This resource was created in collaboration with a teacher professional development workshop designed for K-12 educators. Inspired by the exhibition Living Legacies: Art of the African American South, it provides educators with tools and teaching strategies for arts-integrated learning. This resource includes studio activities designed to help teachers find meaning in visual arts that they can share with their students.
Living Legacies: 
Art of the African American South

Making Meaning through the Stories Art tells:
Storytelling in art is about making an authentic, human connection. Stories in art can help us explain our experiences and relationships through feelings and memories, to questions and objections. Through these stories, our mind makes cognitive and emotional connections that shape our perspective of the world.

Goal
Artists throughout history have told stories through their art. The stories artists tell can provide us with multiple perspectives and awareness of ourselves and others. The goal of this lesson is to engage students in discussion and activities to encourage them to make connections between their own experiences and the multiple perspectives they feel when viewing and creating art.

Ohio Learning Standards Addressed
• W.2.2 Write informative/explanatory texts that introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
• W.2.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question.
• SL.2.4 Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.
• 5PE Identify and describe cultural symbols, images, and contexts of works of art
• 4RE Share their personal interpretations of the meanings conveyed in various works of art.
• 6RE Identify and articulate important historical and cultural contributions of selected visual artists.
• 7RE Recognize and discuss that people have various opinions about art and value art for different reasons.
• 2PE Interpret and evaluate the way a theme or meaning in an artwork expresses the social, political or cultural context.
Classroom Activities for Art Tells a Story

Supplies:
• Styrofoam pieces
• Printing Ink/Rollers
• Canvas or Cloth pieces
• Mat Board
• Pencil

Activity 1: Printed Quilts

Step 1
Begin by talking with children about the Gee’s Bend Quilting Collaborative.*

Step 2
Spend some time looking closely at the quilts together. Use these questions as a guide for discussion: What do you see in the quilt? What does it make you think of? Ask children if they have any special quilts or blankets in their home. Do they have any family members who make quilts?

Step 3
Encourage students to design their own quilt using symbols and patterns that are meaningful to them. They can begin by sketching on scrap paper and then transfer the design to Styrofoam, carving into it using pencil.

Step 4
Once the design is carved, select colored ink and roll it across foam pressing down as you go. Multiple colors can be added to one board and blended.

Step 5
Once the styrofoam is fully covered with colorful ink, carefully press it to your piece of canvas or fabric cloth. Use a dry roller to go over the top and press it down to make the print.

Step 6
Peel the cloth back and see your printed quilt design. As an extension ask students to design a classroom printed quilt by arranging everyone’s individual quilt squares together. Ask students to share the idea or story behind their quilt. This develops communication skills, motivates them to learn about one another, and creates a class bond through a shared experience.

* Information including links to websites and reading material can be found in the Resource section at the end of this lesson plan.
Vocabulary Words

Culture
Culture is a combination of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, values, and behavior patterns that are shared by racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups of people. Culture refers not only to those that we are born into (racial or ethnic groups) but also those we choose to belong to, such as religious or social groups.

Implicit Bias
Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner; attributing qualities to a member of a certain social group that are influenced by experience and are based on learned associations between various qualities and social categories.

Resilience
The ability to recover from difficulties; toughness.
Activity 2: Reflective Writing

These reflective writing activities can be done in front of the work of art, or using an image pulled up on a screen. To access Museum images visit: emuseum.toledomuseum.org/collections.

Grades K-5:
Find a piece of Art that you would want in your home:
- What did the artist title the piece?
- Do you like the title?
- If you could name it yourself, what would you pick?
- Can you find any symbols or secret clues in this image?
- Can you guess all the supplies used to create this piece?
- What is it about this piece that speaks to you?

Grades 6-8:
Find a piece that you feel reflects an aspect of the world today.
- Why did you choose this particular work of art?
- Where in the piece is your eye first drawn?
- Without researching it, can you determine what medium was used?
- What connections can you make between this work and something else you have seen or experienced? (ideas: a book, movie, or song)

Grades 9-12:
Find a piece that exemplifies resilience. Explain your reasoning behind your selection.
- What is your first thought?
- Does it put you into a specific mood? Why?
- What does this image remind you of?
- Does your opinion of this piece change after looking at it for a while?
- Can you close your eyes and describe this piece? Were your words positive or negative?
- If you could make one change to this piece, what would it be?
Additional Resources and Reading Materials

Talking to Children about Equity and Inclusion:

For more information on the artists in the exhibition:
Souls Grown Deep Foundation
https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/

Gee’s Bend Quilting Collaborative:
https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers