

***Diversity in America: We the American People***  
***Suggested Grades: Grades K through Grade 4***  
***Lesson by: Meagan McCormick***

(Be sure to contact the Castellani Art Museum for a copy of the teacher resource guide containing the images, activities, and additional information associated with this lesson plan.)

## **Disciplines: NYS Learning Standards**

### **◆ Social Studies**

***Standard 1:*** History of the United States and New York

***Performance Indicator (1):*** The study of New York and the United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions.

***Performance Indicator (2):*** Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and the United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.

***Performance Indicator (3):*** Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups.

***Standard 5:*** Civics, Citizenship, and Government

***Performance Indicator (3):*** Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.

### **◆ English Language Arts (ELA)**

***Standard 1:*** Language for Information and Understanding

***Performance Indicator (1):*** Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

***Performance Indicator (2):*** Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.

***Standard 3:*** Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

***Performance Indicator (1):*** Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria.

***Performance Indicator (2):*** Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

***Standard 4:*** Language for Social Interaction

***Performance Indicator (1):*** Oral communication in formal and informal settings requires the

ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, and cultures to adapt presentations to different audiences, and to reflect how talk varies in different situations

### ◆ **The Arts - Visual Arts**

**Standard 1:** Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

**Performance Indicator (1):** Students will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Students will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Students will use a variety of art materials processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works.

**Standard 2:** Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources

**Performance Indicator (2):** Students will know and use a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. Students will know about resources and opportunities for participation in visual arts in the community (exhibitions, libraries, museums, galleries) and use appropriate materials (art reproductions, slides, print materials, electronic media). Students will be aware of vocational options available in the visual arts.

**Standard 3:** Responding to and analyzing Works of Art

**Performance Indicator (3):** Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual art characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the way in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed in other disciplines.

**Descriptive Title:** Diversity In America: We the American People

### **Context (Rationale):**

The United States is a very unique nation, unlike any in the world. What makes it so different is its culture. “Culture” refers to how people live; their customs, traditions, and beliefs. American culture is so special because of the way it has developed. From its very beginnings, America was recognized as the place of refuge and hope for people seeking a better way of life. People from many countries all over the world, representing different races, ethnic groups, and religions made America their new home. As they settled into their new surroundings and became familiar with American lifestyles, they also retained much of their original cultural heritage as well. Many of these customs and traditions eventually blended into the American way of life producing a culture not practiced anywhere else in the world. But to describe culture also means to be aware of other differences among people, such as age groups and occupations. All of these various groups of people symbolize the diversity that exists in American culture. Each individual group of people has provided special and irreplaceable contributions. As they view artwork representing aspects of American diversity, students should become more aware of the varied groups who make up American society and understand how these groups have contributed to the development of American culture, creating a mosaic of customs and traditions that have become a part of everyday life.

## **Performance Task:**

The student will be able to:

- Identify artwork that represents facets of diversity in America
- Be aware of different ethnic and racial groups that are represented in their community as well as in the country
- Discuss contributions made by the various groups
- Become aware of different customs and beliefs
- Describe the background to favorite holidays and traditions
- Understand the background and significance to different forms of entertainment
- Discuss the importance of learning from their elders such as parents and grandparents
- Understand the importance of different occupations
- Create a collage of their own “culture” illustrating the important people in their lives such as family and friends, and all their favorite things such as recreational activities, interests, holidays, foods, and music.

## **Art Resources:**

- Angry Woman c. 1945, Ignacio Aguirre, Castellani Art Museum
- “DIGNITY” 1972, Robert E. Dorksen, Castellani Art Museum
- New York, New York, Chinatown 1987, Catherine Howe, Castellani Art Museum
- Three Generations 1967, Milton Rogovin, Castellani Art Museum
- Head of Young Girl 1971, Malcolm Morley, Castellani Art Museum
- Anna Mesches I 1974, Arnold Mesches, Castellani Art Museum
- Doctor, Cindy Sherman, Castellani Art Museum
- Nurse, Cindy Sherman, Castellani Art Museum
- Fireman and Spray 1972, Robert E. Dorksen, Castellani Art Museum
- Untitled, n.d., Lucien Angier, Castellani Art Museum
- Stanford, CT 1981, Roger Mertin, Castellani Art Museum
- Students and Desks, 1991, Pat Bacon, Castellani Art Museum

## **Art Materials:**

- Pencil
- Eraser
- Colored Pencils
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Magazines
- Tag board

- Digital Camera
- Computer
- Printer
- Projector
- World Map

## **Motivation:**

The teacher will motivate students by asking them to think about how they would answer if they were approached from a visitor from outer space who wanted to know as much as possible about life in the United States. What things would they talk about? How would they describe how people live? Would they talk about types of families and traditions, foods, occupations, recreational activities, holidays, and shared values and beliefs? Describing American culture can be very difficult. Even historians have a problem trying to define American culture. Is it a “melting pot” of blended cultures from all over the world or a “salad bowl” with different groups and individuals retaining their unique characteristics? The teacher will use the artwork in the Museum to help students understand the diversity that has contributed to the development of an American culture that is different than any other culture in the world.

## **Presentation:**

1. The teacher will then direct students into the gallery featuring artwork representative of American cultural diversity.
2. The teacher will begin the lesson by posing the motivational question of how they would explain American culture to a visitor from outer space. This question should generate discussion from students as they describe their families, favorite foods and activities.
3. At this point the teacher will divide the students into pairs and distribute the Venn Diagram to each pair. Time will be given to allow them to complete the assignment with help from the teacher, chaperones, and museum staff. This exercise is meant to show students that while they are different from one another they also share similarities.
4. While students are working on the Venn Diagram a member of the Museum staff will go around to each pair and take a picture of each child which they will use in their final art activity.
5. Once the diagram exercise is complete each pair will explain their similarities and differences which will introduce the idea of diversity. Students may list physical differences and appearances, favorite foods and holidays, languages spoken at home, family members, and favorite forms of recreation, or what they like to do for fun.
6. The teacher will now spend a short amount of time explaining that the reason

for many of these differences is because the United States over the years has welcomed immigrants from all over the world to come and begin a new life. Most students are descendants of these immigrants. The teacher may also remind students that the first people to live here were American Indians or Native Americans. Each of these cultural groups contributed to the development of American culture. The teacher will ask students if they can list any of these contributions.

7. While discussing contributions the teacher may want to use the overhead projector to indicate words in the English language that have foreign origins.
8. Time permitting the teacher may use the world map to show students where their ancestors came from and how they traveled to the United States and where they eventually settled.
9. The teacher will also explain to students that other factors contribute to diversity such as age groups and occupations and are important in understanding culture.
10. Students will now view/study the artwork in the gallery that illustrates examples of American diversity. The teacher will ask students to explain what they see and then will explain in greater detail how the art represents diversity.
11. Students will be given directions concerning their final art project. They will be given their individual pictures that were taken earlier and will use them as part of a collage that they will create defining who they are and their culture. Their work will be entitled "*My Culture and Me*". Surrounding their picture will be examples of everything that is important to them; everything that gives them their sense of identity or who they are. They will combine drawing and collage.

## **Assessment Tools and Evidence:**

**Tools:** At the end of the session the teacher will ask students to share their artwork with the rest of the class. The teacher will ask the students questions about their assignment and allow other students to comment.

**Evidence:** The evidence of whether or not the students understood the influence of diversity in American culture will be determined by their artwork and their descriptions.

**Teacher Reflection/Follow Up:** Do the students understand the diversity that exists in American culture? Do they understand how these differences have helped to create a unique culture unlike any other? The teacher will make decisions based on the work created by the students and feedback from the subject area teacher.