



A module series introducing new ideas for the classroom

STORYTELLING SCROLL OF IDENTITY & COMMUNITY

By Raksha Joshi and Monica Jahan Bose

In this lesson, educators will have access to an art-making lesson appropriate for students in Grades 3-8 that connects personal memoir and self-expression. The art-making steps for this lesson includes a co-created fabric scroll representing individual identity and classroom community.

This lesson includes:

- A broad overview of the big idea and goals
- Detailed steps for a two-part lesson
- Guiding questions for discussions with students
- Recommendations for art materials and picture books
- Links to works of art by Monica Jahan Bose
- A worksheet for students
- Social Emotional Learning graphics

There is an accompanying Learning Lab collection where you can view examples of each lesson. Please visit smithsonianapa.org/learn/making-art/ to find the Learning Lab in the Storytelling Scroll of Identity and Community module.

Let's begin!

OVERVIEW	
BIG IDEA	Students will connect a personal narrative through art, and co-create a fabric scroll representing individual identity and classroom community. Students will each create a small work on fabric or paper using personal objects, memories and writing using inspiration from the work of Bangladeshi-American artist Monica Jahan Bose.
GOALS	Students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on what is personally relevant and authentic to them, using this reflection as inspiration for writing with intention• Merge visual expression and written communication into a work of art• Synthesize ideas from multiple sources• Identify themes in art• Make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts and society
CREATION	A co-created fabric scroll representing individual identity and classroom community.

CONSTRAINTS: *This lessons' time, age range, and materials are listed here.*

TIME REQUIRED	90 minutes
BEST FOR AGES	Grades 3-8
SUGGESTED MATERIALS (see Adaptations for more ideas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Picture books and texts (see Appendix for additional recommendations)• Precut fabric; white or cream quilting squares, 8 x 8 in or 10 x 10 in• Markers, permanent and/or fabric markers• Adhesive or needle and thread• Printer paper
STANDARDS	<p><i>English/Language Arts:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society• Use text evidence to support an appropriate response• Make inferences and use evidence to support understanding• Synthesize information to create new understanding• Describe how the author's use of imagery, literal and figurative language such as simile and metaphor, and sound devices achieves specific purposes (author's craft)
SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical thinking• Visual thinking• Word analysis• Collaboration
SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL	<p>Social Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting diversity• Recognizing family, school, and community supports <p>Relationship Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building relationships with diverse individuals and groups <p>Self Awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relating feelings and thoughts to behavior• Accurate self-assessment of strengths and challenges
CREATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate multiple ideas• Make creative choices• Construct mental and/or physical models

IMPLEMENTATION

In this lesson, students will use a personal object, plus sentences they write about themselves, to create an artwork. At the end, students and their classmates will join their pieces together to create a collaborative scroll with their collective stories, similar to Monica Jahan Bose's artistic approach.

This lesson has two main parts.

- Part 1: Sharing texts, art, and building background
- Part 2: Getting ready for the art project, and making art!

Each part provides recommendations on how to implement this lesson in a virtual classroom (via Zoom) and an in-person classroom, as well as personal notes from educator Raksha Joshi about what worked for her and her students. Look for sections that say “**From Raksha**” to see what worked for her!

Part I: Sharing texts, art, and building background

Picture books can be a powerful teaching tool to springboard conversations. They can also be used as mentor texts for writers, even beyond the elementary years. Below are recommendations for books, as well as guiding questions that can be used for discussions with students. Select texts about identity and community that highlight age-appropriate themes (see recommendations in the chart below).

1. For the teacher: Plan stopping points and questions before, during, and after texts. The chart below includes suggestions to help guide inquiry and conversation.

From Raksha: This lesson is part of a larger unit about culture and identity, and can be adapted for language arts and social studies over the course of several weeks during the beginning of the school year. Below are texts I used with my students. In the Appendix, there are additional recommendations you could use.

Text	Guiding questions to ask students after reading the book:
<i>The Name Jar</i> , by Yangsook Choi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do Unhei and Unhei's mother each think about the idea of being different? Why might they think that?• What is the significance of Unhei watching the rain through the window?• What do you think Unhei thinks about after reading the letter from her grandmother?• How does this book tie in to our unit of culture, identity, and community?
<i>Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom</i> , by Dia Cha	<p>For this text, provide some context about Hmong/Mong communities before we began reading this text. The images are all part of one story cloth. For this lesson, we focused the questions, listed below, on reading the sections of the story cloth so students would pay attention to the intricate details. This is a visual arts based teaching strategy called Art Talk.</p> <p>There are 3 stages to the questioning.</p> <p><u>Stage 1: Make observations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you notice in the picture?• What's happening in this image? <p>From Raksha: We asked these questions frequently to encourage students to look closely and pay attention to the details of the story cloth to highlight. I typed students' answers in a chart so that everyone could see what was being shared.</p>

Text	Guiding questions to ask students after reading the book:
<i>Dia's Story Cloth: The Hmong People's Journey of Freedom</i> , by Dia Cha	<p><u>Stage 2: Make content connections:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does this image communicate? Why? What do you see that makes you say that? What are some other connections to culture, identity, or community? <p>From Raksha: After reading the entire book, we analyzed the image of the entire story cloth in the middle of the book using these questions.</p> <p><u>Stage 3: Make personal connections:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does this image remind you of? What does this tell us about the world around us? How is this image a metaphor for your identity? Culture? Our community? If this image extended the ceilings and beyond the screen to the walls, what would be needed to represent your identity? Our community? <p>From Raksha: For this stage, I used the entire story cloth image from the middle of the book.</p>
<i>My Two Blankets</i> , by Irena Kobald	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does the cold waterfall represent? 2. What does her old blanket represent? 3. The author uses temperature to describe her emotional states. Is this effective?

2. Organize a class discussion to build background knowledge of how stories can be told through art and build vocabulary throughout the unit. Ask students to define and provide examples of:

- a. identity
- b. culture
- c. community

From Raksha: Steps 2-4 can happen in tandem throughout several class periods.

3. Use images or videos of Monica Jahan Bose's art to further the discussion of identity. Monica's artwork blends identity and language. She started using a top (sari blouse) given to her by her mother as a springboard for making artwork about her own identity. She also uses text in various configurations to create these fragmented narrative art works. Below are links the teacher can use to show Monica's work:



[Mother Tongue](#)

From Raksha: I used [Art Talk](#), a visual arts based strategy to guide conversations around Monica's work, and applied similar questions in the chart above for looking at Monica's artwork with students. Questions used for *Dia's Story Cloth* may be a helpful guide when looking at Monica's artwork.



[The People Will Rise](#)

Part II: Getting ready for the art project, and making art!

4. Ask students to bring in a personal object or garment that has special meaning for them. It could be a t-shirt, a childhood toy, a memento, a book, a letter or gift from a relative or friend.
5. Use the personal objects to springboard ideas about identity and personal experiences to write a six word memoir. Have students work in pairs so that Student A shares about their personal object while Student B takes notes. The student partners should come up with 10 important words as possibilities for developing their 6-word memoir. This activity should take about 6 minutes.

From Raksha: I created a worksheet for students to help them write down their drafts and revisions. See the Appendix to find the template.

6. After this step, ask students to come together as a whole group to see what went well for students. After hearing what students have shared about their experience in Step 5, evaluate whether another approach might help students in this process before Step 7.
7. Repeat step 6, where Student B talks about their personal object while Student A takes notes.
8. Once the student pairs meet, the teacher should model drafting a 6-word memoir using their own personal object. [This resource](#) provides helpful information about the story behind 6-word memoirs and how to write one.
9. After students watch the teacher modeling how to draft a 6-word memoir, students will begin drafting their 6-word memoir using their paired brainstorming notes. This step in the activity can be done in one class session or broken up to take place over a few days, depending on your teaching schedule.
10. The teacher models how to revise the 6-word memoir draft by considering diction, order, punctuation, et cetera. After modeling, students will then revise their 6-word memoirs.
11. Once students have revised their memoirs, create new student pairings so that students can share their 6-word memoirs. Ask students to provide feedback to each other.
12. When students have completed sharing their memoirs and providing feedback, reintroduce images of Monica's artwork to the class and look closely at the images. With students, share observations about Monica's artworks.
13. With students, ask them to use their personal object (or a representation of it) and their 6-word memoir to create a work of art. Below are art-making recommendations from artist Monica Jahan Bose to guide students as they decorate a cloth square or piece of paper (see Materials or Materials Adaptations for recommendations on materials to use at home or in the classroom). Each step includes a link to a work of art by Monica to illustrate how the step can be done for this lesson.

Monica's Tips and Ideas for the Art Making:

- a. Make a drawing of your personal object or trace it. Use one or two of your words to make a border around the edges of your cloth or paper. Draw yourself or your family into the work. [Here is a example](#) of how I did this in one of my paintings.
- b. Write your 6-word memoir with a sharpie or marker in a shape that expresses something about you or the words you have written.. You could write them in a circle, in a silhouette of your face or body, or inside the shape of your personal object, in multiple columns. Be imaginative! [Here is an example](#) of how I have done this.
- c. Take all or part of your personal object and glue or adhere it onto your cloth or piece of paper. Place your memoir in the middle of the work in any arrangement that is visually pleasing to you. Color your whole fabric or paper with a background color, like [this example](#).
- d. Draw a picture of your home, your room, or your neighborhood. Type your memoir with a computer, print it on paper and cut out the words or sentences and arrange them on the work with glue in the shape of your home, room, apartment building, or neighborhood street grid. Add any imagery that helps express your personal narrative. [Here is an example](#) of how I have done this.

- a. In the end, you may join individual pieces together to make a collaborative piece. [This sari](#) was a collaborative piece that many refugees worked on to express their histories and journeys. Your students' pieces could talk about moving from somewhere, their family's migration, or changes in their lives. Paint or markers can be used to add images and color to the work. The colors chosen could be what is visually appealing or it could have symbolic meaning.
- b. [Here is another example](#) of how the individual pieces can come together to make a scroll. In this project a number of large sari art pieces were sewn together to create a huge scroll, which was carried outside in a procession and performance. Each piece can be sewn or taped together to make a collective scroll at the end of the project. If you can, you may want to do a procession with it, or think of it as a film or storyboard and make a video of it from left to right with a phone camera. When students complete the work, they can be sewed together into a long scroll by joining just one side of each piece. Students could adhere the pieces on the final day as part of a final activity or performance or they can be sewn by a parent volunteer. The joined piece can be carried by the students to the playground or the front of the school. It can be filmed from left to right on a phone camera to save and share as documentation. For the online paper method: Students take photos of the paperwork and send it to the teacher. The teacher or parent volunteer can print them and adhere them together into a scroll. Alternatively, they could be joined digitally.

14. Carve out time to have discussion and reflection about Monica's art as inspiration for paper drafts of student artwork based on their personal object and 6-word memoir. Similar to Step 9, this can be done in one session or across several sessions.
15. Students will draft their work of art on paper. Once students have drafted their work on paper, they will transfer it to a piece of pre-cut fabric square using fabric markers or permanent markers.

From Raksha: I did this via Zoom in breakout groups (about 8 students per room) and students had different roles to keep (time keeper, task manager, thought partner, etc.) to facilitate the process as I circulated through the rooms. This can be done in one session or over multiple sessions. The steps below show how this was done with Zoom--this approach can be done in-person, with students working in small groups in the classroom.

16. Students will share their final art pieces in breakout rooms, or small classroom groups, (about 4 students per room). Give each student about 2 minutes to share their work and 1 minute for questions from the group. Here are some ideas that may help students shape the breakout room discussions:
 - a. Present the personal object or reflection, and why they chose it for this project
 - b. Their process for writing the memoir
 - c. How their ideas may have changed during the drafting and revision processes
 - d. What they did for their artwork, and why
17. Once students have shared their process and works of art, come back as a whole class to share and reflect. Here are some ideas teachers can use for this final share-out:
 - a. Play instrumental music to welcome everyone
 - b. Ask students to mute themselves, turn off the camera, and select to hide non-video participants when they are not presenting. Ask everyone to turn their camera off until their breakout room is called
 - c. Allow breakout rooms to share their works of art one at a time with their cameras on, or in-person to the entire class. This step works like a virtual gallery walk--for approximately 90 seconds, everyone will show their works of art to the camera (or in the class). You can continue to have music playing as everyone shows their fabric squares or paper.
 - d. After all artwork is shared, ask students to respond in Zoom chat to a prompt, or share their thoughts in a classroom. One idea for teachers to ask students is, "What ideas would you like to borrow if you were doing this again?"
18. With students' individual cloth pieces, join them together to create a collaborative scroll with collective stories, similar to Monica's approach in her Tips e and f. Once this collaborative scroll is done, it can be used to decorate a classroom, hallway, etc., so that students can learn more about each other.

MATERIALS ADAPTATIONS

Fabric method:

For this lesson, plain white or solid light colored fabric pre-cut into rectangular or square pieces, at least 10 x 10 or 8x 10 inches, was used. Each student received one piece. Old bed sheets can be used if there is a volunteer who can cut them. Precut fabric can be ordered online. If using the fabric method, when individual squares are ready to be connected to make a classroom scroll, you can use tape, bottled glue, fabric tape, or fabric glue.

Paper method (ideal for virtual classroom):

If using a paper method for this project, here are suggested materials:

- 8 ½ x 11 printer paper (each student can use multiple sheets) or cardstock
- Colored markers, pens, pencils, or crayons.
- Elmer's school glue
- Tempera paint (optional)
- Tape

For decorating and coloring:

Instead of permanent markers, paint (acrylic, tempera) can be used for fabric. For the paper-version of this project, colored pencils, crayons, pens and paint can be used.

APPENDIX

Other Text Suggestions:

- *The Unbreakable Code*, written by Sara Hoagland Hunter, illustrated by Julia Miner
- *Masks*, by Shel Silverstein
- *When No One Is Watching*, written by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by David A. Johnson
- *Someday*, written by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Rosie Winstead
- *Alma and How She Got Her Name*, written and illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal
- *Love*, written by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Loren Long
- *Patterns of Power Inviting Young Writers Into the Conventions of Language, Grades 1-5*, by Jeff Anderson and Whitney La Rocca.

From Raksha: This is helpful for guidance on how to use mentor texts to support student writing.

Social Emotional Learning Graphics Used by Austin Independent School District:



Austin Independent School District Social & Emotional Learning Competencies



**Safe, inclusive, culturally responsive,
academically engaging, and
equitable learning environments**

SEL Core Competencies

Self-Management

- Regulating one's emotions
- Managing stress
- Self-control
- Self-motivation
- Stress management
- Setting and achieving goals

Self-Awareness

- Labeling one's feelings
- Relating feelings and thoughts to behavior
- Accurate self-assessment of strengths and challenges
- Self-efficacy
- Optimism

Social Awareness

- Perspectivetaking
- Empathy
- Respecting diversity
- Understanding social and ethical norms of behavior
- Recognizing family, school, and community supports

Relationship Skills

- Building relationships with diverse individuals and groups
- Communicating clearly
- Working cooperatively
- Resolving conflicts
- Seeking help



Responsible Decision-Making

- Considering the well-being of self and others
- Recognizing one's responsibility to behave ethically
- Basing decisions on safety, social and ethical considerations
- Evaluating realistic consequences of various actions
- Making constructive, safe choices for self, relationships and school

Sources: CASEL, Acknowledge Alliance



WORKSHEET TEMPLATE FOR STUDENTS

Six Word Memoir

(Everyone has a story. What's Yours?)

Part 1:

Personal object: _____

Why your personal object is important (be specific):

Brainstorm partner: _____

Brainstorm (ideas/ concepts/ words/ phrases):

Six Word Memoir Draft

Part 2:

Revision partner: _____

Six Word Memoir Revision:

Six Word Memoir art (ideas/ concepts/ sketches/ drawings):