

Lesson Plan: Regional Art of Tattoos- The Muscogee



Note to Instructors

This lesson plan was designed to supplement the exhibit “We Tattooed Your Father: The Global Art of Tattoos” at the Columbus Museum.

Subjects Covered: The activities and assignments presented in this lesson plan comply with several Georgia Performance Standards and are ideal for a class who will be discussing regional history or topics associated with Regional Native American History.

If your class is planning a trip to the Columbus Museum you may wish to consult with the education department about other materials that may be valuable prior to your visit. Additionally, the Education & History department can be consulted about any changes that the history exhibitions might have recently undergone. Again, the Columbus Museum would be more than willing to assist with measures to help extend the activities below.



LESSON

Case History: Muscogee Tattoo Traditions

Grades: 9-12

Goal: Students will learn to make connections between potential Muscogee Creek Indian tattoo practices and the Muscogee Creek Indian's pottery practice. Through examining the images of Muscogee Creek Pottery the students will infer the potential designs the Muscogee Creek would have employed as well as the potential symbolism.

Relevant Georgia Performance Standards: SSUSH1, ELAGSE9-10RL1, ELAGSE9-10W2, ELAGSE9-10W4, ELAGSE9-10W6, ELAGSE9-10W7, ELAGSE9-10W8, ELAGSE9-10W9, ELAGSE9-10W10, ELAGSE9-10SL1, ELAGSE11-12W1, ELAGSE11-12W2, ELAGSE11-12W4, ELAGSE11-12W5, ELAGSE11-12W6, ELAGSE11-12W7, ELAGSE11-12W8, ELAGSE11-12SL1, ELAGSE11-12SL2, ELAGSE11-12SL4, VAHSVAMC.2, VAHSVAMC.3, VAHSUAMC.4, VAHSVACU.1, VAHSVAPR.2, VAHSVAPR.5, VAHVAAR.1, VAHSDRMC.1, VAHSDRMC.3, VAHSDRMC.4, VAHSDRAR.2

Overall Materials Needed:

Images of swift creek pottery (Included in this packet)*

Paper

Pencils, markers, or color pencils

Linoleum blocks

Brayer, baren, lino cutter

Water-soluble ink(s)

(Optional: cardboard, rigid paper, sponge, hot glue gun, hot glue sticks)

*A few images of Swift Creek Pottery are provided you may need to source more images if necessary.

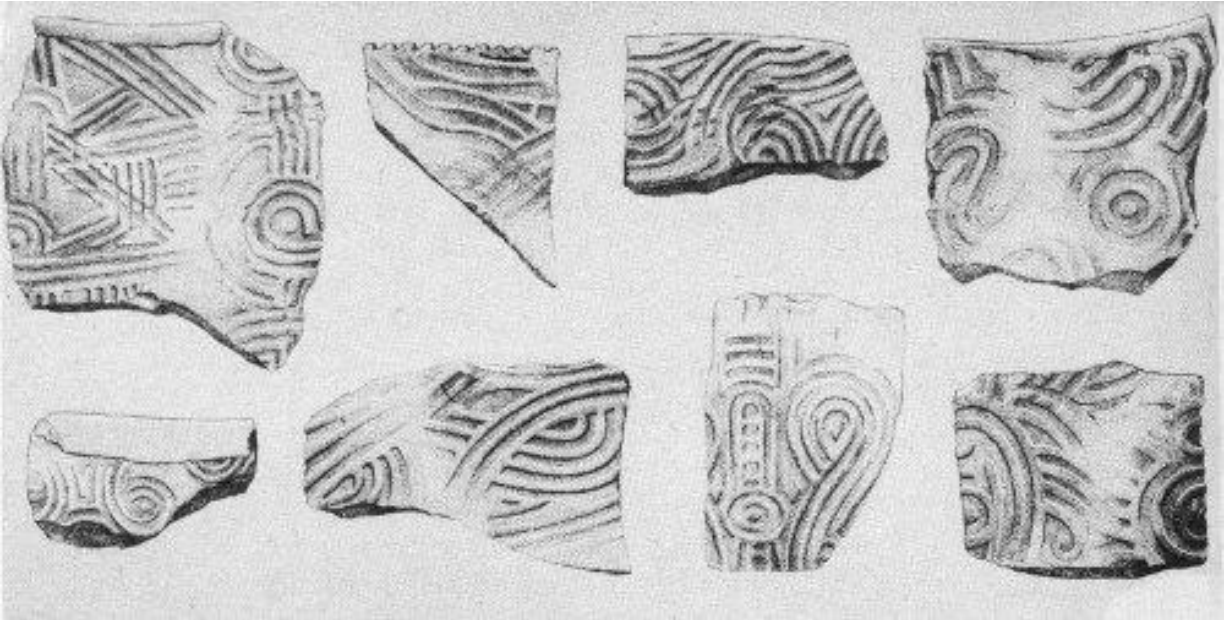
Brief Background: Muscogee Nation& The Five Civilized Tribes

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation are descendants of a rich cultural history. The Muscogee people have existed since before 1500 AD, and they originally lived in towns located in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. The Muscogee tribe was comprised of many united smaller tribes who had their own political structure within their communities. The Muscogee gradually had more contact with the European settlers, which resulted in intermarriage and led to the Muscogee adopting more European social and political traditions. The Muscogee (Creek) people are a part of the Five Civilized Tribes along with the Seminole, the Chickasaw, the Choctaw, and the Cherokee tribes. These tribes were known for having a good relationship with the European Settlers as well as adopting the colonist's traditions.

Using ceramic motifs as a means to understanding Native American Tattoo Culture

During the Woodland Period of Georgia from around 1000 B.C, to A.D. 900, the Swift Creek (also known as Muscogee) people created ceramic vessels that were used primarily for cooking. These pots were elaborately decorated. Potters elaborately decorated their vessels with fabric or simple carved wooden paddles to make impressions in the clay. It is through the pottery traditions of the Swift Creek people that researchers use to arrive to conclusions about the potential tattoo traditions of the Southeastern Native American people. Though there is little evidence that the Native Americans of this region participated in tattooing it is believed that the pottery produced from this time display designs that are likely representations of the designs used in their tattoo traditions. Looking to similar cultures of the time we can assess through their practices that tattooing often had a symbolic or ritualistic purpose within tribes especially since many believed that tattoos granted one safe passages to enter into the after life. The tattooing practice was a status symbol, often marking those who had accomplished things. The Swift Creek people often used iconography (symbolism) in their tattoos to tell stories.

Muscogee (Swift Creek) Pottery Examples:



Above: Fragments of Swift Creek Stamp Designs



Above: Reconstructed Swift Creek Pottery Stamps.

Images sourced from:

<http://www.hellenicaworld.com/USA/Literature/GDPope/en/OcmulgeeNationalMonument%20Georgia.html>

Exercise in Looking

Have the students answer the following short –answer questions after examining the Muscogee (Swift Creek) Pottery examples.

- What types of design elements did the Muscogee (Swift Creek) use in their paddles?
- Pick a pottery paddle example and describe what you believe the meaning of it's design is.

Writing Activity

Have students answer the following short- answer questions after examining the Muscogee (Swift Creek) Pottery examples.

- How do the designs in Native American pottery reflect potential tattoo traditions?
- What can we learn about the Muscogee Indians and their culture through looking at their inscribed designs?
- Why is it important to look at the pottery to determine the possible tattoo designs from the Muscogee Creek people?
- After examining the markings on the pottery what can we infer about the Native American tattoo traditions.
- How does the imagery on the pottery tell the story of the Muscogee creek? What potential symbolism do you see?
- Assuming that the Muscogee pottery traditions are clues into their tattoo heritage discuss how you think the symbols and methods they used influence modern day American tattoo culture?

Interactive Activity: Swift Creek Pottery Paddle Prints

Materials:

Option 1- Traditional:

Linoleum Blocks

Brayer

Baron

Lino cutter

Water-soluble ink(s)

Printmaking paper

Pencils

Paper Towels/ Water (for clean up)

- Option 2- D.I.Y.:

- Cardboard or rigid paper

- Hot glue gun(s)

- Hot glue sticks

- Brayer (or sponge)

- Hand (for rubbing)

- Water-soluble ink(s)

- Paper

- Pencils

- Paper Towels/ Water (for clean up)

Swift Creek Paddle Print Directions:

Using Swift Creek Pottery traditions as their inspiration, students will create “paddle/stamp” designs and then use them to print the creations.

- **For students using traditional printmaking tools (materials option 1):**

Sketch your Swift Creek inspired pattern on a piece of paper. Then transfer the design onto the linoleum block for carving. Using the lino cutter carve the negative (or positive) areas away from the design. Using the Brayer apply the water -soluble ink(s) to the linoleum board. Then lay a piece of paper onto the inked linoleum block and with a baren rub the back of the paper to print. Remove the paper and let dry for a day. The linoleum block is reusable and the student can use it to make multiple prints of their design. Use water and paper towels to clean tools when done.

- **For students using D.I.Y. printmaking tools (materials opt. 2):**

Sketch your Swift Creek inspired pattern on a piece of paper. Then take a piece of the cardboard (or rigid paper), and apply hot glue in the shape of your Swift Creek inspired design. After the glue dries it can be used as your stamp (paddle). Coat the cardboard design with water-soluble inks using the brayer (or sponge) and then lay clean paper on top of cardboard stamp. Using the baren rub the back of the paper until design is fully transferred. In this method the “stamp” doesn’t last as long since its made out of cardboard so students may get a few prints from their stamp. Clean area with water and paper towels.

For further information feel free to refer to the sources used in preparing this lesson plan.

Online:

www.muscogeenation-nsn.gov/pages/History/history.html

www.legendsofamerica.com/na-fivecivilizedtribes.html

www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/swift-creek-culture

www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/woodland-period-overview

www.hellenicaworld.com/USA/Literature/GDPope/en/OcmulgeeNationalMonument%20Georgia.html

Book:

Drawing With Great Needles, Ancient Tattoo Traditions of North America, edited by Aaron Deter- Wolf, and Carol Diaz- Granados