

Lesson Plan 1: Learning from Jacob Lawrence and Harriet Tubman

Social Studies and Visual Arts

Objectives:

Observe carefully "Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" by Jacob Lawrence to recognise the style of Jacob Lawrence.

Provide a context that enables the student to imagine the circumstances of an event or experience. To tell of a personal event or experience through the visual arts.

Activities:

- ◆ Observe carefully the image "Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" by Jacob Lawrence.

- ◆ Ask a series of questions: What do you see? Where are they? Is it night or day?

- ◆ Tell them the story of Harriet Tubman (Fact Sheet).

Jacob Lawrence wanted to capture tension and drama of the scene and does this using the visual elements of line, shape, color, and pattern to portray his subjects. His style is the way in which he used these elements ("Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" Fact Sheet).

- ◆ Ask questions about the visual elements. How many patterns can you find? A pattern is made up of shapes or lines or colours that are repeated to create a rhythm.

- ◆ Draw them out on the Harriet Tubman Visual Elements Sheet.

- ◆ Look at the figures in the painting. Which figure/s look heavy, solid? Why?

Which figures are light? Look at the shapes and colors.

Jacob Lawrence was a master at using poses and gestures to show a mood. Are the figures moving slowly or quickly? What visual clues does the artist give to suggest how they feel? Look at the shape of their shoulders, the position of their heads, and the lines of their hands and legs.

- ◆ Draw one or more of the figures in Jacob Lawrence's Painting Sheet and answer the questions.

Jacob Lawrence told stories through his art and "Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" is one painting from a series of paintings about Harriet Tubman. He uses repeated colors, shapes, and patterns to link his works.

- ◆ Think of a family event or story, and divide it into its beginning, middle, and end. Draw your story on a series of sheets. Use brown paper and poster paint to work in his style.

Assessment:

Answer: Jacob Lawrence Sheet and Harriet Tubman Sheet

Evaluate Visual Element Sheet

Evaluate Figure Sheet

Evaluate and discuss their family event or story painting - assess content, colours, patterns and control of paint.

Resources:

Image of "Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" by Jacob Lawrence

Jacob Lawrence Fact Sheet and Question Sheet

Harriet Tubman Fact Sheet and Question Sheet

"Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)" Fact Sheet

Visual Element Sheet

Figures Sheet

Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land) by Jacob Lawrence



Jacob Lawrence Fact Sheet

Jacob Lawrence (born 1917 – died 2000) called himself “a child of the Great Migration.” Like thousands of African-American families, his parents had come from the South. As a young boy he moved many times and at the age of thirteen he moved to New York City - to Harlem, where his mother had found work and had created a home.

Jacob observed and absorbed the details of the world around him, and images of his Harlem neighbourhood became part of his identity as a person and as an artist. These scenes formed the foundation of his art. They are portraits of his community and portraits of himself. Jacob went to church regularly each week. There Jacob witnessed dynamic, riveting sermons - ones that revealed to him the power of stories. Jacob began to grasp the drama and importance of narrative. And he carried these songs and stories in him for the rest of his life. These sagas of struggle offered hope that poverty and prejudice could be overcome. For Jacob, art became a way of giving voice to these ideas and feelings.

Soon after he came to Harlem, Jacob began attending after-school classes. He joined workshops run by Charles Alston. These arts workshops came out of the ideas of the **Harlem Renaissance**, a cultural and intellectual movement of the 1920s that fostered the arts - not just visual arts, but poetry, fiction, drama, music - as means for expressing and authenticating the African-American experience.

In the workshops he used poster paints and brown paper - both cheap and readily available - and used them throughout his career. Their properties - flat, fast-drying - suited his artistic aims.

At age seventeen, Jacob went to work to help support the family, but he never abandoned his art. Using art he learned to express ideas and feelings in shapes, in patterns, in the hues and rhythms of everyday life - from his family's apartment, filled with bright colors and lively designs, to the streets of Harlem. As Jacob looked at his community, he saw stories: he recalled the inspirational power of the sermons he heard in church, and he remembered

“...the street corner orators, talking about people like Harriet Tubman,... Toussaint L'Ouverture. They strived against great odds and were my heroes....”

Jacob determined to depict the struggle for freedom in stories drawn from real life, from African-American history, connecting the past with the present. He created five narrative cycles - the stories of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, John Brown, and The Migration of the Negro.

Name _____

Read the **Jacob Lawrence sheet** and answer the following questions:

Who was Jacob Lawrence?

- a. an engineer b. a builder c. an artist

What year was Jacob Lawrence born and when did he die? _____

How old was Jacob Lawrence when he moved to Harlem?

- a. six b. ten c. three d. thirteen

In which city is Harlem located?

- a. Washington b. Chicago c. Seattle d. New York

Who was Jacob Lawrence's first art teacher?

- a. Leonardo da Vinci b. Charles Alston c. Vincent van Gogh

What arts did the Harlem Renaissance art movement foster?

- a. visual arts b. poetry c. fiction d. drama e. music f. all of them

What art materials did Jacob Lawrence like to use?

- a. poster paint and brown paper b. chalk pastels and cardboard c. oil paint and canvas

What was Jacob Lawrence's apartment like?

- a. dull and drab b. full of bright colours and lively designs c. messy

As Jacob looked at his community, he saw:

- a. nothing b. horror c. stories

Which of these famous African-Americans did Jacob Lawrence paint?

- a. Michael Jordan b. Harriet Tubman c. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Harriet Tubman Fact Sheet

Harriet Tubman still stands out in American history today for her courage and determination. Born into slavery in Maryland, Harriet Tubman freed herself by escaping, and played a major role in freeing the remaining millions.

Harriet Ross was born in 1819 or 1820, in Dorchester County, Maryland. She was born to parents both held in slavery and she was of purely African ancestry. She was raised under harsh conditions, and subjected to whippings even as a small child.

At the age of 25, she married John Tubman, a free African-American. Five years after her marriage she feared she would be sold and would have to move further South so she made her escape to Canada.

Tubman was given a piece of paper by a white neighbour with two names, and told how to find the first house on her path to freedom.

She initially settled in Philadelphia, where she met William Still, the Philadelphia Stationmaster on the Underground Railroad and other members of the Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society. The Underground Railroad (UGRR) was a group dedicated in freeing slaves by moving them away to the North.

After freeing herself from slavery, Harriet Tubman returned to Maryland, in 1851, to rescue other members of her family. She relocated them to St. Catherines (Ontario) in Canada. St. Catherines remained her base until 1857. In all she is believed to have conducted approximately 300 people to freedom in the North. The tales of her exploits reveal her spiritual nature, as well as a grim determination to protect her charges and those who aided them. She always expressed confidence that God would aid her efforts, and threatened any of her charges who thought to turn back. The idea of being captured by slave-hunters or slave-holders was not an option for her.

After the outbreak of the Civil War, Tubman served as a soldier, spy, and a nurse, for a time serving at Fortress Monroe. After the war she was denied payment for her wartime service, so Tubman was forced to ride in a baggage car on her return to Auburn, NY.

There she married Nelson Davis, and lived in a home they built on South Street. This house still stands and serves as a home for the Resident Manager of the Harriet Tubman Home, a museum dedicated in preserving her memory.

After her death in 1913, Harriet Tubman was buried in Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn with military honors.

Name _____

Read the **Harriet Tubman sheet** and answer the following questions:

Where was Harriet born?

- a. Maryland b. Philadelphia c. Massachusetts

What was her ancestry?

- a. Bermudian b. African c. Canadian

How old was she when she married John Tubman?

- a. 52 b. 30 c. 25

Fearing she would be sold she made her escape to:

- a. Spain b. Mexico c. Canada

The Philadelphia Anti-Slavery Society moved people to the North of America and the system was called:

- a. The Overground Rail b. The Underground Railroad c. The Underground Train

How many people did Harriet help to conduct to freedom?

- a. 200 b. 30 c. 300

During the Civil War Harriet served as a:

- a. nurse b. soldier c. spy d. all three

Why did she have to ride baggage car to NY at the end of the Civil War?

- a. She wanted to b. She had no money c. It was the best form of transport

How do we know that her efforts in the war were eventually recognised?

- a. She died with military honors b. She was forgotten about c. She was paid

"Forward Together (Harriet and the Promised Land)", 1997
by Jacob Lawrence Fact Sheet

excerpt by Ori Z. Soltes, from the "House & Home" Catalogue 2003, Bermuda National Gallery

We cannot miss Tubman, wrapped in a red cloak and her gigantic hand reaching back to pull those behind her past the trees that divide the work into two parts and toward the mountain beyond. The left side of the image is crowded with vegetation and animals and human figures, the whole watched over by a bright blue owl, symbol of wisdom and patience. As the right side opens up, the tree line itself climbs up the hillside; figures emerge from the stream that connects the lower left and right of the image to hurry in diagonal ascent, pulling each other upward like links in a chain. Harriet herself anchors the right lower corner, her second arm and hand extended up toward the star in the sky above the mountaintop. She is like Moses leading her followers to a new home and a new homeland, but the blazing star also evokes the myriad scenes of the magi seeking the new Christ – and so she is also the wise woman leading her people toward an entire new reality. Home is the freedom to make one's home wherever one chooses and to shape it as one wishes; it is the capacity to forge new links in the chain of history, new passages in an age-old narrative.

Name _____

Figures in Jacob Lawrence's Painting

Draw your figure/s in the box below:

What colours has Jacob Lawrence used for the clothes?

Does your person look: (circle all the ones that apply)

Happy

Sad

Anxious

Worried

Confused

Scared

Thoughtful

Calm

Other _____

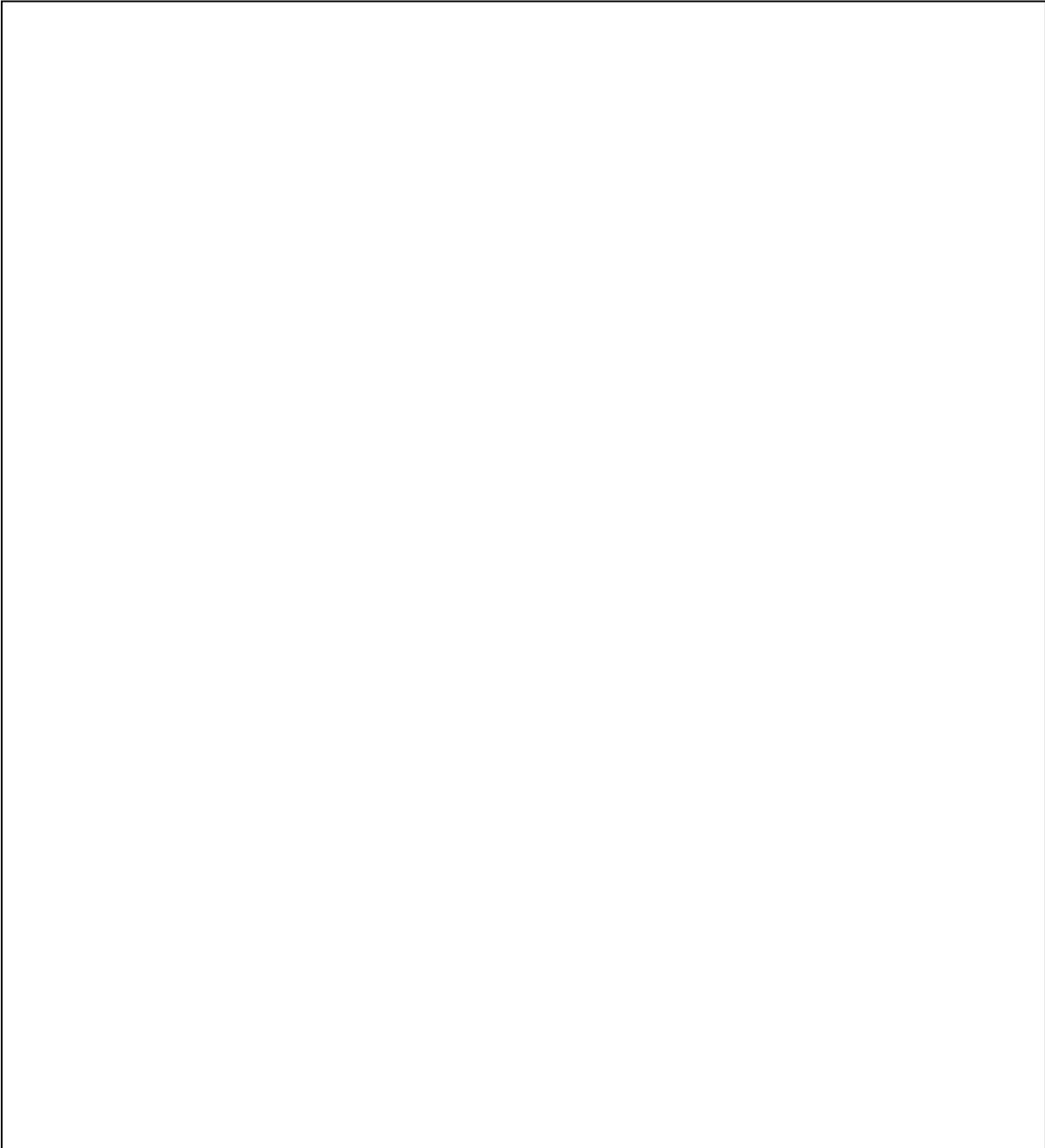


Name

Visual Element Sheet Looking at Patterns in Jacob Lawrence's Painting

A pattern is made up of shapes or lines or colours that are repeated to create a rhythm.

In the box below draw as many different shapes or lines that you can see that are repeated

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to draw repeated shapes or lines.