

The Magic Circle of Drama



A Handbook of 40 Lesson Plans
Integrating Theater Arts
Into the Classroom Curriculum

Developed by:
Educational Arts Team

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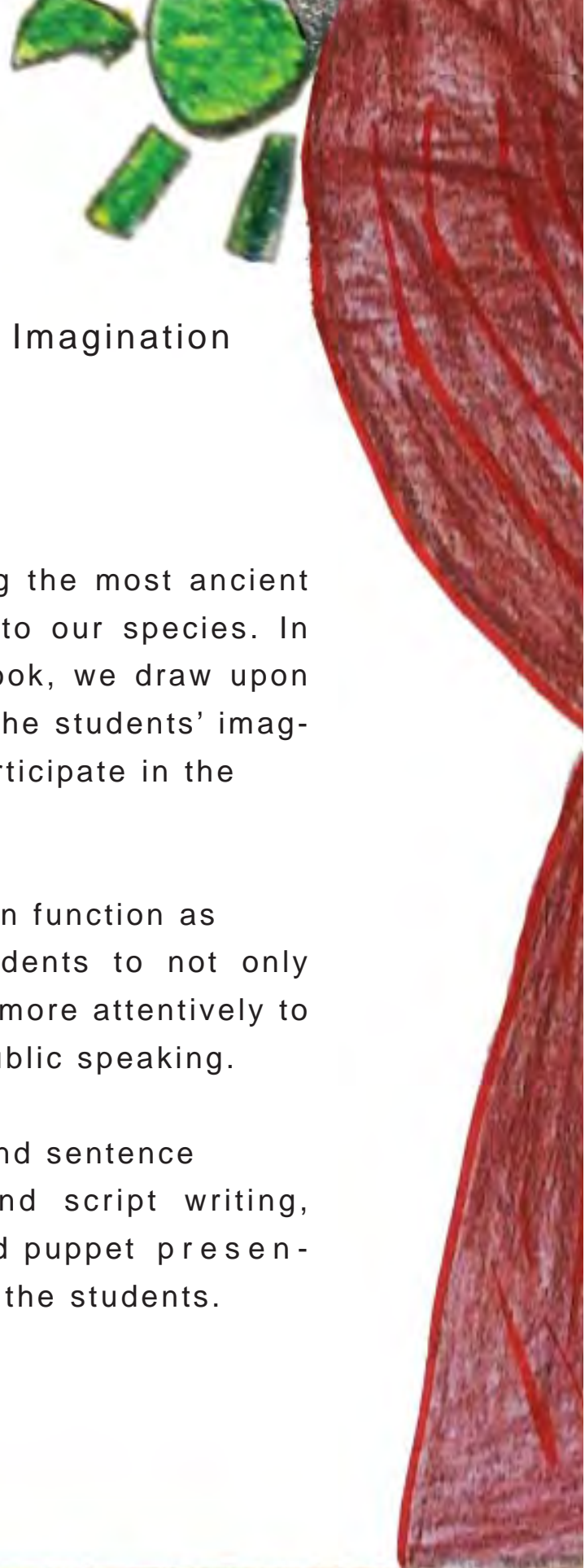
Unit 1

Using Mime, Puppets and the Imagination To Develop Literacy

Mime and storytelling are among the most ancient forms of communication known to our species. In this, the first unit in our handbook, we draw upon these ancient forms to open up the students' imaginations, challenging them to participate in the creation of a story.

Mime, puppetry and improvisation function as powerful incentives for the students to not only invent stories, but also to listen more attentively to others and gain confidence in public speaking.

This unit builds from wordplay and sentence construction to storymaking and script writing, which culminate in an improvised puppet presentation created and performed by the students.



Unit 2

The Colonial Experience

Giving Voice to Everyday People in American History

This series of lessons uses role drama to examine various conflicts from multiple perspectives during critical moments in American Colonial history. In a series of historical scenarios, characters are faced with difficult choices to make: a young indentured servant on the Mayflower must decide how to handle the ensuing rebellion that leads to the Mayflower Compact; a father and son debate the merits of loyalty to the crown vs. the call to rebellion; a Lenape tribe must choose whom to side with in the midst of the American Revolution; a young American soldier, fighting in the darkest moments of the War for Independence, overcome the hardships of what looks to be a lost cause. In the final lesson plan, a slave rebellion presents a tantalizing opportunity for a brother and sister to weigh the cost of freedom against the danger involved to achieve it.

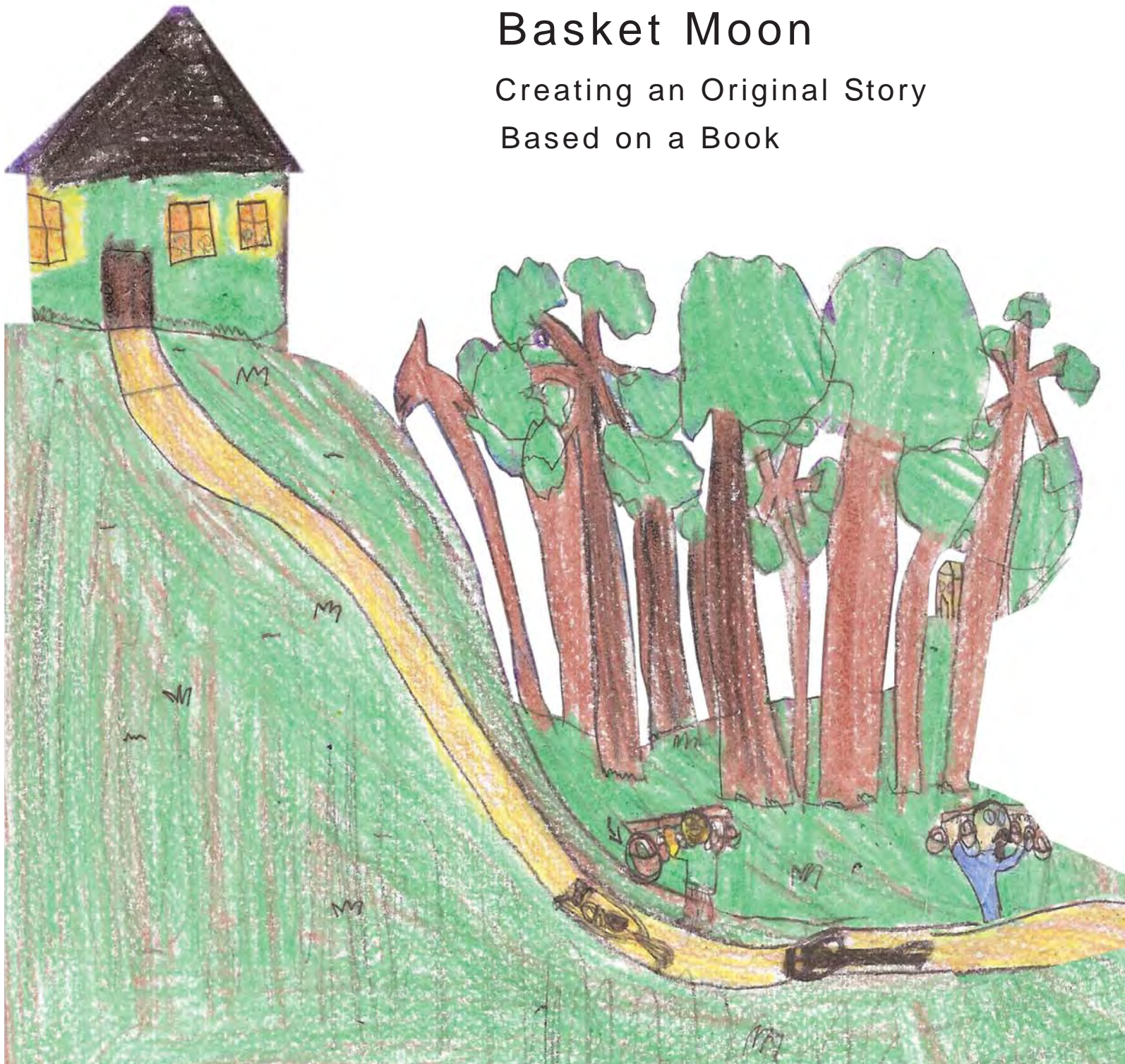




Unit 3

Basket Moon

Creating an Original Story
Based on a Book





In this unit, students work at developing a new story based on the book *Basket Moon* by Mary Lyn Ray (Little, Brown, & Co., Boston, 1999).

The lesson plans capture an awareness and appreciation of the value of tradition and family that is expressed so well in the original story. As members of a family planning a reunion in the Catskill area of New York State, students devise a plan to help their great Aunt Hannah keep her ancestral home in the mountains.





Unit 4

Lenape Tales

Learning Lenape Culture through Telling,
Writing, and Staging Stories



In this unit, students will engage themselves with three Lenape* tales. They will have the opportunity to turn two of the stories into puppet presentations; the second into a storytelling performance.

By developing scripts, creating scenery for them, and being able to tell the stories, the students will learn factual information about Lenape culture.

These lessons help students develop concentration, cooperation, oral communication, writing and research skills.

Through this process, not only will students successfully learn about the Lenape Native-American culture, but they will also partake in various theatrical roles -- writer, actor, director, scenic designer, performer, and audience member.

* Please note: In this unit the tribe will be designated either as Lenape or Leni Lenape



Allow approximately 15-20 minutes for the students to write. When they are finished they can proofread their work by sharing it with a partner.

6. Scenerymaking

Give each student a sheet of white paper (8 ½" x 11"). Ask them if they know what "scenery" is and give some examples from plays or movies they may have seen. Have them brainstorm some things that would appear in the background for each of the stories. If necessary, create an example on the board. Invite them to design with pencil and crayons a scene that they can use as a backdrop for their puppet show. Explain that they are creating elements of the scenery. Hang each scenery element on a strip of black construction paper. (see below)



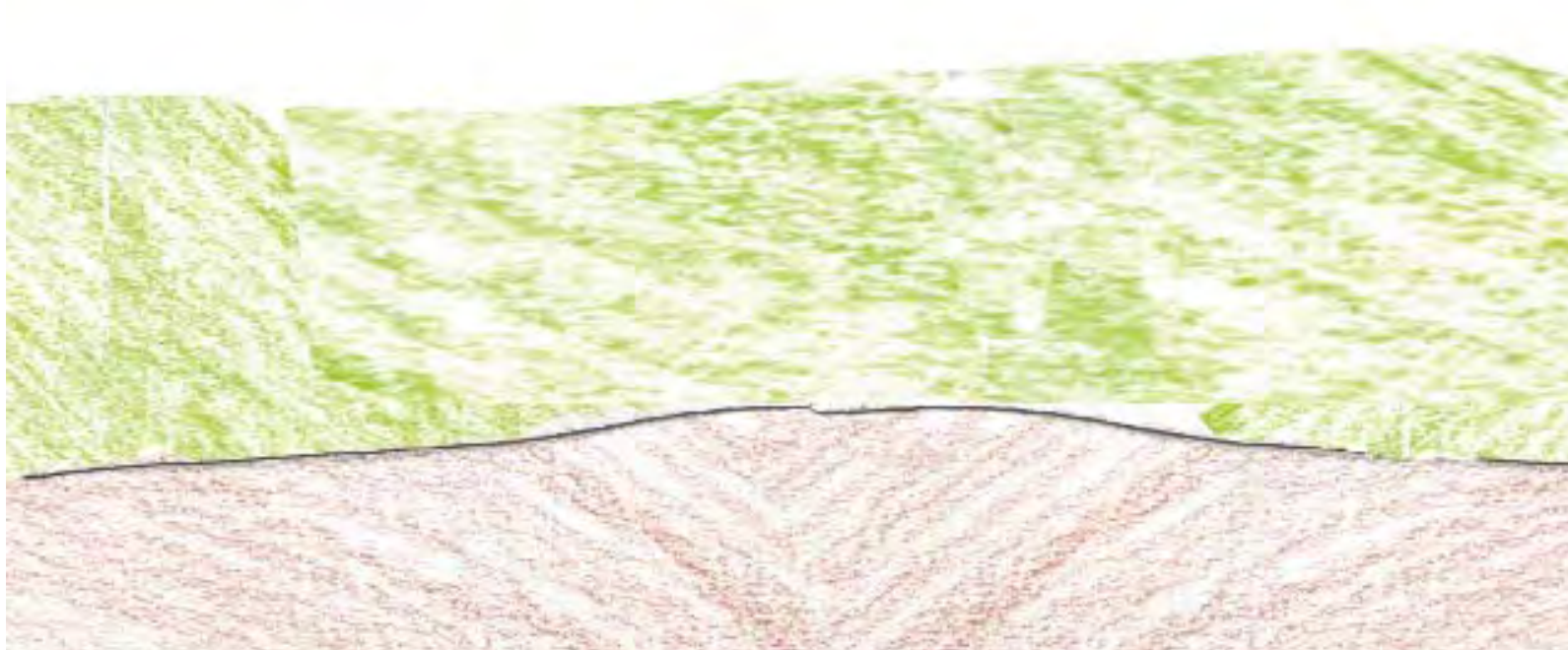
Unit 5

Tall Tales

Learning to Create Characters and Imaginative Stories

In this unit, students will enrich their imaginations. First, they will have the opportunity to hear a series of Tall Tales; then create a fictional character; and finally, they will tell and write their own imaginative stories.

This series of workshops enables students to improve their listening and writing skills and gain confidence in speaking in front of an audience.



Lesson 1

Storytelling Games

Students Will Be Able To:

- Improve their listening skills and gain confidence in speaking by playing a storytelling game.
- Enhance their ability to develop imagination by recalling a moment from a storytelling game and drawing a picture of it.
- Identify the tools of an actor by participating in a movement and concentration exercise.

Materials Needed: Blank pieces of drawing paper

Setting the Context

1. Acting Tools and Skills

Teacher: In our lesson today, we are going to learn some of the skills that actors use to do drama.

Write on the board the words: body, voice, imagination, concentration, and cooperation.



The following tools and skills of acting are explained and practiced at the beginning of this workshop to set a tone of seriousness and focus.

The tools are:

Awareness of body

Awareness of voice

The skills are:

Developing imagination

Developing concentration

Developing cooperation

You might want to begin by playing some form of quiet reflective music in the background that can continue throughout the exercise.

Demonstrate and then lead the students in the following exercise:

Teacher: Follow along as I give directions.

- Please stand with your feet shoulder length apart.
- Take a deep breath and then gently exhale as you bend your knees and reach down to touch your toes.
- Rise slowly as you inhale and guide your hands up along the side of your body. Be in control of your body as you straighten up. With your arms extended, exhale and relax.



- Guide your hands to the throat area and take another quiet breath. This helps us to remember the need to be in control of **our voices**.
- Now guide your fingers to your temples, stop and close your eyes. This will help you to remember the need to use **our imaginations**. Visualize something that makes you happy and hold that image in your mind for several seconds as you breathe deeply and relax.
- Open your eyes and stretch your arms straight into the air, fingers pointing to the ceiling. Gaze over the heads of your classmates and find an object to focus on. This will help you to strengthen your **ability to concentrate**.
- Finally, slowly lower your arms out to the sides and point them straight out from your shoulders like wings on an air plane. This is **the symbol for cooperation** and shows that you are ready to work with the group. Now, s-l-o-w-l-y let your arms come down to your side.

As the class does this last part of the exercise, the students should be standing if possible in a group circle, so that they can lightly place their hands on the shoulders of their classmates standing to the left and right.

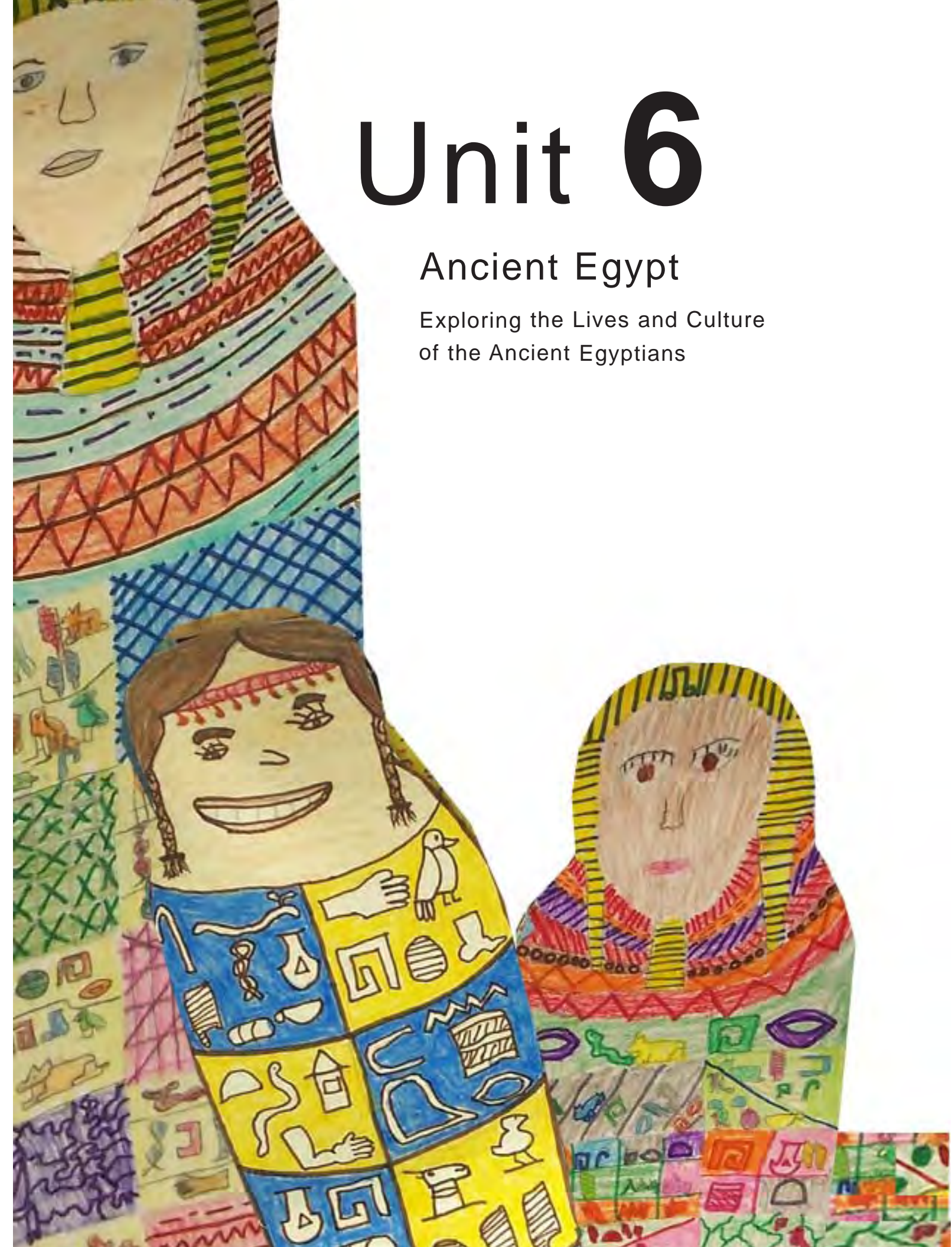
Teacher: In addition to the acting skills and tools we will be working on becoming better storymakers, story presenters and attentive audience members.



Unit 6

Ancient Egypt

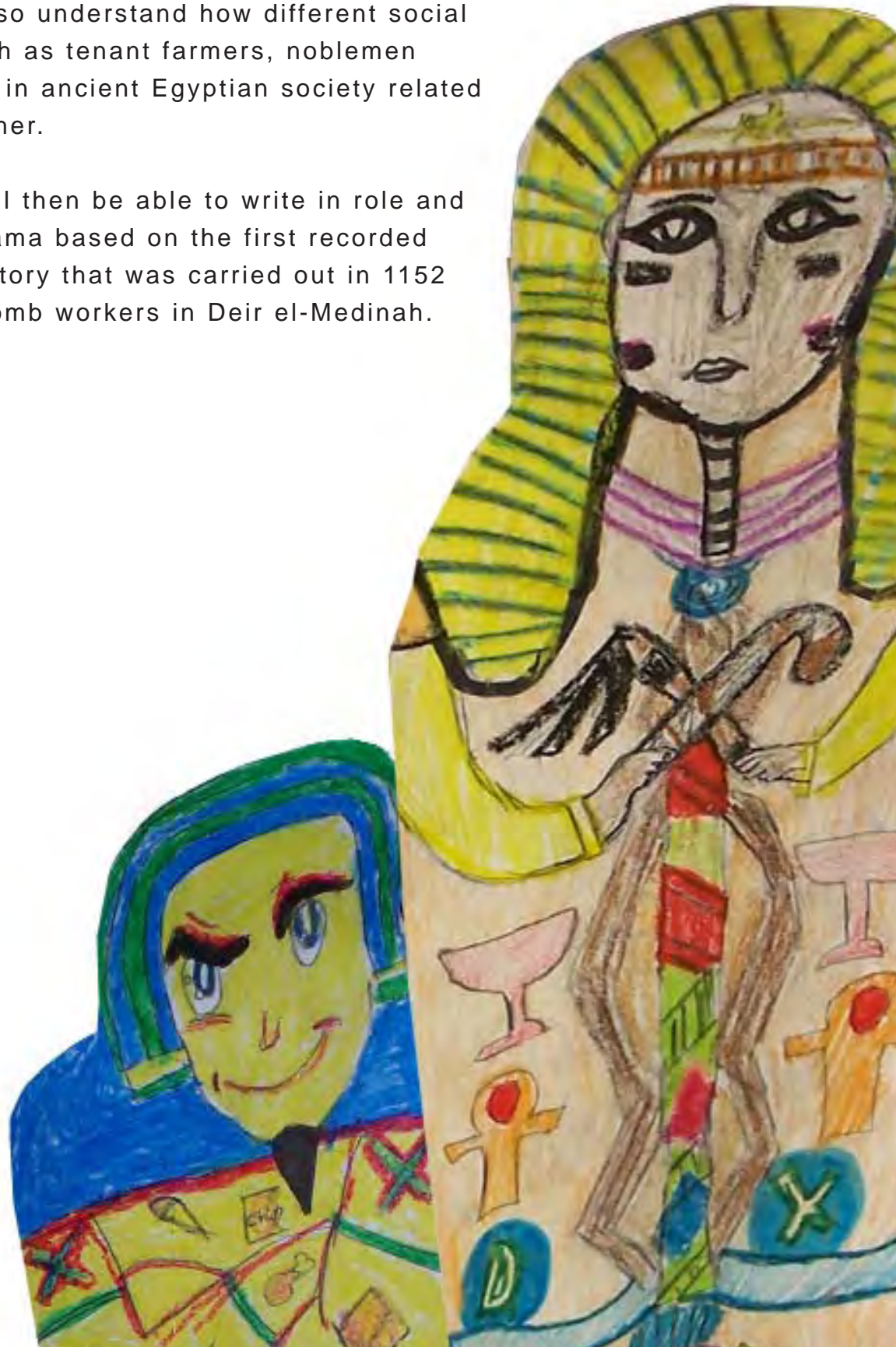
Exploring the Lives and Culture of the Ancient Egyptians



Analyzing poetry and art found in ancient Egyptian tombs, students will recognize how Egypt's geographic location impacted the lives of people living along the Nile River.

They will also understand how different social classes such as tenant farmers, noblemen and scribes in ancient Egyptian society related to one another.

Students will then be able to write in role and create a drama based on the first recorded strike in history that was carried out in 1152 B.C.E. by tomb workers in Deir el-Medinah.



New Jersey Curriculum Standards Addressed in Unit 5

Language Arts 3.2 (Writing) - All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

- A. Writing as a Process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, post-writing)
- B. Writing as a Product (resulting in a formal product or publication)
- C. Mechanics, Spelling, and Handwriting
- D. Writing Forms, Audiences, and Purposes (exploring a variety of forms)

Language Arts 3.3 (Speaking) - All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

- A. Discussion (small group and whole class)
- B. Questioning (Inquiry) and Contributing
- C. Word Choice
- D. Oral Presentation

Language Arts 3.4 (Listening) - All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.

- A. Active Listening
- B. Listening Comprehension

Visual and Performing Arts 1.2 (Creation and Performance) - All students will utilize those skills, media, methods and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance and presentation of dance, music, theater, and visual art.

- C. Theater
 - 1. Discuss and demonstrate the connection between body, movement, and voice in theatrical expression.

Unit 7

Ancient Greece

Breathing Life into Ancient Greek Mythology

In this unit, students are introduced to the world of ancient Greek mythology. Through storytelling, improvisation and scriptwriting students learn the related stories of Prometheus the Bringer of Fire and Pandora's Box providing them the opportunity to learn about the role of ancient Greece in the development of Western philosophy.

The questions these two myths ponder are still relevant to this day. What is the source of the “spark” of the imagination? What is the price of technological progress? Why is there suffering in the world?



New Jersey Curriculum Standards Addressed in Unit 7

Language Arts 3.2 (Writing) - All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

- A. Writing as a Process (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, post-writing)
- B. Writing as a Product (resulting in a formal product or publication)
- D. Writing Forms, Audiences, and Purposes (exploring a variety of forms)

Language Arts 3.3 (Speaking) - All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

- A. Discussion (small group and whole class)
- B. Questioning (Inquiry) and Contributing
- C. Word Choice
- D. Oral Presentation

Language Arts 3.4 (Listening) - All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations

- A. Active Listening
- B. Listening Comprehension

Social Studies 6.3 - All students will demonstrate knowledge of world history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and the future.

- B. Early Human Societies to 500C.E.
 - 4. Describe the significant contributions of ancient Greece to Western Civilization including: Greek mythology

Visual and Performing Arts 1.2 (Creation and Performance) - All students will utilize those skills, media, methods and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance and presentation of dance, music, theater, and visual art.

- C. Theater
 - 1. Discuss and demonstrate the connection between body, movement, and voice in theatrical expression.
 - 2. Create characterizations in context through manipulation of vocal and physical qualities and circumstances.
 - 3. Collaboratively plan and execute group scenes stemming from improvisation.
 - 4. Analyze classroom dramatizations from different perspectives (e.g., playwright, actor, director, designer) and suggest alternatives for creating and interpreting roles, arranging environments, and developing situations.

Lesson 1

Statues

Students Will Be Able To:

- Understand why societies like those in ancient Greece chose to memorialize individuals and ideals by creating tableau-sculpture. .

Materials Needed: None

Setting the Context

1. Introduce Ancient Greece

Teacher: In this unit, we will be studying ancient Greece. What do you think of when you hear the words “ancient Greece”?

One of the things I think of is a Greek statue. The Greeks made statues of their gods, famous people and scenes from mythology. What is a statue? Can anyone name a famous statue? Where have you ever seen a statue? Why do you think a society makes statues of people and puts them in public?



In this lesson we will be using our bodies and voices to create statues. We will also begin to work with a Greek myth about Prometheus, Zeus and Pandora. As we work, let's think about how well we are using our imaginations, bodies and voices. Also, let's think about what this story tells us about the people who created this story.

Engaging the Students

2. The Statue Game: Whole Class

Teacher: We are going to play the statue game, in which we all become statues. Remember, statues do not move or talk. Everyone, please stand. On the count of 3, please become the Statue of Liberty: 1, 2, 3, freeze. Now please become a statue of a famous baseball player: 1, 2, 3, freeze. Now freeze as a statue of a famous doctor: 1, 2, 3, freeze.

Now when I give the signal, please model any statue you want to become: 1, 2, 3, freeze.

Everyone please sit. Who would like to volunteer and show us what statue you did?

As students come up to become statues, ask the rest of the class to guess what they have become. If the class cannot guess the statue after three turns, ask the student who is the statue to tell the class who or what he/she is. As the game progresses, ask the students the following question:



Unit 8

Rumpelstiltskin

Using Process Drama to Extend a Story

Through role drama, students are invited into the imaginary world of Rumpelstiltskin. Students take on the role of advisors to the queen and are involved in an intense, pressure-filled and time-sensitive dilemma they need to resolve.

Throughout the unit, the students weigh various options, debate points of view, and create varied endings to the story.

The opportunities for creative writing increase as the students become progressively engaged.



Unit 9

Ancient Rome

Exploring the Aeneid, a Roman Myth



In this unit, students are introduced to the national epic poem of the Roman Empire, the Aeneid, wherein they meet both mythical characters and ancient Roman gods. This story which takes up where Homer's Iliad ends was written by the poet Virgil. This work connects the first Roman Emperor Augustus Caesar and the Julian clan to the semi-divine Aeneas, a mythical and ancient ancestor of the founders of the city of Rome.

Through storytelling, improvisation, movement, thought-tracking and scriptwriting, students explore the significance of the Aeneid, a foundation story revealing the attributes every Roman citizen needed to embody. They also examine their own values and compare the Aeneid story to one about a young George Washington.

Note to teacher: As we worked with various classes, we discovered that the Aeneid provided many opportunities for dramatic action and writing. Feel free to expand the lessons as needed, or skip some if there are time constraints.

The accompanying video contains only a small selection of the many activities we developed for this unit and also contains some activities we have not included in the handbook.



Lesson 1

Foundation Stories

Students Will Be Able To:

- Illustrate their perception of heroic values by creating a mandala.
- Reflect on the values they have illustrated by writing and discussion.
- Identify the values contained within a legend of the United States by listening to and discussing a story.

Materials Needed: Mandala sheet for each student, markers, crayons and/or colored pencils, easel pad paper (27x30 inches)

Setting the Context

1. Introducing the Aeneid as a Foundation Story from Ancient Rome

Teacher: The next unit we are going to work on is about ancient Rome. What do you know about ancient Rome? Please share some of your thoughts.

In this unit we are going to work on an ancient Roman myth called the Aeneid. It is about Aeneas, a great warrior and hero of Rome.



Engaging the Students

2. Creating a “What Makes a Hero?” Mandala

Teacher: Now we are going to think about what makes someone a hero. What are some qualities in people that might make them a hero?

Next we are going to create an art project called *mandalas*. The project will allow us to think about the qualities which we believe are needed to be a hero.

Hang a large square sheet of easel pad paper (approximately 27x30 inches) in front of the class. Using magic markers draw four concentric circles.

Mandala is an ancient Sanskrit word for “circle.” It is an artistic arrangement of symbols and designs in a circular pattern. Some examples of a mandala are the colorful iris of your eye and a round stained-glass window.

If you can find some visual examples of mandalas, show them to the students.

Teacher: What is one quality that you believe is crucial for a hero to have?

Go from student to student eliciting examples.



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