

**Educational Activities for Elementary Viewers in the  
*Rooted, Revived, Reinvented: Basketry in America Exhibition***

Written by Kristin Gantz

1. **Lesson Overview:** Baskets have been created with many different uses in mind. Beyond the obvious characteristic of being a functional artifact used daily, baskets have also been created to portray stories of past and present times. The skill of basket weaving has different variations throughout parts of the world; by inspecting the materials of traditional vessels, viewers may uncover rich information about who made them and where the artists were from. The shape of the basket may also provide information about why the basket was made and what it could have been used for. Additionally, contemporary baskets deliver stories through images and symbolism.
  
2. **Artists & Artifacts.** The following artists and artifacts have been gathered to explore the idea of storytelling through objects:
  - a. Shan Gorshon, *Preparing for the Fall*, Arches paper, 12.5" x 12.5" x 15.25"
  - b. Aron Fischer
  - c. Carol Eckert, *According to Isidore*, Waxed linen and wire, 20"x88"x5"
  - d. Ojibwa birch bark basket, folded and stitched
  
3. **Goals & Expectations.** Students will be able to:
  - a. Cite evidence from nonprint sources to support claims;
  - b. Make connections between primary and secondary sources; and
  - c. Identify ways in which artists draw upon the past as a source of inspiration
  
4. **National Core Standards**
  - a. **Visual Arts**

Creating: Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.  
Creating: Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.  
Responding: Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.  
Responding: Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.  
Connecting: Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.
  - b. **English Language Arts**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1  
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2  
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3  
Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4  
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5  
Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

- 5. At the museum,** divide the class into three groups. Each group, accompanied by an adult, will take a moment to view each basket individually and discuss the following questions:
- a. Each group should learn a little about each artist in the museum exploration. The information below can be shared with each group upon their arrival at the artifacts:
    - i. **Carol Eckert** creates three-dimensional illustrations of stories, tales, myths, and parables. She chooses stories that are from different cultures but have similar meaning. Her art is made by wrapping twine tightly around wire or string. This artwork is called *According to Isidore*. What do you think this story is about? What do you see to make you say that?
    - ii. **Aron Fischer** creates art to remind us of tools that used to be a part of daily life. Some of them are not easy to recognize, and some we have to look at really hard to discover what they might have been used for. What message do you think the artist trying to deliver through these sculptural baskets?
    - iii. **Shan Gorshon** creates baskets with images of true, authentic Native American lifestyle. Some of her baskets also have written stories woven into them with images. Why do you think the artist has chosen to do this?
    - iv. **This Ojibwa basket** is made out of the bark of a birch tree. This material is strong and durable for the Ojibwa people to carry things in their homeland area around Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota. What natural materials are available where you live? How do they support your daily life? What items do you think this basket was used to carry?
- 6. After visiting the museum,** have students create a weaving that describes their daily life, their own “story.”
- a. On a 9x12” sheet of paper, create a list of qualities and special events that are most memorable in your life. What items or events are the most important in your life?
  - b. These special events may be represented by symbols, too. Can you think of any symbols for these special times (animals, plants, special objects)?
  - c. Explain why these things are important on your list. If you’ve chosen symbols, explain how those symbols represent the important things in your life. Save this list to be woven into the final artwork.
  - d. Allow students to search for images from magazines they can cut out and glue onto cardstock. The entire sheet of cardstock should be covered. When complete, cut these pictures into 1”x12” strips. Number them from top to bottom, 1-10.
  - e. Fold the written list in half “hamburger style” (9” sides together). Leaving 1” space along the short edges, draw lines spaced 1” apart. With the list still folded, cut along the lines. A template may need to be done for lower elementary students.
  - f. Weave the collaged image strips in order from top to bottom. Glue strips on the ends to keep woven strips in place.