard enclosed by a fence.



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SCHOOL OF ATHENS



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