This resource was created in collaboration with a teacher professional development workshop designed for early childhood educators. Inspired by the exhibition Living Legacies: Art of the African American South, it provides early childhood educators with teaching strategies to encourage storytelling through art. This resource includes studio activities designed to reinforce social and emotional learning.

Living Legacies:
Art of the African American South

Social & Emotional Learning:
Positive social and emotional development influences a child’s self-confidence, empathy, and the ability to develop meaningful and lasting friendships and partnerships. Participating in art experiences can help young children learn about cooperation, collaboration, and a sense of value. Artistic expression can enhance cognitive abilities, foster greater self-awareness, and help children regulate their emotions.

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 children in discussion and activities to encourage them to make connections between their own experiences and the emotions they feel when viewing and creating art.

Early Learning and Development Standards Addressed
Domain: Social and Emotional Development
Strand: Relationships
• Attachment
• Interactions with Adults
• Peer Interactions and Relationships
• Empathy
Domain: Language and Literacy Development
Strand: Listening and Speaking
• Expressive Language
• Reading Comprehension
• Receptive Language and Comprehension
Domain: Cognition and General Knowledge
Strand: Cognitive Skills
• Symbolic Thought
• Reasoning and Problem Solving
Strand: Geometry
• Identify and Describe Shapes
• Analyze, Compare, and Create Shapes
Domain: Approaches toward Learning
Strand: Creativity
• Innovation and Invention
• Expression of Ideas and Feelings through Art

Vocabulary
• Legacy
• Quilt
• Sew
• Community
• Sculpture
• Found Object

Books
• Stitchin’ and Pullin’
• ABC’s of Black History
Classroom Activities for Art & Storytelling

Supplies:
• Variety of fabric
• Pipe cleaners
• Scissors
• Pencil/Markers
• Yarn
• Buttons
• Variety of “found” materials
• Glue

Activity 1: Collaborative Class 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 colors and shapes are used in this quilt? Do you notice any Patterns? What materials have been used to make this quilt? 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
Gather a variety of pre-cut fabric strips/scrapes with different textures to put in a couple large containers to use for a classroom quilt. In addition to fabric, you can add yarn, ribbon, etc.

Step 4
Provide children with their own square of mat board or cardboard. Explain that each student will be creating their own unique square to add to the quilt. Encourage children to use special colors that are meaningful to them. Once students pick out their materials, they can use paintbrushes and glue to attach their fabric/ribbon to their board.

* Information including links to websites and reading material can be found in the Resource section at the end of this lesson plan.
Step 5
Once everyone has completed their square ask children to work together to combine their quilt design with the other classmates. Emphasize the key vocabulary words throughout the lesson so children can understand the importance of working together as a group to create something special. Explain to children that their individual square contributes to make a whole work of art, just as each individual contributes to making a whole community.

Step 6
Display the quilt in the classroom or take photos so students can show their families their collaborative quilt project. Encourage children to share their favorite stories about what they like to do with their families.
Activity 2: Found Object Sculptures

Step 1
Look at the following “Found object” sculptures from the Living Legacies exhibition:

- *The Comfort of the First Born* by Richard Dial and *How Do I Look?* by Joe Minter.
- How does this work of art make you feel when you look at it? What does it make you think about? Why do you think the artist chose to use these materials?
- What story do you think it tells? What story do you want to tell about your artwork?
- How are the different materials being used?
- What parts stand out to you the most?
- What do you think this would feel like if you could touch this work of art?

Step 2
Gather a variety of different “found objects” in the classroom. Examples of these objects could be paper clips, water bottles, clothespins, containers, wire/pipe cleaners, etc. Encourage students to collect their own in addition to the materials you provide.

Step 3
Once students have their chosen materials to create, encourage them to experiment with varied ways to attach the sculptures. This could include using ties, a hole punch, glue, etc. Exploring the materials is an important part of the process.

Step 4
When their sculptures are finished, encourage students to talk to one another about their creations. Ask open-ended questions about their artwork; this will stimulate their discussion and give students self-confidence and empathetic awareness of others. Some examples are:

- How did you make your artwork?
- What title would you give your artwork?
- What story does your artwork tell? Is it about you or someone else? What is it doing?
- How did you feel when you were creating your artwork?
Classroom Extensions

Language and Literacy
- Reinforce vocab words through play
  - **Legacy**: Something that you receive or learn from the past you may pass on to others.
  - **Quilt**: A type of blanket made of layers joined together either by sewing or tying the layers together with pieces of yarn, thread, or ribbon.
  - **Sew**: To join or attach using a needle or thread
  - **Community**: A group of people living in a particular area, or a group of people who are doing something together.
  - **Sculpture**: Sculpture is a type of art. It must be three-dimensional and have height, width, and depth like a cube.
  - **Found object**: An ordinary discarded item like clothing, furniture, or pieces of metal or plastic that some artists reuse to make art.
- Read and discuss the suggested books
- Tell a story about your family with your classmates
- Creating their own stories will help children draw connections between experiences they have and how those events or experiences can cause us to feel certain emotions. Additionally, children strengthen relationships skills by learning the importance of communication and active listening skills.

Geography
All the art in this exhibition was made by black artists from the south.
- Show a map of the southern states and discuss the various locations

Math & Science
- See how many animals you can find in the work Home Sweet Home by Thornton Dial Jr.-turn it into an I Spy game with the group
- Discuss what kind of habitat these animals would live in
- Show images of the quilts from the exhibition
- Talk about the patterns and shapes you see

Sensory
- Explore a variety of textured materials including some examples of “found materials”

Social Emotional
- Work cooperatively with a partner to design your own quilt. Work with friends and family to make it collaborative.
- Invite your family to see the Living Legacies exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art. Think about what important stories you want to share about your family.

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Additional Resources and Reading Materials

For more information on the artists in the exhibition, follow this link to see a selection of resources in the TMA Library: https://bit.ly/3iMBjG1

Souls Grown Deep Foundation
https://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/

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

Talking to Children about Equity and Inclusion: