

Lesson Ten:

“Mamas, Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys” or ... —CULTURE AND

CAREERS IN THE BARATARIA-TERREBONNE ESTUARY



Setting The Stage



For as long as we can remember, there have been people making a living off the natural environment in the Barataria-Terrebonne estuarine region.

Fishers, shrimpers, crabbers, trappers, hunters, oil-field workers, chefs and cooks, boat-builders, and other occupations are all familiar sights along the bayous and in local businesses. These traditional ways of making a living reflect our multi-national culture. Each immigrant group who settled in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary—French, Acadian, Filipinos, Islenos, Germans, Vietnamese, Hispanic, Yugoslavian, Croatians, Africans and others—has added to the rich “gumbo” of our south Louisiana lifestyle. But our history goes back farther than recent memory alone.

TEACHER, ask your students to . . .

Close your eyes and imagine you are a Choctaw or Houma Indian stalking a deer in the 1700s . . . or a woman making moss mattresses in the 1800s . . . or a trapper harvesting the abundant mink and muskrat in the early 1900s. What things can you draw to express this view of early life in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary? How would you like to express these things in a mural? Have you ever seen a mural in a public place? What affect can a mural have on the people who view it? What symbols can we use in a mural about life in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary? What are the things most important to you that should be portrayed?”

Objectives

STUDENTS WILL

- **design a class mural depicting scenes from life in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary.**
(They could also use their “I am A Child of the Estuary” poems.)
- **explore their cultural heritage through artistic expression and historical research.**
- **interview viewers about the effect the mural has on them. (Use questions such as: How do you feel? What is your favorite scent? What don’t you like?)**

MATERIALS

- *I Am A Child of the Estuary* poems—written by the students
- Pictures or images of murals, as seen on buildings in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary as well as in museums, such as the Bayou Terrebonne Waterlife Museum
- Pictures, posters, or postcards of scenes from the BTE
- Computer with Internet access, if needed
- Handout: *Planning our Mural* (p.7)
- Art supplies (for wall mural or paper mural): yarn/string, crayons, markers, paint, butcher paper, tacks/pins, construction paper, scissors, tape
- Student journals
- Human resources
- CD player and music selections (optional)

GETTING READY

1. Students will research examples of Louisiana life via library, computer lab, Internet sources, or films such as “Haunted Waters, Fragile Lands: Oh! What Tales to Tell” (BTNEP video).
2. Decide placement of the class mural. If using a wall is not possible, use plywood sheets or butcher paper.
3. The students will think-pair-share ideas with each other. They will work in small groups while planning and painting.
4. Divide the class into small groups, with each group responsible for gathering information on various historical occupations in the estuary.
5. Decide whether student groups will select their own subject or be assigned one to research.
6. Decide whether to assemble the mural as one unit or as separate panels.
7. Each group will be responsible for gathering information concerning one panel or one area of the mural. This may also include interviewing older residents of the local community to benefit from their input. One resource is
Dean, P., Daspit, T. & Munro, P. (1998). *Talking gumbo: A teacher’s guide to using oral history in the classroom*. T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History: Louisiana State University: Baton Rouge, LA.

PROCESS

1. Have students research images for mural ideas.
2. In groups of three or four, students review the pictures and other information gathered during their research.
3. Ask each student to select one element of interest from his or her research and write a reflective paper discussing facts discovered about the subject.
4. Tell the students that they will be assessed according to the quality of their research, the organization of information, clarity of writing, and dedication to the task. In addition they will be assessed according to group cooperation, journal entries and individual reports.

5. Students should decide what things are most important for them to portray. Ask them to consider how they can best use symbols or pictures to make their point about life in the estuary? Have them brainstorm a list: "Ideas for our Mural". Direct them to use the handout *Planning our Mural* to assist in their decision-making process.
6. Using their researched information and their list of ideas as inspiration, each group of students will prepare a rough sketch of its panel or section of the mural. Use pencil and view it as a work in progress.
7. The mural should create an emotional quality or feeling that matches the topic.
8. Put each group's drawings together to plan the class mural.
9. Transfer the sketches to the wall (or plywood or butcher paper). If needed, you and the students can use an overhead projector or the grid method to sketch onto the mural surface.
10. Practice time: Students will free-draw some of their ideas on paper with pencils. They should practice using paint and different size brushes to "paint" the drawings. That will help them decide which colors will be best to use for their section of the mural.
11. Once students are sufficiently competent working with paint and brushes, they will begin painting on the mural surface, using their sketches as a guide.

NOTE: If it is not possible to paint the mural on a wall, an acceptable alternative would be wood panels. Use the following materials:

- Primer: white or black (Prime the board before drawing the mural)
- 1/4" Plywood cut in two 4' x 6' sections, or desired size
- 1" x 2" Wood studs for framing on backside
- Latex house paint in several colors, or outdoor paint if needed
- Different size brushes
- Pencils
- Markers
- Paper

12. When each group is finished with their section of the mural, they may choose to help others complete their section or begin to paint the background.
13. Each group should solicit feedback from other groups and from the teacher. Have them finish painting details and outline sections with black.
14. To celebrate completion of their masterpiece, all participating artists should sign the mural.
15. Schedule a ceremonial unveiling of their completed mural for the school community.



QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

1. Compare and contrast the figures in the mural. If you use quotations, do the quotations share a unifying theme?
2. How are the panels or parts of the mural similar and different from one another in the Principles of Design? (Refer to the handout *Planning our Mural*.)
3. Can murals have an effect on the way people feel about a location and on the viewers? How does the mural make you feel when you look at it?
4. What were the pros and cons of working together as a group instead of alone?
5. What can you "say" through the art of a mural?
6. What symbols did you use to project your message?
7. Which do you think are stronger, words or pictures? Why?

ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT # 1 REFLECTIVE WRITING:

Students will take one element of interest from their research and write a reflective paper discussing facts discovered about their subject. Drafts and revisions should be done before the final paper is submitted. Artwork and/or pictures should be included. At least one paragraph of the paper should explain what the student painted and how it relates to the culture of the BTE.

ASSESSMENT #2 INFORMATIVE WRITING:

The student will compose an artist's statement of approximately one page in length that clearly explains what is represented in the mural. This statement should explain all parts of the mural and summarize the mural's intended message.

To create a rubric, refer to Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators Web Page
<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html>

EXTENSIONS

Students can create a large-scale map of the BTE using clay and/or other malleable materials. Locations of local importance can be marked on the map. If necessary, these can be keyed to individuals or events on the mural.

RESOURCES

WEB SITES

Hugo Gellert's Seward Park Murals: Lessons on how to paint a mural
<http://newdeal.feri.org/gellert/lesson.htm>

Art and Social Studies lessons for middle school students based on the “Detroit Industry” mural by Diego Rivera
<http://www.dia.org/education/rivera/index.html>

Haring Kids Lesson Plans for Parents, Teachers, Institutions: “How to Make A Mural”
<http://www.haringkids.com/lessons/envs/live/htdocs/lesson119.htm>

“Haunted Waters, Fragile Lands: Oh! What Tales to Tell” video or video clips, available from BTNEP.
<http://educators.btnep.org/default.asp?id=61>

HANDOUT:

PLANNING OUR MURAL

THINK ABOUT:

- Will the mural contain symbols, cut-out pictures, maps, quotes, color, tracings, etc.?
- Will there be a central figure in the panel?
- Do we want to include a quotation?
- How do the pictures on both sides of the central figure relate to the figure or to the quotation?
- How will you organize the separate images into one mural?
- What design principles will unite each group's work into one cohesive unit?
- What is the connection between the images on the right side of the mural and the images on the left side?
- If you decide to work each part of the mural around a central figure, select an individual to feature in the mural, someone whose life and work embodies the ideas you want to portray. If desired, select a representative quote from that individual. Choose the quote on its strength as an idea, as well as on its ability to be represented visually.

CONSIDER:

THE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

REPETITION	Will we use patterns or elements over and over throughout the mural? Will we use lines, shapes, colors, or textures to create patterns?
BALANCE	Will the mural be symmetrical or asymmetrical? (Will both sides of the mural look almost the same or will each side look different?)
CONTRAST	Will we use complementary colors or opposite colors?
CENTER OF INTEREST	Will the mural have a focal point? (What element will you become aware of first? How will we draw your eyes to this particular part of the mural?)
MOVEMENT	How will the eyes move around the mural?
UNITY	How will the mural come together as a whole?

