



**Grade/s:** 9 – 12

**Enduring Idea:** Suffering

**Integrated Discipline:** Social Studies

**Unit Title:** Expressive Burlap Figures

**Unit Designer:** Lane Laney

**Unit Description:** Through their work, artists have dealt with and represented the suffering within communities. They may or may not have been a part of a persecuted group but nonetheless feel motivated to represent it visually. Within this unit, the learners will explore how historical events and the persecution of specific communities have inspired the creation of artwork. After studying the stylistic and expressive qualities that artists use, the learners will construct a gestural, expressive figure sculpture using burlap.

**Images:** "Convex Map," Thomas Lyon Mills (2011.6)  
"A Breeze at Work," Sandy Skoglund (1994.20)  
"Untitled Figure Study," Conrad Marca-Relli (2000.11)

**Key Concept:** Suffering can be community distress

**Essential Question:** How does suffering/distress affect communities?

**CCSS Art:**

- VAH2-1.2 Describe the ways that different materials, techniques, and processes evoke different responses in one who is creating or viewing artworks.
- VAH2-1.3 Communicate ideas through the effective use of a variety of materials, techniques, and processes in works of visual art.
- VAH2-4.1 Describe ways that the subject matter, symbols, ideas, and technologies in various

artworks are related to history and culture.

**Integrated CCSS:** Social Studies - History; learners will identify issues and problems in the past and recognize factors contributing to such problems

**Learning Outcomes:** The learners will...

- Explain how specific artworks express tragedy or suffering and why artists choose to explore it as a subject matter
- Work with a partner to develop and sketch plans for figure gestures and poses
- Construct an expressive figure sculpture using appropriate skills and techniques

**Motivator:** The teacher will display "Convex Map" and ask learners to write down three words to describe the artwork. In an informal discussion, the learners will share their words and explain why they chose them. The teacher will prompt, "What specific qualities of this artwork made you choose those words. If you had to come up with a title for this artwork, what would it be? Why did you choose that title?" The learners will continue to look at and discuss the expressive qualities in the images from the Columbia Museum of Art. After discussing how suffering affects communities and groups of people, the teacher will show work from Magdalena Abakanowicz and Anselm Kiefer, two artists that deal with the holocaust and World War II in their work. The learners will discuss questions like, "What tragedies or suffering did these artists explore? Where were these tragedies pertinent to them and why would they choose to make art about them? In what ways did they express suffering through their aesthetic decisions?"

**Day Breakdown:** Day 1 - Motivator (see above)

Day 2 - The learners will divide into pairs. After a demonstration of gesture drawing techniques, the pairs will pose for each other and sketch gestures of suffering. Individually, the learners will choose their best/favorite/most expressive gesture and sketch it

from different angles. The teacher will show work from Rodin and the learners can choose to emphasize certain attributes for an added expressive quality.

Day 3,4 - The teacher will demonstrate how to create an armature from wire, scrap paper, tape, and/or wire mesh. It is important that wire is used sparingly and not used to "build-up" the form. Instead, hollow wire mesh forms or newsprint is best for building up the forms. The learners will build their armatures.

Finished armatures should be attached to a wooden base using a staple gun.

Day 5,6 - The teacher will demonstrate how to cut and distress burlap before applying it to the surface (smaller, shorn pieces work best). Burlap should be dipped in art paste liberally and applied to the armature. It's best to start at the base of the sculpture and work up.

**Materials:** Burlap, scissors, art paste, wood (For bases), staple gun, wire, pliers, wire cutters. Optional: newsprint, wire mesh, and paper towels for building up the armature

**Resources:** Interpretation of Skoglund's work

- [http://www.grinnell.edu/falconergallery/exhibitions/studcurexhs/artchive/checklist/sandy\\_skoglund](http://www.grinnell.edu/falconergallery/exhibitions/studcurexhs/artchive/checklist/sandy_skoglund)

Magdalena Abakanowicz

- Bio: <http://www.abakanowicz.art.pl/about/about.php>
- Work: <http://www.abakanowicz.art.pl>

Anselm Kiefer

- <http://www.gagosian.com/artists/anselm-kiefer/artist-exhibitions>

Auguste Rodin

- <http://www.metmuseum.org/learn/for-educators/publications-for-educators/auguste-rodin-the-burghers-of-calais>

**Assessment:** The learners will be assessed using a rubric that analyzes their participation in the motivator and

discussion, planning and participation in gesture drawing with a partner, application of processes and materials in constructing a figure sculpture, and the expressive qualities present in figure sculpture.