

Global Culture- Haitian Art of Symbolism

K-5

Objective: Students will use symbolism to convey a story of triumph through a painting or illustration.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion:

Symbolism: the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities.

Triumph: a great victory or achievement.

Materials: copy paper, pencils, markers, cups of water, paintbrushes, multimedia paper.

Background information: Haiti was the only nation in the western hemisphere to end slavery as part of its declaration of independence (1803) — therefore ensuring true independence for all people. Part of the island Hispaniola, Haiti is a Caribbean island nation that is considered part of the African diaspora, which means the people of Haiti are considered part of the spread of African people across the globe. Enslaved Africans, brought to the islands to work on vast plantations, carried customs and traditions with them, including religious ceremonies. As Haitian culture and history emerged, artists crafted uniquely passionate styles, often using symbols from daily life and religious ceremonies to share their stories in paintings and sculpture. Haiti has faced many struggles as a nation, and the Haitian people work hard to triumph over devastating natural disasters like the massive earthquake in 2010, and hurricanes Matthew (2016) and Maria (2017).

Opening activity: Have students bring to mind a story from their own life of a great victory or achievement they experienced. Maybe it was working hard on a school project and getting a good grade! Maybe it was a victory in a sports event, or a field day! Or maybe it was saving money over time in order to afford a very special purchase or experience. Choose 1 or 2 students to share their story with the group. Distribute copy paper to students and have them sketch a few symbols they could use to communicate the feelings or experience of their victory story.

Core Activity: Have students use the multi-media paper to fully draw out their symbolism illustration and add color with markers or paint. Instruct students to use the FULL page, remind them that the painting should have a background in addition to the symbol(s) they've chosen. Set paintings aside to dry.

Reflection: As students are cleaning up the space, have them share: how does your painting demonstrate your story of triumph? What symbols did you choose?

