

## THE ART OF BATIK

### Lesson Objective & Summary

**Objective:** Students will explore the history of batik and its significance in representing the cultures and heritages of St. Kitts and Nevis. Students will consider symbols that represent their own culture and community and create their own simple batik patterns using these symbols.

**Summary:** Students will watch "[The Art of Batik](#)" video. Students will collaborate in small groups to think about symbols that represent their local culture, community, and/or school. Students will individually design their own batik design and create a simple batik print.

**Grade Level:**  
Upper Elementary

**DURATION:**  
2 - 3 Lessons + dry time

**SUBJECTS:**  
Social Studies, Arts Education

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### Standards & Benchmarks

#### From the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Human beings create, learn, share, and adapt to culture. (*Culture, 1*)
- Through experience, observation, and reflection, students will identify elements of culture as well as similarities and differences among cultural groups across time and place. (*Culture, 2*)
- The study of people, places, and environments enables us to understand the relationship between human populations and the physical world (*People, Places, and Environments, 1*)
- Personal identity is shaped by an individual's culture, by groups, by institutional influences, and by lived experiences shared with people inside and outside the individual's own culture throughout her or his development. (*Individual Development and Identity, 1*)
- Young learners develop their personal identities in the context of families, peers, schools, and community (*Individual Development and Identity, 4*)

#### From the National Standards for Visual Art

- Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art (*Content Standard #3a*)
- Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning (*Content Standard #3b*)

## Background Information for Educators

Across the world, batik is an art form where fabrics are decorated using wax, and then dyed in vibrant colors.

Although the origins of batik are difficult to precisely trace, many believe that batik likely developed in Southeast Asia, and was spread to other parts of the world as trade routes developed. Batik prints have been discovered in ancient Egyptian tombs, as well as in the Middle East, China, and Japan. Although many modern day batiks are made using cotton fabric, ancient batiks were often made on silk, linen, and even wool fabrics.

The process of making batiks uses a relatively straightforward process. Wax designs are applied to fabrics by paintbrush, canting tool, or stamps. The fabrics are then dyed using vibrant colors. Once the dye has dried, the wax is melted off either using an iron or hot water, which leaves the wax design areas un-dyed. The fabrics may be dyed and painted multiple times to create different layers of designs.

Batik prints usually reflect local cultural symbols or scenes found in the region where they are produced. For instance, batik prints found on St. Kitts and Nevis often include hibiscus flower designs, seascapes, and palm branches. Batik prints are often multi-colored, reflecting the many different steps of dyeing that the fabrics underwent. Once dyed, washed, and dried, batik fabrics can be used to make clothing, pillow cases, and anything else the imagination can create with cloth.

Guiding Questions	Key Vocabulary
<p>What is batik?</p> <p>Where is batik found in the world?</p> <p>What is the significance of batik in St. Kitts?</p> <p>What do the patterns of batik represent?</p> <p>What symbols represent your own culture or community?</p>	<p>Textile</p> <p>Fabric</p> <p>Wax</p> <p>Canting Tool</p> <p>Symbols</p>

## Lesson Plan

1. Ask students to think about what a “symbol” is. Then, ask students to brainstorm a list (or draw sketches) of symbols that they see in their daily lives.
2. Remind students that symbols can be found in many different aspects of our daily lives. In cultures across the world, symbols are often found in drawings, on buildings, and in clothing. Ask students to look at one another’s clothes to see if they notice any symbols. Have students then discuss what these symbols might represent about their culture.

3. Share with students that “batik” is a special type of cloth-dyeing where cultural symbols are often displayed. Show students “[The Art of Batik](#)” video.
4. Divide students into groups of 3. Have each group collaborate to create a list of symbols that represent their school, community, and/or heritage. If possible, have students walk through the hallways or community to observe and jot down/sketch the symbols they find.
5. Once all student groups have compiled their lists, have groups share their lists. Ask students to consider what each symbol might reflect about their culture, school, or community.
6. On a piece of paper, have individual students sketch symbols that reflect themselves. Students may choose symbols that reflect their own individual personality, heritage, or daily life.
7. Have students select a symbol (or collection of symbols) to create their own batik print (see directions below).
8. Have students share or display their individual symbols with the class, verbally explaining why they chose their particular symbols, and what those symbols represent about them. Celebrate the diverse symbols that represent your students!

### Batiking for Kids

1. Place the fabric on wax paper. Using a pencil, lightly sketch desired design directly onto the fabric.
2. Trace design using blue gel glue. Let the glue design dry completely (usually about 12 hours).
3. Create a dye by watering down acrylic craft paint. Apply the color to the fabric as desired.
4. Allow the paints to dry on the fabric completely (usually 2-3 hours).
5. Soak the dried fabric in warm (almost hot) water (10-30 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fabric; thicker fabrics will require longer soaking). If needed, scrape dried colored paint flakes and glue with a nail brush. (Teacher Tip: use a bathtub if working with a large number of pieces of fabric)
6. Once the glue and paint flakes are removed, allow the fabric to dry completely, using either a dryer or heated iron. Your batik is complete!

### Materials Needed

Washable Blue Gel Glue (any brand)  
Pencil  
Fabric cut to size (cotton muslin works well)  
Wax Paper  
Acrylic Craft Paint (desired colors)  
Paint Brushes  
Paint Smock or T-shirt  
Nail Brush  
Sink or Tub for soaking  
Warm/Hot Water  
Dryer or Iron

## Assessment

### Evidence of Understanding

Student lists and sketches reflect symbols used in local culture or daily life.

Student batik designs and oral explanations show a strong understanding of how symbols can reflect one's individual identity.

Assessment Rubric	Below Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations
Student Symbols List and Oral Discussion	Student lists and oral discussions reflect a limited understanding of symbolism and how symbols reflect one's culture and community. Student may not fully grasp the relationship between symbols and what they represent.	Student lists and oral discussions represent a firm understanding of how specific symbols can reflect specific elements found within one's culture and community.	Student lists and oral discussions not only reflect a firm understanding of how specific symbols reflect one's culture and community, but students also examine or analyze symbols beyond their own culture, considering similarities and differences among different cultures.
Batik Designs and Oral Explanation	Student's batik designs and oral explanations show a limited understanding of how symbols can reflect their own personal culture, community, or identity. Student may not be able to clearly explain the connection between their chosen symbols and their own identity or culture.	Student's batik designs and oral explanations show a firm understanding of how a particular symbol or symbols was/were used to represent their own culture, community, or personal identity. Student explanations reflect a clear connection between symbolism and personal identity.	Student's batik designs and oral explanations show a strong understanding of how symbolism can be used to reflect personal identity, culture, or community. Oral explanations may further express similarities and differences among symbols of different cultures.

## Challenge Questions

Why are some of the same symbols found in different cultures?  
What might this tell you about these cultures?