

**HMONG STORY CLOTHS:
CREATING A PERSONAL NARRATIVE WITH
ELEMENTARY ART STUDENTS**

by

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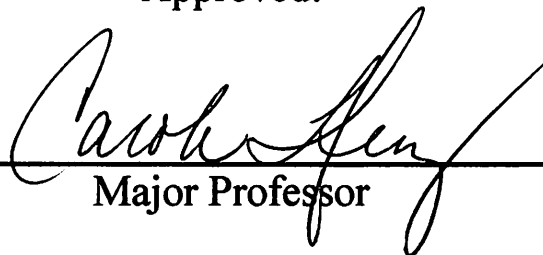
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Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On the outskirts of the small town of Monroe, Georgia, there are green rolling hills with farmlands, chicken houses, and pastures with galloping horses. The culture calls for blue jeans, t-shirts, and camouflage hunting jackets. Bumper stickers hail the name of the car owner's favorite NASCAR driver, and pickup trucks not only transport children to school, but they also haul lawnmowers and power painting supplies, on occasion. Nestled within this community full of Southern pride and "We support the troops" bumper stickers are several cultural groups that have to find their place at Walker Park Elementary School. Whether they are African-American, Hispanic, Hmong, or Caucasian; everyone must learn to fit in somehow.

For some students, familiar cultural history is a part of the curriculum. For others, their history and culture are left out entirely. I talked to five teachers from the school, each from a different grade level (first through fifth grade) and asked them what cultures they teach about in their curriculum. All grade level teachers told me they teach about African American history for anywhere from two to six weeks, with fifth grade students getting the most information during their unit on Civil Rights. Only fourth and first grades teach about Mexico and Spain, with first grade concentrating on Mexican geography and culture, and fourth grade learning about Spanish explorers. The least taught about ethnic group from our school is Asian. Only two first grade teachers talk about Hmong culture (an Asian group) with their students; no other grade addresses the history or culture of this group. So, where does that leave the Hmong students?

There are only a handful of storybooks about Hmong people in the school library and English as a second language classroom. The history of the Hmong is not a part of the curriculum, and therefore is left out due to lack of time and knowledge. There are no field trips to visit Hmong landmarks around town, and no Asian role models in the classroom to study even though, according to *K-12 Public Schools Annual Report Card: Walker Park Elementary School (2006)*, the school has six percent Hmong students (over forty students). African-American students comprise 11 % of the population, and Hispanic students make up only 3% of our school's population.

Many children who are in a class with a Hmong child believe the child to be Chinese or Japanese. Why not? China and Japan are the only Asian countries a child might hear mentioned in the school. How else would one learn about the people from the small country of Laos?

Statement of the Problem

When I first started teaching art at Walker Park Elementary, I had never heard of the Hmong or Laos. I did not know much about the Vietnam War, either. But, what I did come to know well, over the next three years, were the shy faces of the Hmong children, waiting patiently for their turn in class, saying as little as possible in large groups, and obediently following the art lessons I designed for the class. (Oftentimes, Asian students are referred to as the "model minority" by researchers and educators). I found myself wanting to know more about where they had come from, their backgrounds, and their national culture. Most of my Hmong students are shy and do not talk about their culture

at school, so I had to do my own investigating to find answers. When I entered the Masters of Art Education program at the University of Georgia, I decided to focus my applied project on what I felt was a real problem: the history, culture, and art of the Hmong people is not part of the curriculum in the school where I teach art. Consequently, I decided to design a curriculum unit to increase the feeling of acceptance of the Hmong students by creating lessons about their art. My secondary reason for the project was to help all students and teachers at my school become more empathetic and understanding of people who are different from them.

The art curriculum that I taught to all of my kindergarten through fifth grade students involved looking at a Hmong story cloth as a catalyst for discussion. We examined it aesthetically using art criticism techniques and to discover the story of immigration it told. Students heard stories about Hmong families leaving Laos for America (either through story books written by Hmong-American authors or through Hmong parents who came in and talked to the class.) (See Appendix B for a list of these books.) Students worked together in groups and brainstormed possible key events from their lives to use as themes in their artwork. Each student used these events as the subject for the fabric art they made. I incorporated several different modified fabric art techniques from varied global traditions in the lessons such as fabric painting, dyeing, batik, sewing, and mixed-media collage. Students shared their personal narratives in small groups. A few students brought special fabric art or clothing from home to share with their class. Several Hmong students wore their traditional clothing to show classes examples of Hmong fabrics. Upper elementary students developed a written reflection

about what they learned after the studio art component. Younger students discussed what they learned from the project as a class.

Research Questions

The areas of research for my project are broken down into three main topics: multiculturalism, caring, and cooperative learning, each with their own research questions.

Multiculturalism

- ❖ How can I sensitively teach about a culture's art when I am not part of that culture?
- ❖ How can I get non-Hmong students to embrace learning about the Hmong culture without pointing out or ostracizing the Hmong students?

Caring

- ❖ What kind of classroom environment or teacher actions promote caring?

Cooperative learning

- ❖ How can Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Tappan, 1998) be integrated into the art classroom?
- ❖ What is the educational value of cooperative learning? What are the most effective ways to use cooperative learning in an art classroom?

The following pages of this applied project include research on the main topics of multiculturalism, caring in the classroom, and cooperative learning. I will then discuss the research methods that I used in this project. A large amount of this applied project

will be devoted to the details of the art project I completed with the students.

Photographs taken of the students' art and quotations made by the students will be included in this section on the project. There will then be a summary of what the students learned, and what I learned during the project. The applied project will conclude with recommendations for other teachers as well as resources for teachers, such as lesson plans, worksheets, and other helpful information.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although there were many things I wanted to research to inform my teaching about Hmong story cloths and narrative art for children, I felt that multiculturalism, caring in the classroom, and cooperative learning would best fit the direction I wanted to go with this project. My research is based on the following big ideas:

Multiculturalism- We studied the Hmong culture's story cloths in depth and used them as a catalyst to create narrative fabric art. Patricia Stuhr (1999) was a primary researcher who influenced my teaching on this subject. She believes that the more someone knows about the history, heritage, traditions, and cultural interaction of a group of people, the better one can understand them.

Caring- Students engaged in learning about the history of their fellow Hmong students and shared their own personal histories with each other through art, creating caring and respect for others. Nel Noddings (1988) provided a framework for my research with her ideas that caring allows students to have opportunities for self-understanding and growth in the classroom.

Cooperative Learning- These techniques were used when students were engaged in art criticism and learning about the Hmong story cloths. I looked at the theories of L. S. Vygotsky (Tappan, 1998) as a source of direction on this. His main ideas were that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition and that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development" (a

level of development attained when children engage in social behavior.) Basically, he believed that what students can learn together exceeds what they can learn alone.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Multiculturalism

As I delved deeper into the topic of learning about Hmong story cloths and Hmong culture, each of these topics informed my teaching on the subject. Multiculturalism was the first topic I explored. As Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) wrote, “Multicultural education is a concept and a process that originated in the 1960s as part of the Civil Rights Movement to combat racism” (para. 10). They explained that this process provides more equal opportunities for disenfranchised groups and individuals to advance in society socially, politically, and educationally. Much has been written in educational journals over the last ten years of what to do and not to do when teaching about the cultures of the world. I needed to know what other researchers said about how an outsider should sensitively teach about another culture’s art.

Many researchers have strong beliefs about how teachers should or should not teach multicultural topics in their classrooms. Davis and Rimm (2004) describe two different ways people look at teaching students from other countries. The *assimilationist* wants the immigrant, or refugee, to conform to the mainstream culture of the United States. The *cultural pluralist* wants students to have pride in their own ethnic identity, which helps create a healthy self concept. All of the research I found and studied was by researchers who held the cultural pluralist point of view.

Graeme Chalmers (2002) wrote extensively on a subject he calls “*critical multicultural education*” (para. 7). This type of multicultural education affirms a student’s culture without trivializing it. This kind of teaching also problematizes a simplistic focus on self-esteem and encourages discourse on topics many teachers fear bringing up in class such as race, ethics, war, beliefs, and religion. Most teachers would rather celebrate multiculturalism by discussing only the good things about a culture. Chalmers feels this approach glosses over the culture and trivializes it. Lynette Henderson (2005) agrees that too much “soft multiculturalism” (p. 46) or celebratory art, remains in art education. She believes that educators should discuss the beliefs, practices, and values that are reflected in the art.

Some educational resources tend to portray so called “traditional” cultures as if they were stuck in a non-changing time-warp. For example, many school children today believe that Native Americans still live in teepees because they see pictures in textbooks that suggest to them that this is still true. Educators may think it is too complex to deal with showing the many ways that various cultures have changed over time. In reality, cultures are constantly changing. The preservation of culture is subjective because of the fluid nature of people from the culture and the bias of the interpreter. Mixed families, moving to new homes, and influences by the majority culture affect all aspects of life. Just because a person’s family is from Laos, and they now live in the United States, it does not mean they will have the same beliefs and practices as their ancestors did in Laos. People constantly change. This reality makes it very difficult for educators to teach students about other cultures. Teachers sometimes have to tell their students some general characteristics about the culture so students have some sort of knowledge base

about it. Patricia Stuhr (cited in Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr, 2001) wrote that “[t]here is no such thing as “an” African American culture or “a” Native American culture or “a” Jewish culture. There is no one representation of a cultural group you can come to understand by memorizing its characteristics” (para. 6). This point of view made me a little nervous as I began the task of teaching my students about Hmong culture. How could I do this without creating stereotypes? Stuhr pointed out that “the more that is learned about the various members of a particular group with its history, heritage, traditions, and cultural interaction, the more complexly and richly one can understand the social and cultural groups to which they belong (para. 6).

So who is qualified to teach about other cultures’ beliefs and practices? Chalmers asks, “Can we speak for the ‘other’?” (2002, para. 16). Steve Fuller (cited in Chalmers, 2002) writes about the idea of *hyperculturalism* in which “only natives of a culture are authorized to speak on its behalf” (para. 16). According to this view, other voices are suspicious because they have not lived in the culture. So, how are teachers supposed to teach about many cultures and people of the world if the teacher is not from the culture she wants to teach about? Desai (cited in Adejumo, 2002) says that all representations of other cultures involve an unequal power dynamic, and it is impossible to represent a culture authentically. Still, I feel an effort must be made to teach children about other places and people in the world so they do not grow up thinking they are the center of the world.

Educators need to think about how their teaching will generate respect for a particular culture. It is unrealistic to think that just because a teacher talks about Frida Kahlo’s paintings that her students will automatically feel respect for the Mexican

culture, or for that matter, the physically impaired. Imparting cultural appreciation is hard to measure.

How should a teacher decide which culture to study? What if her classroom has students from at least four different cultural backgrounds? If she teaches about two of the cultures, then the other two cultures will be left out. What content will she teach from the cultures she selected? What should she do if her classroom is more or less homogenous? Some teachers would want to leave out talking about certain other cultures because they feel it does not apply to their students. Either way, it would be impossible to teach the content of an entire culture. A better goal would be to expand the students' art knowledge to include images from many different cultures.

Teaching Strategies

There are several important things researchers say teachers can do to be culturally sensitive while teaching about art from other cultures:

- 1. The art must be appreciated from the perspective of its creators** (Venet, 2002). Art has a different definition in each culture. Some cultures believe that art should beautify a wall, some cultures' art is to express feelings, and still others' art is purely functional in clothing or furniture. From what I have learned about Hmong culture, their art is functional. It is on their clothes, baby carriers, and in the way they build their houses. Their story cloths function as devices to record memories.

- 2. Include people from the culture being studied to do some of the teaching.** To develop true appreciation for another culture, have a student exchange program, peer or adult mentors, or invite parents from the culture to share their knowledge on a topic

(Adejumo, 2002). Henderson (2005) invited Laotian artists from the community to help out during a project about Laotian art at a Saturday art program. Students listened to personal stories from Laotians while working on projects, examined authentic art, and looked at maps and photos of Laos. During the story cloth project at my school, I held a “Hmong Family Night” in our media center where Hmong families brought in art from home and learned about volunteer opportunities to visit their child’s art class and teach the students about Hmong culture, clothing, and art. Four parents did come to our school and teach in their child’s class, as a result of the connections I made that night.

3. Promote investigation. Chalmers (2002) said teachers should not just transmit knowledge, but they should facilitate students as they investigate. Art teachers should research and include a variety of cultures so all students feel a sense of belonging. They should also help students understand the multiple reasons artists create and express their own stories. Students should be encouraged to create art about their own ideas and beliefs instead of copying another artist’s theme (Venet, 2002). During the story cloth unit, all students were encouraged to make their story cloth about their own life and bring in fabric art from home to share with the class.

4. Allow choice. Henderson (2005) explained that she was worried about how the students in her program would react to learning about art from Laos. Would they want to copy the intricate work and fall short on skill or want to make their own designs? She ended up allowing her students to choose simple things like colors or a design while still remaining true to the basic principles of Lao art. Western cultures tend to value individuality and like to make their work their own; rarely do they want to copy a

masterwork in every detail. Henderson knew this and incorporated choice and just a little reproduction of traditional designs into her lesson.

Why should “all” students learn about Hmong story cloths?

I believed the Hmong students would benefit from lessons about their art and culture at school because these children need to know that it is acceptable to be both Hmong and American at the same time. (Many children of different ethnic backgrounds may also feel torn between their home and school culture.) McInnis (1991) says Hmong children are torn between their teacher’s expectations for them in school and their family’s expectations at home. Sometimes, these values and expectations can be very different and can cause Hmong students to resent being a minority in a majority school. Many Hmong children appear to be quiet, good students in school but are actually depressed or withdrawn because they are an ethnic minority and feel out of place trying to fit in. They need a creative outlet, rather than a verbal one for therapeutic expression. Some Hmong children may have witnessed violent experiences in their non-verbal stage, so they can not talk about the experiences in a verbal way. They have to find another way to express their emotions, such as through music and art. Talking about deep emotions is often alien and offensive to Hmong people. Venet notes that “cultural art experiences may be therapeutic for refugee or immigrant children” (2002, para. 21).

If teachers show students, like the Hmong, that they care for them by teaching about their culture, then these students will be more likely to take pride in their culture. Lauren Phillips (2003) writes, “Children who feel their voices have value will be more likely to become active participants in their learning. They are more likely to learn how

to listen to others and, in turn, understand the viewpoints of other people” (p. 47). Venet (2002) writes, “Minority students need to be included fully in the curriculum; their self-esteem and ability to develop their talents are at stake” (para. 1).

Not only are cultural art experiences beneficial to the students from those cultures studied, but these lessons can also be very valuable to other students as well. These lessons can help students appreciate different artistic styles and ways of life that may be foreign to them. Students will realize there are various definitions of what art can be. Chalmers (2002) believes that the art of different cultures should be studied because everyone’s art matters. Adejumo (2002) says multicultural education is to expand all students’ understanding of the culture of minority groups.

Another reason that teachers need to put forth the effort to learn and teach about other cultures is because the demographics of the United States continues to change. How will students learn anything about other cultures if their teachers do not research and teach about them? In reference to studying the art of Laos in particular, Henderson (2005) wrote that learning about the Lao experience can help students use that knowledge to apply to contemporary events in their own lives. It is very important for students to try to apply the knowledge they have learned about the other culture to their own life. This will help avoid the feeling of boredom that students get from pointless lessons that they feel have no relevance to their lives. “Once students become participants in their learning, they can make more connections between themselves and the larger world around them....The more children connect with the people and places surrounding them, the greater the opportunity for learning empathy” (Phillips, 2003, p. 46).

Noddings (1988) referencing John Dewey explains that a “major teaching function is to guide students in a well-informed exploration of areas meaningful to them, learning objectives must be mutually constructed by students and teachers” (p. 221). The teacher should be attuned to students’ interests and should allow for extra time to research and explore those interests. For example, during this applied project, a Hmong mother visited her daughter’s art class and taught them about types of Hmong clothing. Throughout the visit the class became interested in how Hmong words were pronounced and spelled. The mother ended up doing a mini lesson on how to say basic words in Hmong like, “sister,” “hello,” and “goodbye.” The students left the class period excitedly practicing their new vocabulary and remembered the experience later in the year as one they were really interested in.

Learning about other cultures cannot only be beneficial to the students, but also to the other teachers in the school, the families of students, and community members near the school. While doing the story cloth project, several students told me they talked to their parents about Laos and the Vietnam War at home. It was a doorway to lead families to talk about their past and learn from each other.

Caring

Caring has always been a part of education, but has not always been seen as a scholarly topic of discussion. This disregard for the topic of caring can be traced to the end of World War I, when school curriculum became based mainly on scientifically proven research, not humanistic education. This outlook downplayed caring (Goldstein,

1998). Caring professions, such as nursing, social work, and teaching, have been given a low status in society because they were considered non-intellectual occupations.

There are many reasons to focus on caring in the classroom. Nel Noddings (1995) writes in *Teaching Themes of Care*, “Caring implies a continuous search for competence”... “it demonstrates respect for the full range of human talents” (para. 10). Milton Mayeroff (cited in Noddings, 1988) explains that caring is when someone fosters the growth of someone else. This aligns with one of the primary goals of education, which is to promote positive growth in students. Noddings feels the aim of education is to encourage the growth of competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. She explains that focusing education on caring also prepares students for future parenting, work, and civic responsibility.

Goldstein (1998) believes caring is an intellectual act, not just one of “gentle smiles and warm hugs” (para. 1). People tend to usually think that caring is a feeling or personality trait that makes you a good candidate to work with young children. Elementary teachers are portrayed as nice, supportive, responsive, and kind. Beth Swadener (cited in Goldstein, 1998) calls this the “hegemony of nice” (para. 5) and feels this interpretation contributes to the misperception that early childhood educators are not as professional or intelligent as secondary teachers.

Chalmers (2002) also agrees that caring has gotten a bad reputation. He wrote that “some teachers have turned empathy into sympathy” (para. 28). We do not understand the other by being empathetic; we understand them by thinking, feeling, and conversing with the other. Lilla Watson, an Australian Aboriginal, says, “If you have come to help me, don’t bother, but if you have come because your liberation is tied up

with mine, then let us work together” (cited in Chalmers, 2002, para. 28). I want my students to know that we are not studying the war in Laos so that we can feel sorry for the Hmong people, but so that we can learn from each other and understand each other better.

Goldstein states that “Caring for children is both an emotional and an intellectual act, and as such, forms a legitimate foundation on which to base an early childhood curriculum” (1998, para. 95). Themes of caring in school should be relevant to self-understanding and growth (Noddings, 1995). By allowing students to explore topics within a multicultural art unit, the teacher is showing that she cares about her students’ engagement with their own learning. I showed all of my students I cared about them in this unit by allowing them to make art about their lives. Many of them told me stories about the events in their lives, both sad and happy. I listened intently to those that wanted to share, and gave space to those who did not want to tell me about their personal events.

There are many researchers that agree caring is an important subject in education, but how should a teacher promote caring in her own classroom? What kind of classroom environment creates caring opportunities?

Noddings (1995) writes extensively about caring. Her publications explore many ways to incorporate caring in the classroom. Some of her suggestions on ways to show caring are included below along with a brief explanation of how each was addressed in this project:

1. Parents and teachers can cooperate in children’s activities, share their own dreams and doubts, and provide for the growth of the students. I made sure I always

created an authentic example of personal events from my life to share with students in the story cloth unit.

2. Address caring themes. In the Hmong story cloth unit in this applied project, themes involving life stages, love, friendship, war, poverty, and tolerance were addressed.

3. Teachers should help students make wise decisions about what information to share about themselves during deep discussions. Students should understand that they do not have to reveal any overly personal information that they do not want to reveal. I made it a point to inform my students about choices they had on the subject matter in their story cloth. The story cloth could be about happy or sad events; they made the choice about what to share.

4. It is wise to keep teachers and students together for a few years in a classroom so they can develop stronger relationships. It is easier to discuss important matters once trust is established. Art teachers usually teach the same set of students for several years and are able to get to know them over longer periods of time than many other teachers. I felt that as a teacher in the same school for four years that I was able to get better results with this story cloth project than say, a first or second year teacher would. As the students and I grew to know each other, they were truly able to open up and discuss events from their life.

5. Teachers must care about their students enough to learn about these connections they will teach. This often involves extra time researching after school. I

spent a large amount of time researching the Hmong culture before I taught about the culture.

Other researchers have studied Noddings' work and added their own thoughts on ways that teachers can teach caring in their classes:

1. Goldstein (1998) believes teachers should look at their job as an opportunity to participate in caring encounters. Teachers need to make sure that they have individualized expectations for each student, tailored to their needs. They should be committed to each child as an individual. To do this, the teacher must know them, and invest emotionally in them. Teachers should try to show children that they have opportunities to make good choices everyday.

2. Phillips' (2003) definition of empathy involves connecting who we are and who we see before us with the choice to act with care or not. She models caring behavior with her art students and helps them understand situations where empathy occurs. Facilitating dialogue in her classes and having a positive attitude also reinforce empathy.

3. Stout (1999) taught both the visual arts and language arts to eighth grade students. She created instructional units that transferred among the arts disciplines, "stimulating imagination, developing empathetic awareness, and instilling the capacity to care" (p. 22). Her classes studied a variety of cultures and human experiences, and held many class discussions about differences in cultures, learning to show empathy to other human beings in the process.

All three of these researchers addressed caring themes with their students, like Noddings recommends. Teaching themes of care through other curriculum subjects reinforces the importance of caring.

Cooperative Learning

While planning my applied project, I knew I wanted the students to learn from each other. I was not sure, however, of how to use cooperative learning in my lessons, and looked to Lev Vygotsky's work for insight. He was an influential Russian psychologist and educator that researched themes of human development, social interaction, and speech and cognition (Tappan, 1998). I also wanted to know how other researchers used techniques such as those of Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development in teaching students cooperatively (Fore, Riser, & Boon, 2006).

One definition of cooperative learning is that it is "a set of instructional methods in which students are encouraged or required to work together on academic tasks" (Fore, Riser, & Boon, 2006, para. 8). Cooperative learning includes mutually agreed upon group goals, individual accountability, equal opportunities for success, competition, and special tasks for each group member (Fore, Riser, & Boon, 2006).

Vygotsky (cited in Fore, Riser, & Boon, 2006) believed that good instruction is like a magnet. If it is aimed ahead of students just slightly, it will pull them along, helping them to master new things that they would not be able to do alone. Some strategies that Vygotsky suggested for cooperative learning were: using challenging assignments, peer modeling, positive reinforcement, frequent feedback, and organizational tools to keep students on track.

Vygotsky (cited in Tappan, 1998) is well-known for his idea of the *zone of proximal development* which he explained as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (para. 19). For example, children of similar ages probably often work in each other’s zones of proximal development because they have some knowledge and skills in common (Hedegaard, 2005).

To be able to use the zone of proximal development in the classroom, a teacher must be keenly aware of the developmental levels of the children in the class. The teacher can then plan for lessons which are one step above what the child is able to do (Hedegaard, 2005). In *Show Me How to Learn: Key Strategies and Powerful Techniques that Promote Cooperative Learning*, Robyn English and Sue Dean (2004) discuss how establishing rules as a class, effective planning, student self-evaluation, and learning centers are effective ways to use cooperative learning while teaching. Some of their ideas are included in my applied project. Second through fifth grade students evaluated their own learning after the story cloth project through written self-evaluations. The authors also suggested that students use a “judgment scale” (p. 35) or self-critique to evaluate their own learning. One of these judgment scales is located on my reflection worksheet for the students so they could evaluate how well the story they wrote about from their story cloth matched the pictures in their story cloth.

Students used cooperative learning in this project when they brainstormed key events that could be included in a story cloth about their life in groups. When students were finished creating their final story cloth, they got into groups of their choice with peers,

talked about their own art, and asked each other questions about their story cloths. The most effective use of cooperative learning, though, was when the fourth and fifth grade students were learning to sew. Many of the students had never sewn before, so they had a lot of trouble threading their needle and tying knots. The students with some sewing experiences offered to help other peers around them tie knots and thread needles. The students who were being helped appreciated the assistance and the “peer teachers” enjoyed helping other students and appeared to be proud of their skills.

This applied project will document some of the many ways I have incorporated multicultural art education and cooperative learning to show the students that I care about them and their individual backgrounds. As a teacher representing the school, this project also demonstrates to students that the school cares about their culture and considers it important enough to study. Throughout the unit, students will see that art comes from different places and is about different things. It can tell stories and be about the past, present, or future. Hopefully, other teachers will be able to incorporate some of the ideas present here into teaching that is appropriate for their own students.

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY

My research is based on qualitative methods of action research. I tried to bring about a social change in my school in which all students are aware of Hmong culture and recognize that it is a valued part of the school. I also wanted Hmong students to feel proud of their Hmong and American culture. I wanted all students to examine a Hmong story cloth and reflect on their own personal narrative story of their life. This applied project also included arts-based research methodology because student artwork and reflections were collected as data to help assess what students learned about creating a personal narrative.

The applied project was conducted with all kindergarten through fifth grade art classes at Walker Park Elementary School. Approximately 650 students participated in the lessons. Each class met for fifty minutes, one day a week. The project lasted approximately three class periods for first grade and kindergarten students and four to six class periods for second through fifth grade students.

The data collected came from observations of my own students during the lessons. Peer interaction and class participation was given special attention in general, and a sociogram (see Appendix D) was used to take notes. A sociogram is a teacher-made graphic organizer used to record information about how students interact with their peers. There were spaces in the sociogram to record dates, times, the gender of the person speaking, grade levels, notes on participant interactions, dialogues, and gestures. As I taught the Hmong story cloth art lessons, I kept the sociogram nearby and recorded

significant things that students said or did about the project in it. I wrote down at least two or three comments per class period.

Reflections were another source of data. I kept a reflective journal throughout the applied project. I made notes in it during my lunch break or after school, noting the progress and problems with some of the lessons. I wrote in it at least three or four days a week while the applied project was taking place.

Students also reflected on their learning after the studio component of the project was complete. Lower elementary students in kindergarten and first grade had a group discussion with me, reflecting on what they had learned. Upper elementary students in second through fifth grade wrote reflective answers to the following questions on a worksheet:

1. What did I know before the story cloth project?
2. What do I know after the story cloth project?
3. What was the most interesting thing I learned?
4. Here is a story about my artwork.

Upper elementary students also rated their work on a scale from 1 to 10 (with ten being the highest) to tell me how similarly their narrative writing and narrative story cloth art were aligned. Several verbal examples were given to students so they would know what level of quality each number represented.

Selected student artwork was photographed as part of the data. Through photography I chronicled the students as they progressed with the project. Only students who signed the Minor Assent form and whose parents signed the Parent Consent form (see Appendix I) had their photographs or writing included in this applied project. All aspects of the project, including these forms, were approved by the Institutional Review

Board at the University of Georgia and the Walton County School Board of Education.
(The project took place in a Walton County school.)

For the data analysis, student comments, reflections, and peer interactions were compared and contrasted using coding and categorization. I found common answers among students for each answer, color coded each of their answers that fit those categories, tallied how often these answers were given, and made graphs to show the frequency of the different answers. I also looked carefully to see if classes that had Hmong students in them were affected more deeply by the assignment in their reflections and discussions than classes without Hmong students. This comparison was also made by looking at the results of the coding and categorization I recorded on the student reflections and also the notes I wrote in my reflective journal.

CHAPTER 4

THE PROJECT

Walker Park Elementary is a rural school, and many of the students do not have exposure to other cultures outside of what they learn in the classroom or see on television or in the movies. I decided to focus my applied project on what I felt was a problem: the history, culture, and art of the Hmong people is largely invisible in this school where I teach art, even though Hmong students make up the second largest minority group in the school. In *K-12 Public Schools Annual Report Card: Walker Park Elementary School* (2006), the data on students showed Asian students are six percent of the school population. (The only Asian students in the school are Hmong.) African-American students are the largest minority population (11%) and Hispanics are the third largest (3%). I designed a curriculum about Hmong art to increase understanding and acceptance of the Hmong students. I also wanted all students to understand that art comes from other countries and has different meanings to different people.

Before beginning the applied project, I conducted research to familiarize myself with the history of the Hmong people. I wanted to know how and why they came to the United States, what their common culture was like, and what kinds of art they made. I knew I could not teach my students anything about Hmong art if I did not have a basic understanding of these things.

Even though I researched Hmong topics in many books, there were still many questions that needed to be answered. I wanted to ask Hmong people these questions, and involve the Hmong families at my school in the project, so I planned a “Hmong

Family Night,” one evening at the school a few weeks before beginning my applied project. I typed up an invitation in English and had a Hmong parent volunteer to translate it into one Hmong dialect (see Appendix A). This parent is a college graduate, but this is rare for many Hmong adults. Many of them still speak very little English even though some have been living in the United States for many years. I was glad to have a Hmong and English version of the invitation sent to every Hmong family in our school. The turnout would have not been as inclusive without this.

About forty Hmong people showed up for the family night. I had sent home invitations to twenty-three families through the students. The turnout was strong for the first time our school had done anything like this. There were snacks for the families to eat. One Hmong family brought a special fried apple dish for the occasion. Everyone mingled as they ate and looked at the traditional Hmong art they were asked to bring. There were examples of clothing worn for their Hmong New Year celebration, dolls dressed in special clothing, story cloths, an embroidered baby carrier, books in Hmong and English, and other various things. After everyone had a chance to have some refreshments, I told the families about the master’s art education project I had planned for our school. I told them I wanted to learn about Hmong story cloths and teach about them to the students at our school. I added that because I am not Hmong, I needed their help in learning more about story cloths and Hmong art. Four parents volunteered to come visit their children’s classes and bring Hmong clothing or art to show the children. Eleven Hmong children promised to bring special Hmong clothes, story cloths, sewing, or other items to their class to share as well. Many families let me borrow cultural artifacts to display in my classroom.

The best part about the night was making connections with the parents. They could tell that I really cared and was interested in their culture. It seemed to make them feel special to have this night planned just for them. They loved the fact that I wanted to tell other people how unique their culture is.



Figure 1. Hmong Backpack. A mother shows how to carry her daughter with the embroidered backpack at Hmong Family Night.



Figure 2. Clothing. Three Hmong mothers dressed me up in their finest Hmong New Year clothes.



Figure 3. Book Collection. I displayed Hmong books from our library for the families to look at.



Figure 4. Hmong Dolls. Several families brought in dolls dressed in exact replicas of the clothing their family group wears to the Hmong New Year festival.

Figure 5. Story Cloth. One family brought in a small story cloth that their mother hand-embroidered.



A few weeks later I began teaching the Hmong story cloth art curriculum to thirty-one kindergarten through fifth grade classes. Dr. Richard Siegesmund, art education professor at the University of Georgia, let me borrow an authentic Hmong embroidered story cloth to show the students. It told the story of many Hmong people escaping Laos in bamboo rafts late at night, arriving in Thailand, and going to the refugee camp there. I began by asking students to name things they saw in the story cloth to encourage thoughtful looking. With the kindergarten and first grade students, I also asked them to name things they would hear, smell, touch, and taste if they had jumped into the story cloth and could move around. When I asked one kindergarten class how the elephant in the story cloth would feel if you touched it, one girl called out, “It would feel like Grandma’s hands!” This was a great comparison.



Figure 6. Examining the Story Cloth. Students told me things they saw in the picture, and I pointed to them.



Figure 7. The Five Senses. Kindergarten students brainstormed things they could see, smell, taste, touch, and hear if they jumped inside the story cloth.

After the discussion, I read a book (*Dia's Story Cloth* by Cha, 1996 to fourth and fifth grade classes; *The Whispering Cloth* by Shea, 1995 to second and third grade classes). For the kindergarten and first grade classes, I briefly summarized that there was a war in Laos about thirty years ago and many people died. They had to escape to another country called Thailand, close by Laos. Eventually many Hmong people moved to America and sewed cloths about their lives and memories. Facts were supported with pictures for them.

During a discussion of the war in Laos and the fact that many Hmong people were killed by soldiers, one first grade boy said, "Cool." I had to stop class and relate to them that, no, it wasn't cool that people were killed for no reason. He looked embarrassed after I said that. In a class of second grade students when I reached that same part of the discussion, a boy in the class made a noise like he was cocking a gun and pointed a finger like a gun at his own neck. Again, I had to have a discussion with the class that this was not a laughing matter. I stressed that the people portrayed represented real people with real feelings.

I told all of the grade levels that they would make a story cloth about events that really happened in their own lives. I explained to the students that they could choose what events they wanted to make their art about; the events could be happy or sad, as long as they were true events. Students were asked to brainstorm a list of major life events with the children at their table. After the brainstorming session, to further stimulate thinking, I walked around and read aloud one event from each list to the class. Each student used their group's brainstorm list as a catalyst to think about major events from their own life. One group in second grade wrote that major events from their lives were:

being born
my birthday
my first mall trip with a purse
car crash
new puppy
my first Six Flags trip
when my Dad fell and got real bad hurt
my sister got stitches

That same day, each student sketched out some major events from their life on newsprint paper. I noticed that most of the younger students up through second grade drew only one or two events from their life on the story cloth, while fifth grade students included sometimes five to ten different events. As I walked around the room to check for understanding, many students told me about their drawings. (Quotes are verbatim with my comments in italics):

I'm going to draw the four main stages of my grandfather dying. When he was sick, dying, at the viewing, and at the church. *- Fourth grade girl who started crying five minutes after she said this and asked to go speak to the counselor. When she came back to the room, she chose to make her picture about her two best friends instead.*

"Me and my dad will be playing Playstation."- Fourth grade boy

“Is that one of the top four or five things that has happened in your life?”
“Yeah, we do it like every night.” – same Fourth grade boy

“Mine is about Tennessee. We went for five days. It was snowing. We stayed in a hotel with two beds. The name of our hotel was 17. Yeah, that’s what was on our door.” – Kindergarten boy

“This is me and my daddy and this is my mommy. She ate some food that she didn’t know what it was. She gets to take pills now.” - Kindergarten boy

Another Kindergarten boy was new to our school because he was in Hurricane Katrina and had to be evacuated from New Orleans. His story cloth showed his house being destroyed by a tornado, then the new house caught on fire; now he lives in an RV.

One third grade boy drew a story cloth sketch about his Dad leaving their family, which he covered with his arm so I wouldn’t see it.

“I’m drawing me getting run over by a train.” -Kindergarten boy
“Did that really happen or did you make that up?”
“It’s real.”- same Kindergarten boy
Later I found out it was a toy train he was referring to.

“I drew God and Jesus watching my house, and Brooke’s house, and Rebecca’s house. Then they are going to go to our houses and visit.” -a First grade girl
(her friend’s names are pseudonyms)

A second grade boy asked me, “Can I draw me when I grow up?” I replied, “Yes, like *The Whispering Cloth’s* character showed how she wanted her future to be.” The student then said, “I’ll draw me with an afro!”



Figure 8. (left)
Children Sketch
Independently.



Figure 9. (right)
Boys Help Each
Other Sketch.

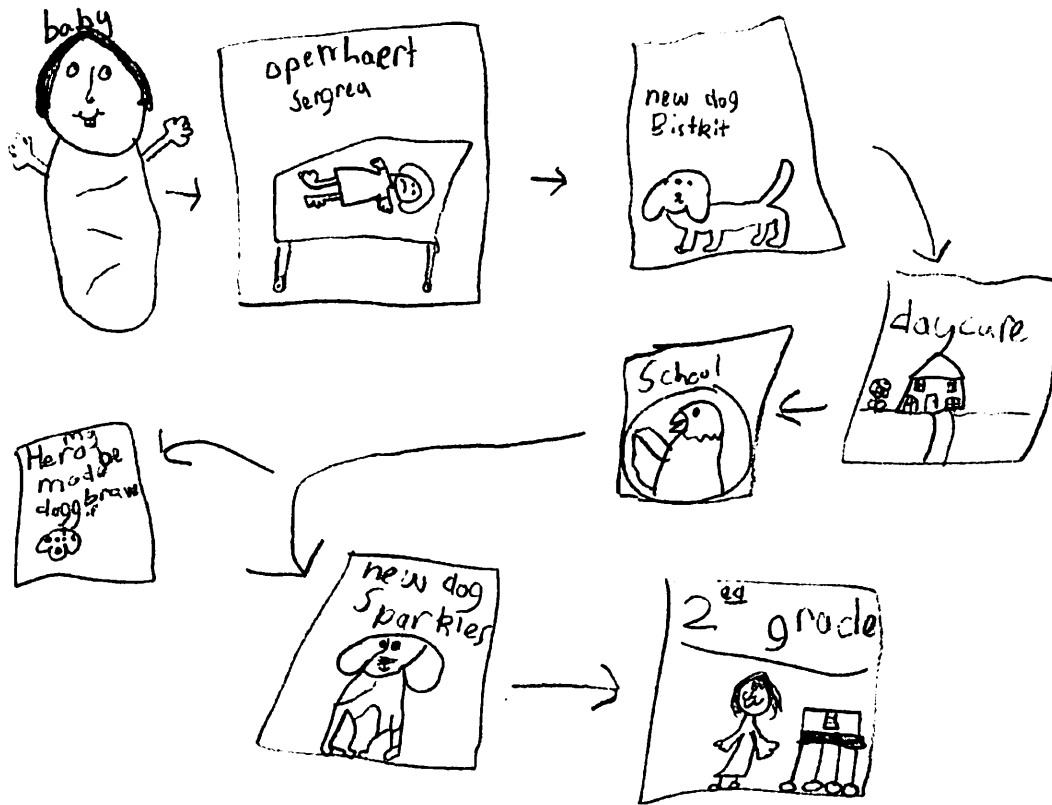


Figure 10. Second Grade Girl's Sketch of Events from her Life.

The following week, each grade level began to make a story cloth in a slightly different way. I did not want them to make hundreds of story cloths that all looked the same, so I chose to modify several fabric art techniques from various global traditions to fit with each grade level's abilities. I taught students how to do fabric painting, dyeing, batik, sewing, and mixed-media fabric collage.

Kindergarten and first grade students drew their life events from the week before on smooth synthetic fabric with fabric crayons. The following week they embellished sequins and foam shapes to the fabric to accent special areas.

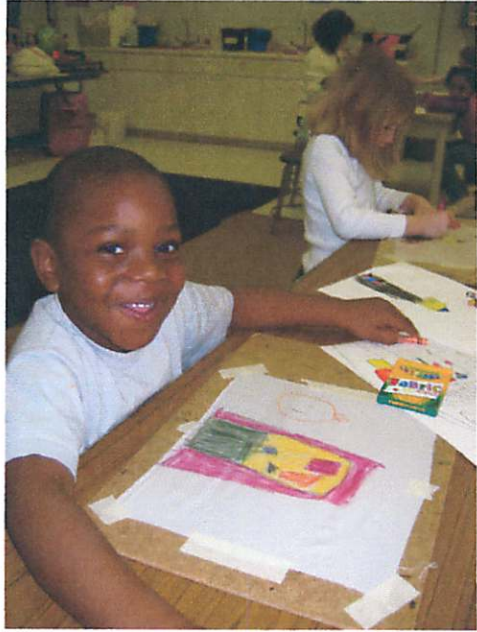


Figure 11. Kindergarten Students Draw their Personal Life Events on Cloth with Fabric Crayons.

Afterwards, the students played an art criticism game called “Token Response” where they walked around the room looking at the final story cloths their classmates made. They laid their token next to the story cloth that was the “most creative,” “looked like it took the most time,” and “the one they loved the most.” These superlatives helped the students really think about and evaluate the art by their classmates. When the kindergarteners were playing Token Response, I heard...

“I picked mine so I could feel good about it.”

“Nobody will like mine.”

“I picked David’s because he had different shapes.”

“My family likes my friends and I like to help them out, so I picked my friends.”

Figure 12. Choices. Kindergarten students chose the story cloths they “loved” the most and “wished they could give to their family.”



In their lesson, second grade students saw examples of batik from Thailand, Ghana, and America. We discussed how real batik artists used hot wax to draw designs on cloth. Dye was then painted in between the wax lines. Later, the wax was ironed out of the cloth. Students created their own batik story cloth by drawing their life events on fabric, painting over the lines with white tempera paint, and then the following week they painted the rest of the cloth with colored acrylic paints. Students rinsed out the tempera and were left with a batik-looking cloth that was a safer alternative for the children than hot wax. Some students had to go back over details in the design with colored permanent markers if the details had been washed out.



Figure 13. (left)
Painting with
White Tempera.

Figure 14. (right)
Painting Inside the
Lines with Acrylics.



Third, fourth, and fifth grade students looked at different kinds of dyed fabric art, then chose a dye color and dropped a piece of fabric in that dye bucket. I stirred the dye, later rinsed it, and hung it out to dry myself because I did not want students to touch the dye and possibly have an allergic reaction.



Figure 15. (left) A Fifth Grade Student Drops Cloth in Dye.
Figure 16. (right) Dyed Cloth Hangs on a Clothesline Outside.

Later, third grade students drew their life events on cloth, painted the events with acrylics and added puffy paint or fabric glued down to highlight special areas.



Figure 17. (left) Taping. Third grade students tape down their cloth before they sketch life events on it.



Figure 18. (right) Puffy Paint. A student accents details of her story cloth with three-dimensional paint.

Fourth grade students cut out each drawing of an event from their life, pinned each cut out to light-sensitive fabric, and made a rayograph in the sun (like Man Ray, the famous photographer who invented this photographic technique on paper). Later, they sewed this photo fabric onto their dyed cloth background.



Figure 19. (top left) Cut Outs.

Figure 20. (top right) Sun Exposure.

Figure 21. (bottom left) Sewing the Photo Fabric and Dyed Cloth Together.

Figure 22. (bottom right). Fourth Grade Student is Surprised with the Color Change.

Fifth grade students created a story cloth similar to the third grade students. They painted their life events, but instead of adding puffy paint, they sewed around important areas of the story cloth to make them stand out against the painted areas.



Figure 23. (left) Students Paint.



Figure 24. (right) Fifth Graders Sew.

All students shared their personal narratives in small groups. This involved students choosing their own groups. I let them choose their group because I was interested to see if the Hmong students were chosen more often by the other students to be in a group because of the focus on their culture in this project. I did not really see much difference in this and how students normally chose groups with their friends, which included various races and ethnic groups such as the Hmong. The only interesting thing about the Hmong students was that while many of them were in groups with children from other cultures, some Hmong boys chose to be in a group by themselves and talk about their cloths to each other in the Hmong language.

The group members sat down and listened as each group member told about their story cloth. This usually involved the child naming the life events in the story cloth. Sometimes, they would discuss their favorite part, certain color choices, or other artistic elements. (These were some things suggested to discuss in the group). When students shared their story cloths with each other, I heard animated voices saying:

It's blue, it's black, it's red.

When we moved, she died.

I don't have anyone else to talk to.

This is when I met Pocahontas when I was a Make-a-Wish kid.

Raise your hand if you like mine! (Everyone in the group raised their hands.)

I've got a question, how did you do that?

I have another question, why is the trampoline green?

Hey! You don't have that many windows in real life!

It was this big. (A boy motions with his hands about his horse that died.)

This is my fabric that I sewed. It took me one day.

Tell me about your work. When was your brother born?

Most of the sharing involved the students naming things in their art. Some students asked the speaker questions about what was happening or why things were certain colors. They took turns well, deciding who was going first before sharing. There were a few difficulties concerning some children who were not asked to be in a group to begin with, and I could tell the children were reluctant to accept the group member when I asked if the child could join them. The experience gave me insight on who had trouble making friends or was an outsider. This insight helped me be aware of the need to make sure these students were always included in group activities.

The younger grades had mixed gender groups, while the fourth and fifth grade students were usually all boys or all girls. The boys were more reluctant to share things in their cloth than the girls were, and they only chose two or three members for their

group. The girls' groups talked for much longer and had more members than the all boy groups.



Figure 25. Students Share Their Story Cloths in Groups.

A few students brought special fabric art or clothing from home to share with their class, such as quilt squares their grandmother made for them, nail and string pictures on fabric, or embroidery. Several Hmong students wore their traditional clothing to show their class examples of Hmong fabrics. A teacher's aide brought in two molas from Panama.

Second through fifth grade students answered four questions on a written reflection worksheet about what they learned after the studio art component. Younger

students discussed what they learned from the project as a class. I wrote their answers on chart paper. The data from those reflections will be discussed later in this paper.



Figure 26. Two Third Grade Students Fill Out Reflection Worksheets.

After the projects were completed, students put foam tape on the back of their story cloth and attached it to a large sheet of colored butcher paper, which was hung up in the halls of the school just in time for the parent-teacher conferences. I typed up a brief synopsis of the project and learning goals as wall text. I printed off about forty photographs of students working on their story cloths, and had a bulletin board of pictures of Laos, the refugee camps, traditional Hmong clothing, and other cultural items so parents and staff could see what we were learning about in class.



Figure 27. Hall Display.

During the conference days, many students eagerly showing their parents their story cloth in the hallway. A clipboard was displayed with papers asking parents to write

down comments about our art show, but none of them did. The only comment that was written was by a Hmong fourth grade girl. She wrote, “Why did you show my parents in the picture (on the bulletin board), it’s so embarrassing but it’s ok.”

Many teachers stopped me in the hall and told me how “great” or “cute” everything looked. There were very few comments about what the students learned or about the Hmong story cloths and culture. I was a little disappointed that the teachers seemed to treat this as just a way for me to decorate the school. I wonder if that is how they really felt or they just did not take the time to really look at the display or tell me a more in-depth reaction to it. The only comment I really got that affirmed all the hard work I had done was when one teacher told me I had outdone myself and should be teacher of the year. That felt good.

I also displayed about ten story cloths made by the students at the county-wide art show at the Monroe Art Guild a few weeks later. Wall text was included, explaining the history behind the Hmong story cloths and added a picture of an authentic Hmong story cloth. Other art teachers asked me questions about how they could do similar projects with their students.

CHAPTER 5

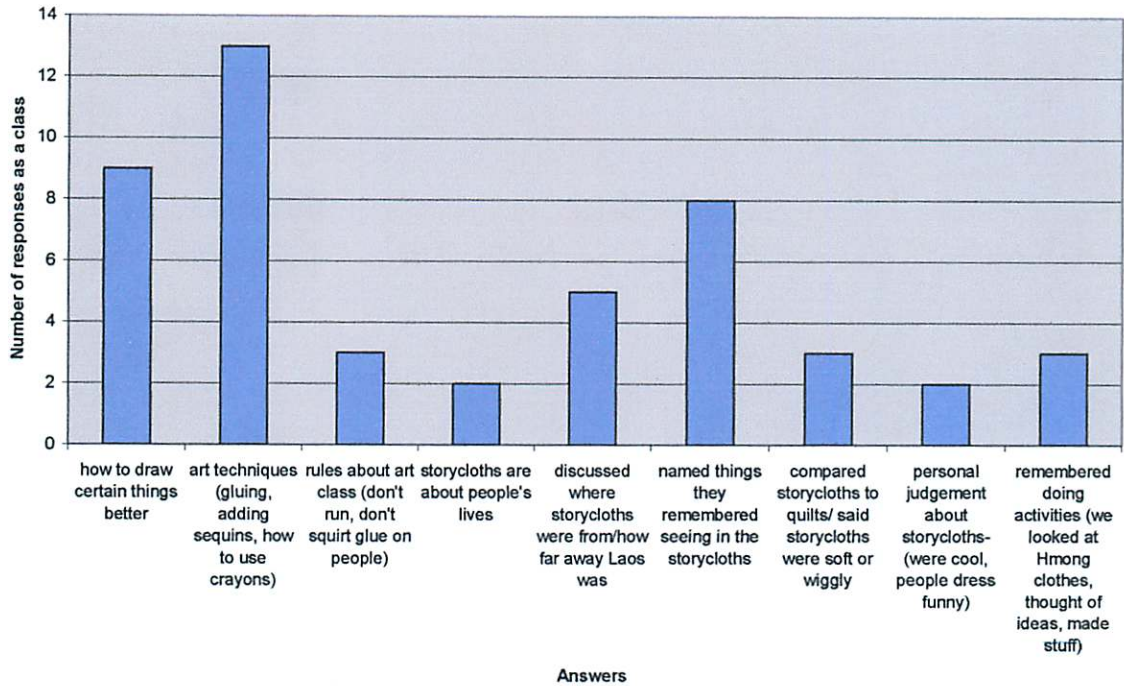
REFLECTIONS

Looking at the written reflections from the students gave me a deeper understanding about what students learned during the project and what they had understood and misunderstood from my teaching. I was able to determine that most students really did not know much about Laos, story cloths, or Hmong people before the project. However, after doing the project, the students showed me in their reflections that they did learn something that was of value to them.

There were many different things the students said they learned during the applied project. The three most frequent answers from each grade level will be reviewed next. (More information is available in chart format in Appendix D.)

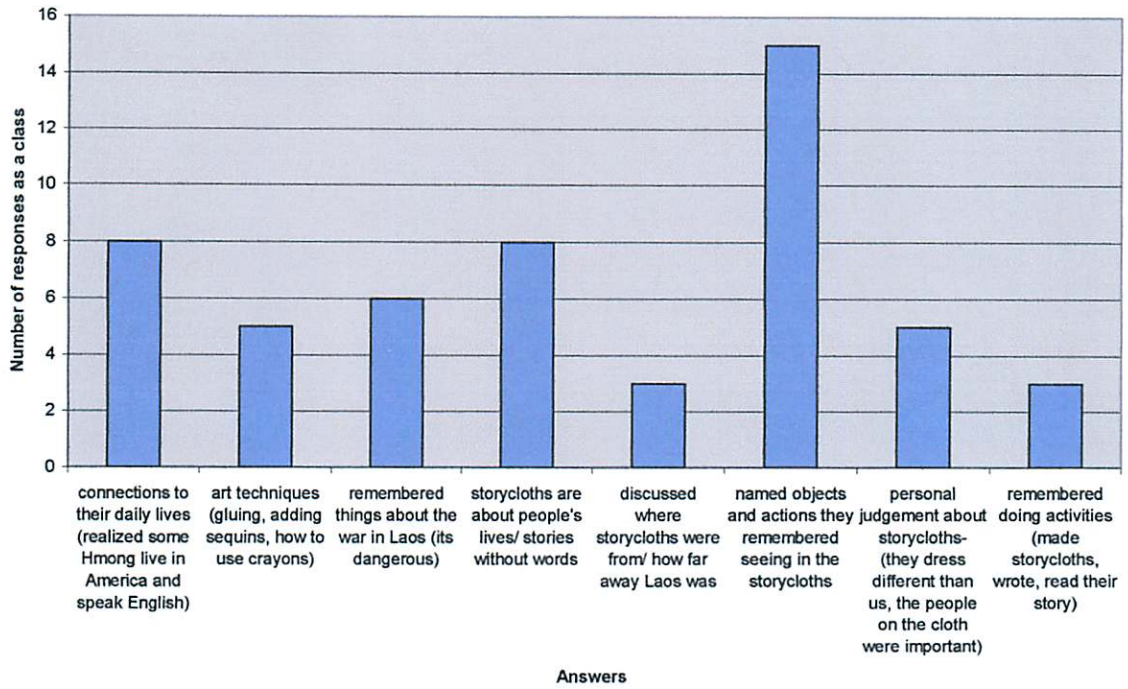
I asked kindergarten and first grade classes what they learned during the story cloth project. I recorded their answers on chart paper and did not give them any prompts on kinds of answers I was looking for. The most frequent thing kindergarten students said they learned referred to art techniques such as gluing sequins or how to color with fabric crayons (13 students said this.) They also told me they learned to draw certain things better (9 students), and they named things they remembered seeing in the story cloth (8 students).

Kindergarten: What did you learn during the storycloth project?



The things first grade students learned were slightly more specific to the project. Although they named objects and actions they saw in the story cloths (15 students), they also had some higher-level connections that were made. Students told me that story cloths are about people's lives (8 students), and another 8 students noted that the project connected to the things they know in their own life. For example, some realized that Hmong people live in the United States and speak English. Other things the students remembered were details about the war in Laos (6 students).

1st grade: What did you learn during the storycloth project?



The second through fifth grade classes were asked to write a written reflection on their learning (without any help from me) that answered four main questions:

What did I know before the story cloth project?

What did I know after the story cloth project?

What was the most interesting thing I learned?

Here is a story about my artwork.

Each grade level's three most popular student responses are grouped after each question and indicated the number of students who wrote down that answer. Many students had very similar responses on the questions, but there were also some answers that struck me as particularly interesting. I am including some of the specific things students wrote verbatim in their reflections as well:

What did I know before we did this story cloth project?

Second Grade

Nothing. - 83 students responded this way

I knew that Hmong make story cloths and sew. – 5 students

I knew that story cloths told stories. – 4 students

Third Grade

Nothing. -67 students

I knew Hmong people existed. – 8 students

I knew of Laos and/or Thailand. – 5 students

Fourth Grade

Nothing. – 55 students

I knew how to sew. – 36 students

I knew Hmong people existed. – 13 students

I knew of Laos and/or Thailand. - 13 students

Fifth Grade

Nothing. – 57 students

I knew how to sew. – 27 students

I knew Hmong people existed. – 15 students

Specific Excerpts

That story cloths were very important to Hmong people's human culture. –Hmong 4th grade girl

Before we did this project I already knew that story cloths told stories. I also knew that many Hmong came from Thailand and Laos. Hmong also made their own clothes. –Hmong 4th grade girl

I know how to sew by my grandma, she taught me how. -4th grade girl

What do I know after doing the story cloth project?

Second Grade

I know about Laos and Thailand and the war that was there. – 25 students

I know how to make a story cloth. – 20 students

I know story cloths are made by Hmong people. – 13 students

Story cloths tell about the artist's life. – 13 students

Third Grade

I know about Laos and Thailand and the war that was there. – 24 students

Story cloths tell about the artist's life. – 19 students

I know story cloths are made by Hmong people. – 11 students

Fourth Grade

I know how to sew now. – 51 students

Story cloths tell about the artist's life. – 22 students

I know how to make a story cloth. – 20 students

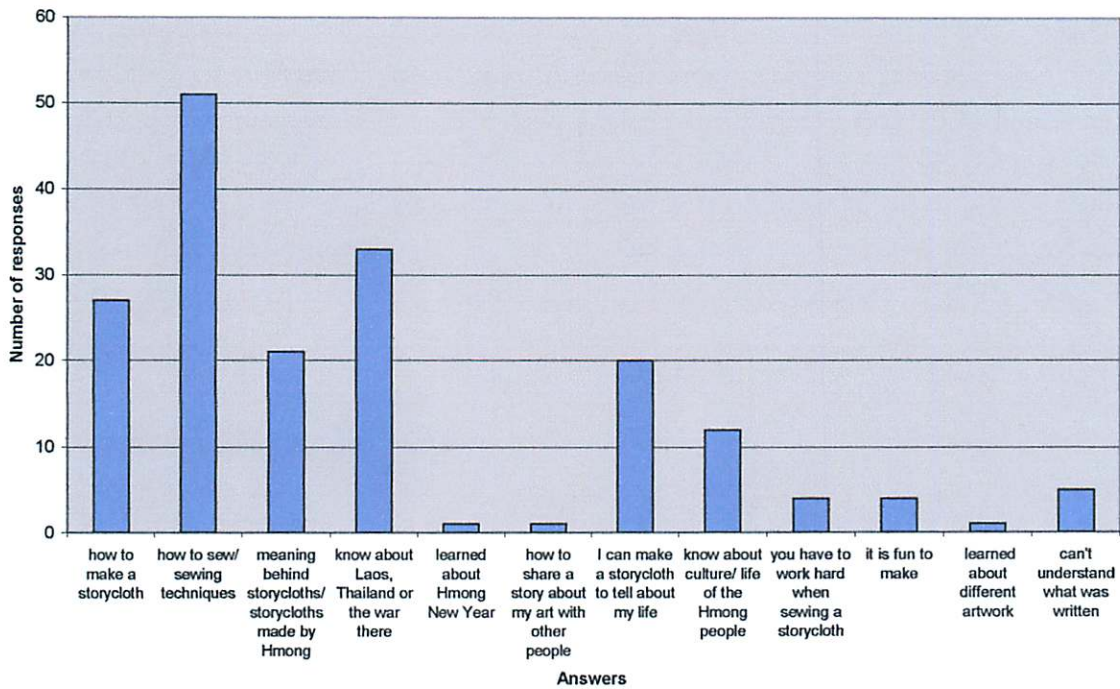
Fifth Grade

I know how to sew now. – 51 students

I know about Laos and Thailand and the war that was there. – 33 students

I know how to make a story cloth. - 27 students

5th grade: What do I know after the storycloth project?



Specific Excerpts

I have learned about Thailand and it is very interesting. -4th grade girl

A story cloth is called a batik. -2nd grade girl (*Look for more commentary on this response in Chapter 7*).

That Laos got bombed and had to move to a camp. -5th grade boy

They don't have a good life. -2nd grade boy

I learned how to sew. I could teach other people. I also learned the story cloth. I would like to try a big one. - 5th grade boy

It takes skill. -2nd grade girl

I learned how to sew. I learned more about Thailand because I didn't really know how the refugee camp felt. -Hmong 4th grade girl

I know instead of books, they made stories on a piece of cloth. - 3rd grade girl

I know about other countries and how they live. -4th grade girl

What did I know after doing the story cloth project is that we been through a lot of troubles and worries. –Hmong 5th grade boy

What was the most interesting thing I learned?

Second Grade

Batik uses hot wax and is a kind of cloth. – 23 students

I know how to make a story cloth and I know that the story cloths were made by the Hmong. – 19 students

The answer the student wrote down did not make any sense in the context of the question. - 16 students

Third Grade

I know how to make a story cloth and I know that the story cloths were made by the Hmong. – 33 students

The Hmong came from Asia and left because of the war there. – 15 students

Story cloths tell of the artist's life. – 10 students

Fourth Grade

I learned how to sew. – 48 students

I learned that the sun can change cloth into a rayograph. – 25 students

Story cloths tell of the artist's life. – 15 students

Fifth Grade

I learned how to sew. – 51 students

I learned how to make a story cloth. – 20 students

I know more about Hmong culture now. – 16 students

Specific Excerpts

The most interesting thing I learned was about the story cloths and how they are different. -4th grade girl

How heavy the outfits were. -4th grade girl who tried on a Hmong outfit when a Hmong parent visited her classroom

The most interesting thing I learned is about the Hmong culture. Even though I am Hmong I still like to learn more about Hmong from everyone. -5th grade boy

The most interesting thing I learned was about the Hmong language. -4th grade girl who had a Hmong parent teach her class how to say several words in Hmong

That people from other places really dressed up. -4th grade girl

About the refugee camps. -4th grade boy

The most interesting thing I learned is about how they used story cloths to tell stories. I thought it was so cool. -4th grade girl

The most interesting thing I learned was the rayograph. That is because anytime I grow up I can teach it to other people like my grandchildren. -4th grade girl (*Look for more information on the rayograph lesson in Appendix B*).

The most interesting thing I learned was to feel in spots by sewing. -5th grade girl

The students also had to write a short story describing what was happening in their story cloth and then rate how accurately their story and art matched. Here is an overview of the three main things students in each grade level wrote about in the writing about their story cloth. Many children wrote about more than one thing in their story, so the numbers of children responding about each item are high. Several complete excerpts from their writing follow:

My story is about...

Second Grade

A birth or death – 42 students

My house or moving to a new house – 33 students

Family – 30 students

Third Grade

A birth or death – 47 students

My house or moving to a new house – 40 students

Family – 36 students

School – 36 students

Fourth Grade

My house or moving to a new house – 60 students

A birth or death – 57 students

Family – 48 students

School – 48 students

Fifth Grade

My house or moving to a new house – 55 students

A birth or death – 52 students

School – 48 students

Family – 38 students

Specific Excerpts

I was born in an average house. The car is for my cousin's death because he got hit by a car. The stick is for when I climbed up my Grandma's favorite tree. So she pulled off a limb and spanked me with it. That's my story. -5th grade boy

It tells about my favorite dog in the whole world but he died yesterday on 3-15-06. I like to play basketball and it's my favorite sport. Every Valentine's I had pink eye. My favorite ice cream is chocolate chip cookie and some other food that I think it's fried squid and I have an earth that means I want to travel the world and a hand that says I am not a troublemaker and W.P.E.S. that's my school. -5th grade girl

I was born. Then my dad left us when I was two. Then I came to a new school. Then I got a new dog. Then we built a barn when we were done. I jumped in a lake. A year later we moved. -3rd grade boy

In March 21, 1995 I was born. About four years later I had my first day of school. When I was in school I learned how to read some things. And in Christmas 2005 I got my first real digital camera! -5th grade girl

When the bad guys came we crossed the river. Then my grandfather got shot on his body. -Hmong 2nd grade boy

First I have my old house before it got struck then to the right and up I have a lightning bolt, rain, and some dark clouds. Down a little bit we have my house after it got struck, a little lower there is a fire truck to put out the fire. Then we have my new house with a bright sun above it. -5th grade girl whose house burned down only months before

What was interesting to me were the different things that students chose as the most important things and events that had happened in their life. I would not have personally chosen getting spanked by my grandmother as one of those pivotal moments in my life, or the flavor of ice cream I liked, but I had to remember these are children, and their life experiences are limited.

I was also surprised that moving to a new house or their existing home was written about more often than family with all four grade levels. It shows that when students move to a new home or new school, it can be a life changing experience for them. The majority of students also listed being born as one of the most important things that ever happened to them.

Overall, the data I collected from analyzing students' reflections helped reinforce to me that students really did take home some of the messages I was trying to get across to them through the lessons. They went from the majority of them knowing "nothing" about Hmong culture, Laos, Thailand, or story cloths, to learning about new cultures and countries, understanding the meaning of the story cloths, and picking up technical artistic skills like sewing.

CHAPTER 6

THE FINDINGS

After all of the lessons I taught and the data I collected and analyzed, I still had many questions to resolve. Some of the main questions I had about the students' learning were:

1. Were there any stereotypes or misunderstandings students had about Hmong people at the beginning of the project, and did this change over the course of the project?
2. What specifically did the Hmong students get out of the project? How did they feel about the project?
3. Did classes with Hmong students in them learn more than classes without Hmong students in them?
4. Did the students show caring in the project?
5. Was cooperative learning helpful to students during this unit?

I found answers to these questions in the notes I made in the sociogram, my personal reflective journal, and in students' answers on their reflection worksheets.

Misunderstandings of the Hmong

As I began the story cloth project, I assumed that most children in the school had no idea what "Hmong" was. They probably thought the Hmong student in their class was actually Chinese because they had heard of China before. Throughout the project, I heard a few comments (probably less than ten) that confirmed my suspicions that there were some misconceptions about the Hmong students in the school. These are some comments I heard in the art class:

That looks like China. -1st grade boy

I know that Hmong, Laos, and Thailand ate sushi. – 4th grade boy

After hearing the story book *Dia's Story Cloth*, a fourth grade boy asked the two Hmong boys in his class, "How do they speak in Hmong? Tell us something!" The two Hmong boys blushed and stayed quiet. The same boy that asked them the question then said loudly in front of the class, "I know how to speak Japanese. "Wichi Wachi!" The class laughs, as well as the two Hmong boys, uncomfortably. I told the class that Laos is not the same as China or Japan. The United States of America is next to Mexico, but that does not mean we speak the same language as Mexico. Then someone from the class asked, "So Hmong and Japanese are not the same language?"

As time went by, I heard these comments from some of the children that seemed to indicate more understanding, acceptance, and awareness of differences between students:

I learned their clothes are different from us. -2nd grade girl

After our class discussion, I overheard a fourth grade girl asking all of her Hmong tablemates where they were from. She was very interested in learning more about their families.

Two Caucasian first grade students were sitting at a table working when one student said, "Those people in the picture (Hmong)... I met those people before. They were real nice." Then she proceeded to draw a Hmong boy in her picture. Her tablemate said, "I never saw those people before, but I saw them now."

At the beginning of the second day of a third grade class, we reviewed what we learned from the week before. A Hmong boy raised his hand and said he talked to his family about the war in Laos. They told him they hid in the woods instead of going to the refugee camp. Another student excitedly exclaimed, "So this story cloth is about his life!" (I guess he had not made the connection the week before.)

Hmong Students' Feelings

I had mixed reactions from Hmong students about the project. While their parents and grandparents were fully supportive of the story cloth unit, and most of the Hmong

children were, too, a few were not so excited. Several of the fourth and fifth grade Hmong students seemed reluctant to have their parents visit their class or show Hmong cultural artifacts to their peers, a sign of their growing independence. The third grade and younger students were much less worried about what their peers thought and were eager to bring in items to show their class. One kindergarten girl's mother visited her class and dressed up her daughter in her traditional costume. While the little girl appeared to love hamming it up in front of the class, later when I asked her what she thought about it, she said "It was weird."

During one third grade class, I sat down and had a long conversation with one very shy Hmong girl. She told me all about the story cloths in her home, what her family does for the Hmong New Year, and how her Grandmother makes her and her siblings speak Hmong at her house. Because they don't really know how to speak Hmong, they hide in other rooms and whisper in English to each other. I asked her how she felt about doing this project in art class, and she said, "I like it because I learn more about Hmong stuff that I didn't know." Then I asked her if she was ever embarrassed when kids in her class look at her when we talk about Hmong things. She replied, "Yeah, most kids think I'm Chinese or Japanese."

As the project went on, I paid careful attention to things that other Hmong students said about the project. For some, these lessons recalled things they had been told about their family history. For others, it sparked a family discussion about the past. Here are some things I heard:

I remember living in Laos, a long time ago. I remember my friends. We had a lot of family. But not so much now. I remember my grandfather got shot while he was sleeping near me because there was blood. -Hmong 1st grade boy

(This was interesting to me because this Hmong boy sat right next to another Hmong boy in class who did not know anything about Laos and drew a picture of his new dog.)

Several Hmong children in different grade levels told me about their grandparents being killed during the war in Laos. Either they were killed by Laotian soldiers or drowned trying to swim across the Mekong River. One third grade Hmong boy told me of how his grandfather drowned crossing the Mekong. He told his class how the Hmong and American soldiers fought on the same side. At the end of class, I asked the whole class what they learned, and the same boy said he learned the name of the river... Mekong, and he learned the army taking over Laos was Communist.

After one first grade class period was over for the day and the children were leaving, one Hmong first grade boy ran up to me and gave me a hug. I asked him if liked learning about Hmong things in art. He nodded, "Sometimes, we teach about Laos and Hmong art at my house!"

One kindergarten Hmong boy was not so enthusiastic about the project. On our second day of the project he moaned, "Awww. Are we going to talk about this again?" This same student was also the only student in the school who copied the authentic Hmong story cloth we looked at. I asked him, "Why did you decide to copy the story cloth?" He replied, "I dunno. Because I Hmong." It made me think that maybe he really did feel a connection to the story cloth even though he put on a tough front.

I asked a Hmong boy if he had heard about the story cloths and war much before and he said no, his family doesn't talk much about the war in Laos.

Another Hmong first grade boy told me that because of this project, "Now my family is talking about Laos!"

Class Comparison

The first fifth grade class that did this project with was the only fifth grade class that did not have any Hmong students in it. As I read *Dia's Story Cloth* to them, many of the boys became restless half way through the story and started sighing loudly like they wanted me to hurry up and get it over with. It made me a little anxious, and I worried that they would not respond well to the assignment. They had a little trouble brainstorming ideas and seemed a hesitant to share life events with other children in their

class. Fortunately, though, as the project progressed in the following weeks, they seemed to get into the dyeing and sewing. The fifth grade class I had the day after this class had two Hmong boys and two Hmong girls in it. I wrote in my journal after their class:

The way fifth acted today was miles different from yesterday. The class was so quiet and interested in the story. They asked some good questions, wanted to know about the Hmong New Year, and enjoyed seeing a photo of one of their Hmong classmate's New Year's dress on the bulletin board. It really made a difference for them to relate this information to their classmates that they know.
-January 25, 2006

I looked over the data from the student reflections by class and compared the things students knew and learned in classes that had Hmong students in them with classes that did not have Hmong students in them. I really did not see a discernable difference in the quality of things students learned in the two groups. Perhaps this is because even if a student did not have any Hmong peers in their class this year, they probably had some Hmong students in their class the year before, had physical education with them, or ate lunch in the cafeteria with them. So really, all the children had seen Hmong students at the school before; maybe they just did not know anything about their background.

Caring Ways

One of the main ways I showed caring to my students was how I took time to listen to the students who wanted to share events from their life with me. In one instance, I had a conversation with three third grade girls. Two of them lost relatives in very tragic ways. We discussed how art can help you get out sad feelings. One student said, "Yeah, then you won't go crazy and cut off your ear like Van Gogh." I also tried not to pry too much with students whose body language was telling me they didn't want to share anything with me.

It probably would be useful for me to read a few articles from art therapists or have the counselor be available for particularly sad students to visit if this unit was replicated in the future. However, I do not feel that counseling is the focus of this project at all. Students, just like adults, make art about their life experiences. For some people, art is naturally therapeutic, so sometimes sad subjects will come up as themes in art.

Cooperative Learning at Work

It was helpful for students to brainstorm in groups and share their finished story cloths in groups. It seemed even more helpful for students to use cooperative learning while sewing. I could really see evidence of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development happening in my classroom through children helping each other sew in the fourth and fifth grade. Children that already had some experience sewing at home were at a level above beginning sewers. When the beginning sewers had to thread their needle, tie knots, or un-do mistakes, the more advanced sewers stepped in and showed the beginners what to do when I was busy helping someone else. I could see an improvement in the beginners' sewing ability after several class periods of sewing, mainly due to the teaching of their more capable peers.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The idea for this project began in the spring of 2005 when I realized I wanted to take my interest in Hmong culture to a new level. I started researching about the Hmong culture in the summer of 2005 and went to the Hmong New Year festival in Winder, Georgia with a few fellow teachers in November of that year. The applied project lessons took place from January to March of 2006 at Walker Park Elementary School in Monroe, Georgia. The data analysis and analysis of the project was completed in the fall of 2006.

As I stated in Chapter 1, I wanted to develop this applied project to address what I felt was a real problem: the history, culture, and art of the Hmong people is not part of the curriculum in the school where I teach art. I designed the art curriculum around an important aspect of Hmong art and culture (story cloths) that I felt all students would be able to relate to in their own lives. My secondary reason for the project was to help all students and teachers at school become more caring of people who are different from them.

I feel like this unit definitely made the students more aware of the Hmong culture and the idea that people come from different places and have different experiences. I also feel that, at least during the project, students acted more sensitively to other children in their class, and I hope that those actions carried over to their daily lives outside the art room. I saw examples of caring words and actions in the classroom throughout the lessons and recorded them in my journal and sociogram. Some of the caring actions I

observed were when children who did not appear to be close friends volunteered to help each other learn to sew or demonstrate how to draw something difficult.

Recommendations

I learn something new every day as a teacher. The weeks I spent doing this project were no exception. Here are some recommendations regarding procedures I would have done differently if I was going to repeat this project with a group of students in the future. Hopefully, the advice will help other teachers who want to do similar projects:

1. A teacher who wants to replicate this project may want to alert the school counselor about the type of project she is going to do and ask the counselor for tips on talking and listening to children who are drawing about tragedies they have experienced. Some students may ask to see the counselor (one of mine did) after drawing about an upsetting experience. The majority of students drew about happy times in their life, but a few may need someone to talk to about something that makes them sad.

2. Some students seemed hesitant to brainstorm major life events with people at their table. Perhaps, it was because they had assigned seats. Allow children to jot down events privately and then share them with their table. They will probably feel more comfortable sharing this way. It also helped for me to go to each table and prompt students who couldn't think of anything important that had happened in their life. I asked them if they had ever gone to a new school or if they had a special hobby.

3. The fourth grade students had trouble understanding the concept of a rayograph. They had never made anything like that before and kept wanting to draw

pictures with pencil on their cut-outs, thinking the pencil marks would show up on their photo-fabric in the sun. Eventually, I realized to tell them that when the sun makes a shadow of a person on the ground, it does not make the words on their t-shirt show up; it just shows the outline of the person's body. This helped them understand the concept better, along with several examples of what to do and not do.

4. The second grade students seemed to understand that story cloths and batiks were not the same when I was teaching them, yet in their reflections, ten to fifteen of them wrote that a story cloth was a batik. It was disheartening to realize they had totally missed the point. I was just trying to show them a different way of making fabric art and ended up just getting the students confused. Looking back, I would not do batik with second grade students, I would let them do a project similar to what the third grade students did: paint on cloth and add cut fabric and puffy paint to the details.

5. After dyeing with students for several days, I found my throat to be a little itchy, even though the ventilator was on the whole time. I do not think I would use real dye with students in a classroom again. The decision to do that came from inexperience. Next time I would use pre-dyed fabric or let students dye cloth with yellow onion skins. (See Appendix H for the recipe).

6. I became really frustrated with a few kindergarten classes when I asked them what they learned during the project, and they told me, "Don't run with glue," or "I learned to draw a house." I thought I had wasted my time teaching them about the Hmong culture. They could have learned these things in a simpler project. Later, I realized that these things were important to them, and that it was okay. The first grade students also mentioned skills they learned, but also mentioned cultural differences that

struck them. It is important to remember that young students' view of the world is so limited that they are not going to understand a lot of details about other countries. The main point for them is that there are many different places and people in the world, and they do and make things in unique ways.

7. I wish I had a tape recorder to capture all of the interesting things the children had said while working and learning. Maybe, if it is approved by the principal, a teacher could allow groups of students to tell about what they learned or liked about the project on video. The video could play on a looped television at an open house for parents and teachers. Then they might be less likely to just view the story cloths as "cute," but as evidence of real learning and growth.

8. In *The Culturally Competent Art Educator*, Andrus (2001) discusses that educators should pick a specific theme and research the many cultures who use that theme in their work. I felt I could have done a better job incorporating many different cultural traditions of fabric-making into the lessons. If I was going to do a semester long unit on fabric art, other traditions such as quilt making in America, molas of Panama, or weaving of the Navajo Native Americans could have been studied as well. Additionally, I could have looked at how different cultures tell personal stories and memories through art making.

Conclusions

This project helped my school be a more accepting community of learners. I saw understanding etched on the faces of the students as they talked to each other about things that are important in their lives. This experience helped the kids open up and see how their lives are important and meaningful. That will be the message I hope they remember

ten years from now, not facts about Laos or types of clothing worn by Hmong groups, but that their life is important enough to make art about.

It is evident that this project about the native culture of one of the cultural groups at my school, made a difference in the feelings of those families had about the school. Some of them finally felt, and acted, like a part of the school. There was a sense of pride I could see as the Hmong parents taught their child's class for a period, and all the children listened carefully to their lesson about Hmong clothing or language. A similar project could be developed for any cultural group in the school, and I think it would increase parent involvement at meetings and school functions. With the continuing influx of immigrants into the United States, education will continue to be influenced by other cultures. Art teachers must embrace this challenge and see it as a great teaching opportunity for students to learn about the world.

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APPENDIX A

Hmong Family Night Bilingual Invitation

You are invited to:

Hmong Family Night

at Walker Park Elementary School

Tuesday, January 10 at 6:30 pm in the Media Center

Ms. Low, the art teacher, will talk about an art project she will do with all Walker Park students where they will learn about Hmong story cloths and make fabric art. Mrs. Young will talk about the English as a second language class that she teaches.

Please bring any Hmong art that you have. Ms. Low would like to take pictures of it and learn about it. It could be story cloths, clothing, hats, sewing, or anything!

If you know anyone who makes Hmong story cloths, please let Ms. Low know. She would like to meet them.

This will be a fun time to see friends and learn about the Walker Park art program. There will be snacks provided too. If you want to bring any special Hmong food, you are welcome to do that.

I'll see you there!

Ms. Karen Low
Walker Park Elementary Art Teacher
klow@walton.k12.ga.us



Thov caw koj tuaj koom:

Tsev Neeg Hmoob Hmo

Nyob rau ntawm lub tsev kawm ntawv Walker Park Elementary School.

Hnub tim 10, lub 1 hli, taum 6:30 PM nyob rau hauv Media Center

Ms. Low, tus xib fwb qhia kos duab, xav tau kev pab ntawm cov niam txiv hmoob sawv daws, vim nws xav qhia txog hmoob cov dab neeg uas tau muab sau tseg cia rau hmoob tej ris tej tso thiab paj ntaub, rau cov tub ntxhais kawm ntawv nyob rau hauv Walker Park Elementary School. Tsis tas li ntawd, Mrs. Young, yuav los piav thiab qhia hais txog ntawm nws chav qhia ntawv askis (English as second language) ua nws xav qhia pub rau xawv daws.

Thov, yog hais tias leej twg muaj ris tsho hmoob, kaus mom, paj ntaub, los yog tej yam uas hais txog hmoob lub neej, Ms. Low xav yees duab thiab kawm txog.

Yog hais tias koj paub leej twg muaj ris tsho los yog paj ntaub hmoob uas piav txog hmoob lub neej, Ms. Low xav ntsib thiab xav nrog nws tham.

Cia siab hais tias txog hnub ntawd peb sawv daws yuav sib ntsib. Peb muaj me ntsis khoom txom ncauj, yog hais tias nej muaj koom noj dab tsi los nqa tuaj tau.

Kuv mam ntsib nej sawv daws rau hnub ntawd

Ms. Karen Low
Walker Park Elementary Art Teacher
klow@walton.k12.ga.us

APPENDIX B

Story Cloth Lesson Plans

Story Cloth Lesson Plans
 Grades: Kindergarten through fifth Grade
 Time: Three to six 50 minute periods per grade level

Essential Question-

How can I make art about things that happened in my life?

Aims-

Students will learn about the history of the Hmong people, teaching them to appreciate people that are different from them.

Students will analyze the artistry of the Hmong story cloths using art criticism techniques.

Students will create their own personally narrative story cloth, connecting it to the narrative quality of the Hmong story cloths.

Visual Art Objectives from the Georgia Quality Core Curriculum-

| Kindergarten | First Grade | Second Grade | Third Grade | Fourth Grade | Fifth Grade |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| K.1- Creates art with different subjects and themes and from personal experiences. | 1.2- Creates fiber art and mixed media art. | 2.2- Uses a variety of art materials and techniques to model, construct, and compose original artworks. | 3.5- Produces crafts, fiber arts, and mixed media. | 4.4- Creates artworks using shapes and space (positive and negative). | 5.1- Produces artworks and graphic designs that use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message. |
| K.2- Creates fiber art and mixed media | 1.3- Uses a variety of art materials and techniques to model, construct, and compose original artworks. | 2.3- Creates paintings and fiber arts emphasizing line. | 3.16- Discusses the purposes and functions of art in today's world. | 4.6- Produces drawings, fiber arts, and mixed media. | 5.3- Creates fiber arts and mixed media. |
| K.3- Uses a variety of art materials and techniques to model, construct, and compose original artworks. | 1.4- Uses imagination & environment, including family & home, as sources for ideas. | 2.6- Discusses how culture and environment provide inspiration for creating artworks. | 3.17- Examines other individuals' reasons for preferences in artworks. | 4.13- Explains how space and shapes can be positive and negative in a composition. | 5.12- Identifies specific media and techniques used to produce selected artworks. |
| K.11- Recognizes colors, lines, shapes, textures, | 1.17- Describes feelings in response to | 2.19- Makes statements about the | 3.18- Associates artworks of a | 4.18- Develops and applies criteria | 5.13- Recognizes how artists use |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| and patterns in artworks and in nature. | looking at artworks. | functions (purposes) of particular artworks and the culture that produced them. | particular style with the culture from which the work was produced. | for judging personal decisions about artworks. | selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message. |
| K.13- Uses art terms with emphasis on the elements of art to talk about own artworks and art reproductions. | 1.19-Examines and judges artworks based on clues within the artworks. | | | 4.20- Matches a description of a culture with an artwork representative of the same culture. | 5.14- Critiques artworks in sequence of: description, analysis of design or a composition, interpretation of meaning, and judgment based on evidence/clues observed in artworks. |
| K.17- Points out clues in selected artworks that determine time and place. | | | | 4.21- Generates accurate statements about the functions of particular artworks and the culture that produced them. | 5.15-Develops, judges, and communicates personal decisions about artwork. |
| | | | | 4.22- Explains how art reflects the relationship between artists and their culture (geographic, political, and economic). | |

Materials-

General Materials-

Hmong story cloth or reproduction of one

Photographs of Hmong culture and art, maps, and other things on a bulletin board

Permanent markers in different colors

Ziploc bags and file folders for storing little cutouts, sequins, and other small things.

Plastic apron and rubber gloves for the teacher dealing with dye

Grade-level specific materials-

| Kindergarten | First Grade | Second Grade | Third Grade | Fourth Grade | Fifth Grade |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| Sketch paper | Sketch paper | Sketch paper | Sketch paper | Sketch paper | Sketch paper |
| Pencils | Pencils | Pencils | Pencils | Pencils | Pencils |
| Synthetic fabric squares | Synthetic fabric squares | Natural fabric squares | Natural fabric squares | Natural fabric squares | Natural fabric squares |
| Masking tape to hold down fabric to table, or pre-tape fabric to masonite boards | Masking tape to hold down fabric to table, or pre-tape fabric to masonite boards | Masking tape to hold down fabric | Fabric dye for background fabric | Fabric dye for background fabric | Fabric dye For background fabric |
| Fabric crayons | Fabric crayons | White tempera paint | Sink and buckets | Sink and buckets | Sink and buckets |
| Elmer's glue | Elmer's glue | Colored acrylic paints | Clothesline and clothespins for wet fabric | Clothesline and clothespins for wet fabric | Clothesline and clothespins for wet fabric |
| Hmong patterns to copy | Hmong patterns to copy | Sink to rinse fabric | Acrylic paint and acrylic puffy paint | Photo print fabric pre-cut into squares, like "Design and Print Sun Fun Squares" | Acrylic paint |
| "Token Reponse" art criticism game | "Token Reponse" art criticism game | Clothesline and clothespins for wet fabric | Small paintbrushes | Paper that students cut silhouettes from | Small brushes |
| Chart paper | Chart paper | Batik examples | Fabric glue and fabric scraps if they want to add fabric scraps | Masking tape to stick silhouettes to photo fabric or pins and cardboard to back the fabric when | Sewing practice worksheet |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | exposing it to sun | |
| Sequins and little foam shapes | Sequins and little foam shapes | Hmong patterns to copy | Hmong patterns to copy | Sewing needles and pins | Sewing needles |
| | | | | Embroidery thread | Embroidery thread |
| | | | | Hmong patterns | Hmong patterns |

Resources-

Brittan, D. (1997). *The Hmong*. New York: Rosen/Power Kids Press.
 Cha, D. (1996). *Dia's story cloth*. New York: Lee and Low Books.
 Murphy, N. (1997). *A Hmong family*. Minneapolis: Lerner.
 Shea, P. D. (1995). *The Whispering cloth*. Honesdale: Boyds Mill.

Vocabulary-

Hmong- means “free people,” they come from Laos usually

Laos- country in Southeast Asia

Thailand- country in Southeast Asia

Story cloth- also called a pa'ndau, an embroidered Hmong cloth that tells about a person's life

(4th and 5th grade only) Vietnam War- during this war the Communists tried to take over the government in Laos and the Americans and Hmong fought a secret war against the Communists, which they lost

Instruction-

Kindergarten and First Grade Lesson: Crayon and Embellishment Story cloth

Day 1-

1. Students examine a story cloth on display in the classroom. (The story cloth I used showed Hmong people moving, swimming across a river, farming, a family, and a house). Everyone participates by going up to the story cloth and pointing out things they see in the artwork. (There is a chart on the elements of art nearby for reference to art words).
2. The teacher asks students to make predictions on the time and place occurring in the story cloth based on clues in the artwork.
3. Again they look at the original story cloth on the board, now exploring it with the other four senses. The teacher writes down suggestions from the class on chart paper of things they would see, hear, feel, taste, and smell if they stepped into the picture. What feelings does it give you?
4. The teacher talks about how artists sometimes make art about important things that happened in their life. Students get in groups and talk about important things that happened in their life (moving to a new house, a sibling being born, death of a loved one, starting school, etc.) Then they each draw important events that happened to them on 9 x 12” newsprint. They can write about it on the back of the paper if desired.

Day 2-

1. The teacher and students review what happened the week before.
2. Then she demonstrates how to turn the drawing from last week into fabric art. (The teacher should pre-tape fabric onto masonite boards for kindergarten, but first grade is able to tape their fabric to the table independently). Then copy the drawing from last week onto the fabric with fabric crayons. Press down hard on the fabric to color in the design and background.
3. If they finish early they may use pencil and paper to practice drawing Hmong patterns or designs from a book or worksheet on their art. This helps improve hand-eye coordination and lets students become familiar with Hmong symbols.

Day 3-

1. Students glue down little foam shapes and sequins to their story cloth to accent special areas.
2. Students share their art in small groups. They can tell about the story in the art and the ideas behind it. Then the students lay their fabric on their desk.
3. Each student is given a paper symbol from the game "Token Response." (This art criticism game helps students categorize art. Students walk around and lay their symbol on the artwork they like the best, think is the most creative, etc. Then the class discusses the selections.
4. The teacher gathers the students together and asks them what they learned during this project and writes the responses on chart paper.

Second Grade Lesson: Tempera and Acrylic Batik Story cloth

Day 1-

1. Students examine a story cloth on display in the classroom. Everyone participates by going up to the story cloth and pointing out things they see in the artwork.
2. The teacher reads *The Whispering Cloth* to the students. The book is about a young Hmong girl whose parents were killed as they slept in war-torn Laos. Her and her grandmother escaped in the night and now live in a refugee camp in Thailand. The grandmother teaches the girl to stitch a story cloth to remember her parents and to stitch pictures of her hopes to move to America. (If there is a parent volunteer they may choose to tell about events from their past that relate to the story.)
3. Again they look at the original story cloth on the board. How has reading the book changed how you looked at the story cloth? What feelings does it give you?
4. The teacher asks students to determine how the culture and environment of the Hmong people inspired the artwork. What do you think this story cloth was used for in Laos, or in America? (memories)
5. The teacher talks about how artists sometimes make art about important things that happened in their life. Students get in groups and brainstorm a list of important things that happened in their life (moving to a new house, a sibling being born, death, starting school, etc.) Then they each draw important events that happened to them on 9 x 12" newsprint. They can write about it on the back of the paper if desired.

Day 2-

1. The teacher reviews what happened the week before and introduces the art of batik. Make sure the students understand that the story cloth is not batik. It is embroidery. We are making batik to learn about a different way of making fabric art. Students look at several examples of batik and learn about the process of drawing with wax and then dyeing the fabric.
2. Then she demonstrates how to turn the drawing from last week into batik safe for children. First you draw your design on fabric with a pencil. Then trace over your lines with thin brushes and white tempera paint. The white tempera is a substitute for hot wax used in batiks. (It may be necessary to tint the white with a little pink or yellow so students can see the paint against a white background.)

Day 3-

1. The teacher demonstrates how to use small brushes and colored acrylic paint to paint inside the white outlines made last week in the fabric. This works best when the acrylics are thinned slightly with water.
2. Set these fabric works aside to dry while students practice drawing Hmong patterns or designs on sketch paper for fun.

Day 4-

1. Several students at a time rinse out their fabric in a sink or bucket. The tempera will wash away, but not the acrylic paint. It looks like batik. (If tiny details were washed away when the white tempera was rinsed out, next week students can go over details with thin permanent markers.)
2. Students share their art in small groups. They can tell about the story in the art and the ideas behind it. Then the students lay their fabric on their desk and the class walks around to look at all of the art they made. Then hang it on a clothesline to dry.
3. If students brought in fabric from home to show the class, they may do so.
4. Then students fill out a reflection worksheet answering questions about what they learned and write a story about what is happening on the story cloth. On the worksheet they also have to rate how well their story describes what is happening in their story cloth artwork.
5. The class discusses what they learned as a whole.

Third Grade Lesson: Puffy Paint Story cloth

Day 1-

1. Students examine a story cloth on display in the classroom. Everyone participates by going up to the story cloth and pointing out things they see in the artwork.
2. The teacher reads *The Whispering Cloth* to the students. The book is about a young Hmong girl whose parents were killed as they slept in war-torn Laos. Her and her grandmother escaped in the night and now live in a refugee camp in Thailand. The grandmother teaches the girl to stitch a story cloth to remember her parents and to stitch pictures of her hopes to move to America. (If there is a parent volunteer they may choose to tell about events from their past that relate to the story.)
3. Again they look at the original story cloth on the board. How has reading the book changed how you looked at the story cloth? What feelings does it give you?

4. The teacher asks students to determine what they think this story cloth was used for in Laos or in America. What are some of the functions of art in today's world?
5. Teacher talks about how artists sometimes make art about important things that happened in their life. Students get in groups and talk about important things that happened in their life (moving to a new house, a sibling being born, death, starting school, etc.) Then they each draw important events that happened to them on 9 x 12" newsprint. They can write about it on the back of the paper if desired.

Day 2-

1. The class reviews what happened the week before and the teacher introduces the art of dyeing cloth. Students look at several examples of dyed cloth and learn about the process of dyeing fabric.
2. While the students finish up their sketches from last week, the teacher takes 4-5 students at a time to the sink area where there are buckets of dye, each one a different color. Students write their name on the bottom corner of their fabric with a permanent marker and drop it in the dye color of their choice. The students should not touch the dye. The teacher stirs the cloth and leaves it for the amount of time listed on the package directions. After school the cloth will be taken out and hung on a line to dry. The teacher should wear long plastic aprons and gloves when handling the wet dye, and a mask when mixing the dye before school. Only use dye in your classroom if you have a good ventilation system.
3. Next, Students color code their sketches so they know what colors to use when painting the following week.

Day 3-

1. Draw your sketch onto the fabric with a pencil.
2. Paint the figures and other designs with acrylic paint.
3. Demonstrate how to add puffy paint to special areas of the story cloth. Let students practice squirting puffy paint on scrap paper before they try it on their fabric.
4. If desired, students can cut and glue scrap fabrics onto their story cloth as well.

Day 4-

1. Students share their art in small groups. They can tell about the story in the art and the ideas behind it. Then the students lay their fabric on their desk and the class walks around to look at all of the art they made.
2. If students brought in fabric from home to show the class, they may do so.
3. Then students fill out a reflection worksheet answering questions about what they learned and write a story about what is happening on the story cloth. On the worksheet they also have to rate how well their story describes what is happening in their story cloth artwork.
4. The class discusses what they learned as a whole.

Fourth Grade Lesson: Stitched Rayograph Story cloth

Day 1-

1. Students examine a story cloth on display in the classroom. Everyone participates by going up to the story cloth and pointing out things they see in the artwork.
2. The teacher reads *Dia's Story cloth* to the students. The book tells about the secret war in Laos between the communists and the Hmong. The Americans came to Laos to help the Hmong people. Many Hmong died and had to leave their homes and move to refugee camps in Thailand. Eventually many Hmong moved to America, but had to leave some family members behind in Asia. The book is a true story about the Hmong people, written by a Hmong woman. (If there is a parent volunteer they may choose to tell about events from their past that relate to the story.)
3. Again they look at the original story cloth on the board. How has reading the book changed how you looked at the story cloth? What feelings does it give you?
4. The teacher asks students to determine what they think this story cloth was used for in Laos or in America. What do you think is important to this culture? What do you think this artist thinks about the culture they came from?
5. Teacher talks about how artists sometimes make art about important things that happened in their life. Students get in groups and talk about important things that happened in their life (moving to a new house, a sibling being born, death, starting school, etc.) Then they each draw important events that happened to them on 9 x 12" thicker drawing paper. They can write about it on the back of the paper if desired.

Day 2-

1. The class reviews what happened the week before and the teacher introduces the art of dyeing cloth. Students look at several examples of dyed cloth and learn about the process of dyeing fabric.
2. While the students finish up their sketches from last week, the teacher takes 4-5 students at a time to the sink area where there are buckets of dye, each one a different color. Students write their name on the bottom corner of their fabric with a permanent marker and drop it in the dye color of their choice. The students should not touch the dye. The teacher stirs the cloth and leaves it for the amount of time listed on the package directions. After school the cloth will be taken out and hung on a line to dry. The teacher should wear long plastic aprons and gloves when handling the wet dye, and a mask when mixing the dye before school. Only use dye in your classroom if you have a good ventilation system.
3. Students will also be working on cutting out figures and objects from their sketch for their cloth. There should be some positive and negative shapes in the design. Those shapes will be laid down on top of a photo fabric next week and placed in the sun to make a sun gram or rayograph (like Man Ray's photographs).
4. The cut out fabric figures will be put in a Ziploc bag with the student's name on it for storing until next time.

Day 3-

1. The teacher gives a brief introduction to how a photograph is made. Light enters a hole in a camera and exposes the film, making an image. If we do not have a camera we can still make a photograph, as long as we have light (sun) and light-sensitive material.

2. The teacher demonstrates how to do the next steps to make a rayograph (a photographic process made famous by photographer, Man Ray). He used light-sensitive photographic papers but we will use sun-sensitive fabric that will be pinned to a piece of cardboard and labeled with the child's name in permanent marker. The cut-outs from last week will be laid down on top of the fabric and placed in the sun for about ten minutes (depending on the amount of sun outside) to make a rayograph. Students may have to do some tape rolls under the paper shapes or use sewing pins to keep them from flying away in the wind before we go outside.
2. After the photo fabric is exposed, students remove the cut-outs and put their fabric in water to rinse off the chemicals.
3. Hang up these fabric works to dry. Make sure students wash their hands with soap and water.

Day 4-

1. Today students will sew their photo fabric onto their dyed background.
2. Start by demonstrating how to thread a needle and tie a knot. Students must do this by themselves before beginning to sew. A big drawing on the board of how to do this helps or an extra large needle and thread made out of poster board is a good visual.
3. Show them how to pin down their fabrics together in the corners.
4. They will sew up and down with a simple stitch around the outside of the photo fabric. There should be a border around the outside of the photo fabric, showing off the dyed fabric (as long as the dyed fabric was larger).
5. Demonstrate how to do a double knot to finish and clip off extra string. They can sign the bottom corner with a permanent marker.

Day 5-

1. Students share their art in small groups. They can tell about the story in the art and the ideas behind it. Then the students lay their fabric on their desk and the class walks around to look at all of the art they made.
2. If students brought in fabric from home to show the class, they may do so.
3. Then students fill out a reflection worksheet answering questions about what they learned and write a story about what is happening on the story cloth. On the worksheet they also have to rate how well their story describes what is happening in their story cloth artwork.
4. The class discusses what they learned as a whole.

Fifth Grade Lesson: Painted and Stitched Story cloth

Day 1-

1. Students examine a story cloth on display in the classroom. Students participate by Critiquing the artwork by describing what they see (what materials did they use?), analyzing the design or composition (what do you look at the most?), trying to interpret the meaning, and judging it based on evidence/clues observed in artworks.
2. The teacher reads *Dia's Story cloth* to the students. The book tells about the secret war in Laos between the communists and the Hmong. The Americans came to Laos to help the Hmong people. Many Hmong died and had to leave their homes and move to refugee

camp in Thailand. Eventually many Hmong moved to America, but had to leave some family members behind in Asia. The book is a true story about the Hmong people, written by a Hmong woman. (If there is a parent volunteer they may choose to tell about events from their past that relate to the story.)

3. Again they look at the original story cloth on the board. How has reading the book changed how you looked at the story cloth? What feelings does it give you? What message is the artist trying to say?

4. Teacher talks about how artists sometimes make art about important things that happened in their life. Students get in groups and talk about important things that happened in their life (moving to a new house, a sibling being born, death, starting school, etc.) Then they each draw important events that happened to them on 9 x 12" newsprint. They can write about it on the back of the paper if desired.

Day 2-

1. The class reviews what happened the week before and the teacher introduces the art of dyeing cloth. Students look at several examples of dyed cloth and learn about the process of dyeing fabric.

2. While the students finish up their sketches from last week, the teacher takes 4-5 students at a time to the sink area where there are buckets of dye, each one a different color. Students write their name on the bottom corner of their fabric with a permanent marker and drop it in the dye color of their choice. The students should not touch the dye. The teacher stirs the cloth and leaves it for the amount of time listed on the package directions. After school the cloth will be taken out and hung on a line to dry. The teacher should wear long plastic aprons and gloves when handling the wet dye, and a mask when mixing the dye before school. Only use dye in your classroom if you have a good ventilation system.

3. Next, Students color code their sketches so they know what colors to use when painting the following week.

Day 3-

1. Students will lightly sketch their figures onto their dyed cloth, making sure to consider the composition they have designed.

2. Next they will paint in the figures with acrylic paints and small brushes.

3. Afterwards the teacher will demo how to thread a needle and tie a knot. Students must do this by themselves before beginning to sew. A big drawing on the board of how to do this helps.

3. Show them how to go up and down when sewing on the teacher-made practice worksheet. There are several shapes and lines that will be good practice for them before beginning sewing.

Days 4 and 5-

4. Students continue to work on the sewing worksheet. Once they have finished, they will pick one or two special areas of the fabric painting that they would like to embellish with sewing. They must thread the needle themselves and tie a double knot when done. If they finish early, they may do more sewing on the artwork.

Day 6-

1. Students share their art in small groups. They can tell about the story in the art and the ideas behind it. Then the students lay their fabric on their desk and the class walks around to look at all of the art they made.
2. If students brought in fabric from home to show the class, they may do so.
3. Then students fill out a reflection worksheet answering questions about what they learned and write a story about what is happening on the story cloth. On the worksheet they also have to rate how well their story describes what is happening in their story cloth artwork.
4. The class discusses what they learned as a whole.

Modifications for Special Needs Children-

I have several different kinds of special needs children in my art classroom. Some have trouble with motor skills and will need shapes that they can trace, a hand to guide them when drawing on cloth, or raised lines (“Wikki Sticks” work well) or colored masking tape that they can paint in-between. My blind student might benefit from me transferring her drawing to the fabric for her with some puffy paint so she can feel the lines she must paint in. The older students that are sewing may need larger needles and burlap to sew on, which we could glue on top of their dyed fabric later. Be flexible!

Assessment-

Students are assessed for participation in class discussion and small group discussion. Grades 2-5 must fill out an end-of the project reflection worksheet. Kindergarten and first grade play “Token Response” as a way to think about their art in a critical way. These two younger grades also have a class discussion on what they learned throughout the unit.

Clean-up-

Have plenty of wet wipes, plastic aprons, long rubber gloves, mops, plastic sheets to cover tables, clotheslines, clothespins, buckets, trays for transporting wet materials, and a positive attitude ready before beginning.

APPENDIX C

Student Reflection Worksheet

Name _____
Grade _____
Teacher _____

1. What did I know before we did this storycloth project?

2. What do I know after doing the storycloth project?

3. What was the most interesting thing I learned?

4. Here is a story about my artwork-

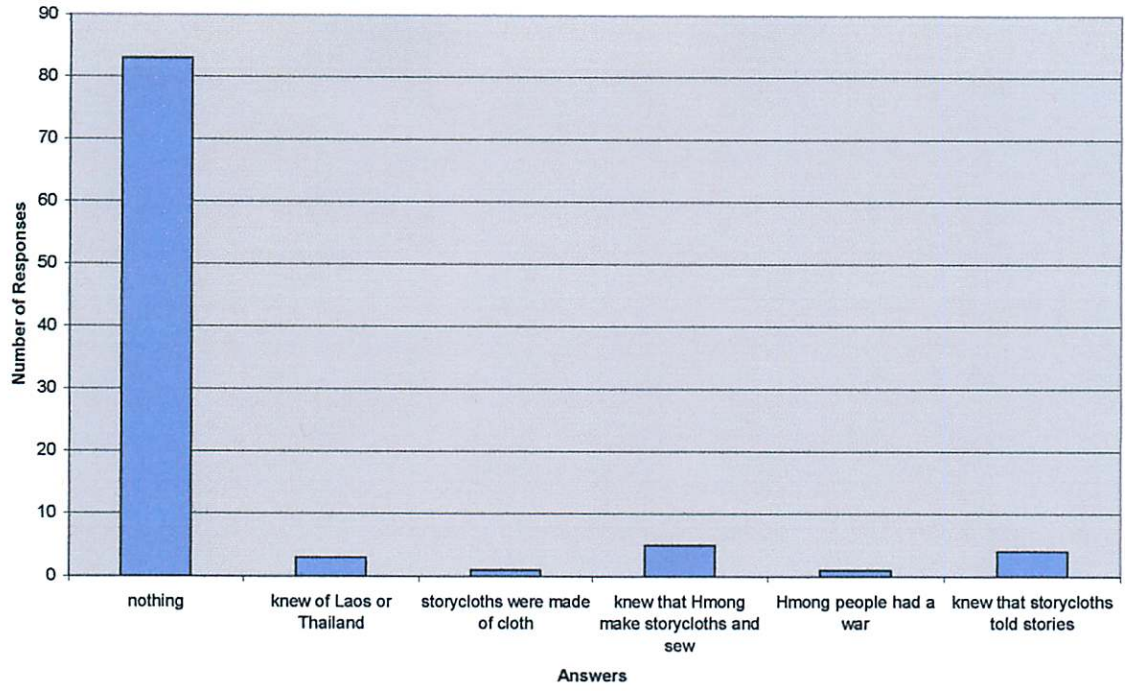
On a scale from 1-10 (with 10 being the highest), how well does your writing match what is happening in your storycloth picture?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
☹ ----- ☺

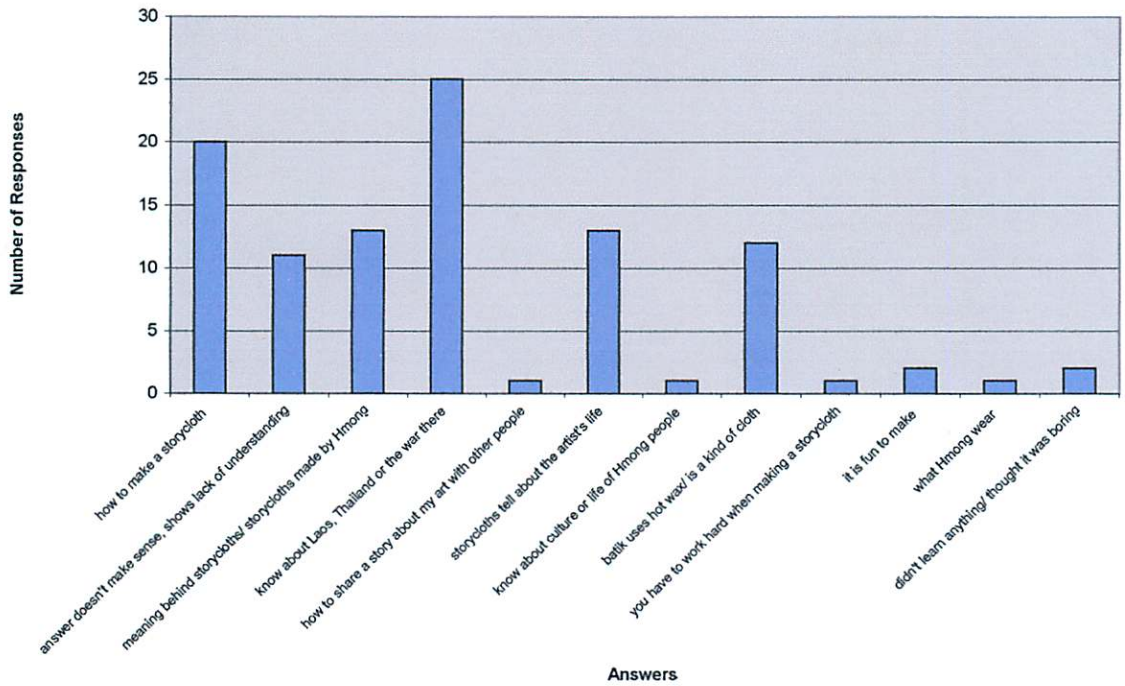
APPENDIX D

Student Reflection Data Charts

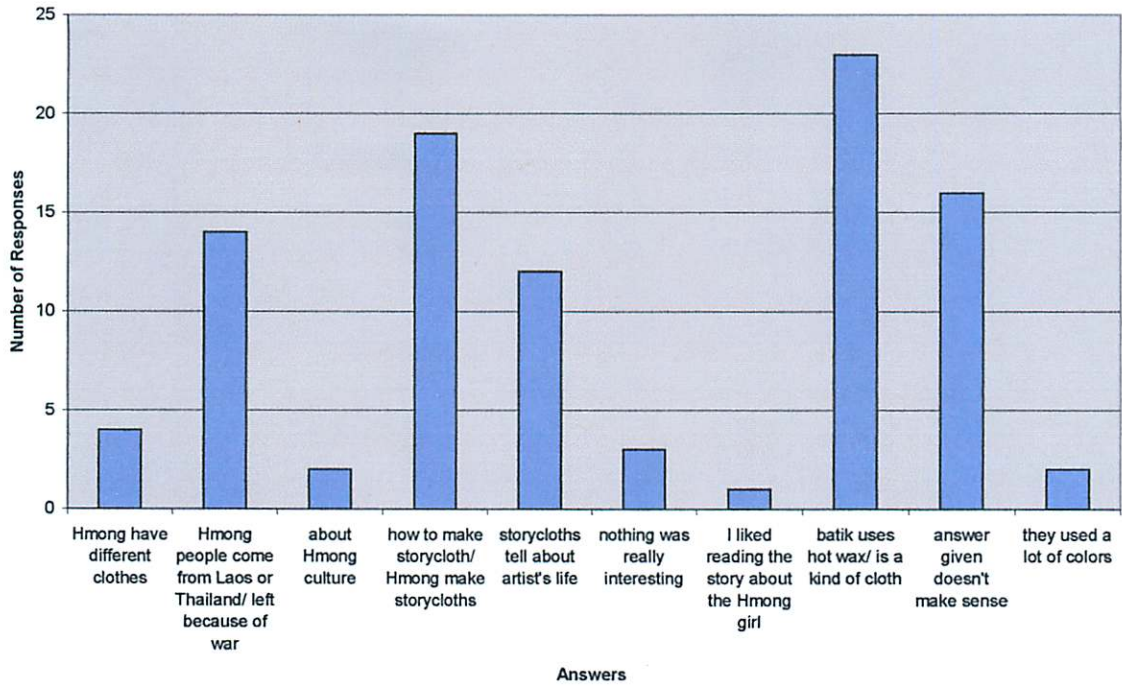
2nd grade: What did I know before the storycloth project?



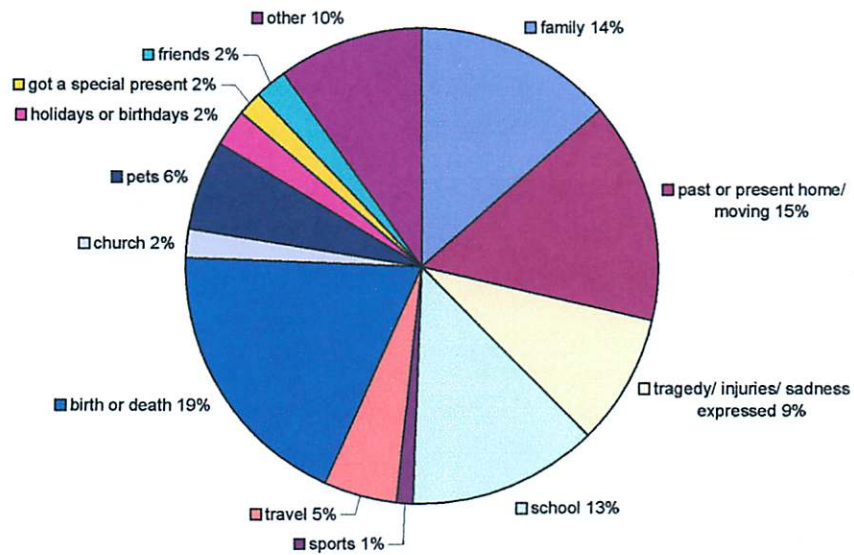
2nd grade: What do I know after doing the storycloth project?



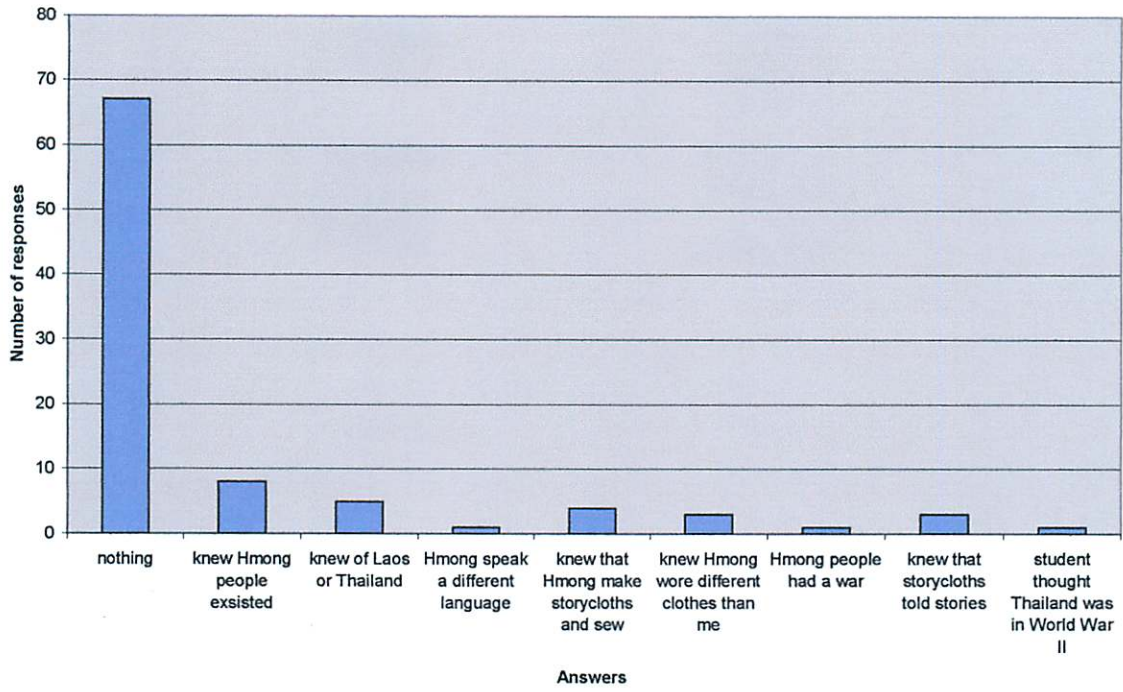
2nd grade: What was the most interesting thing I learned?



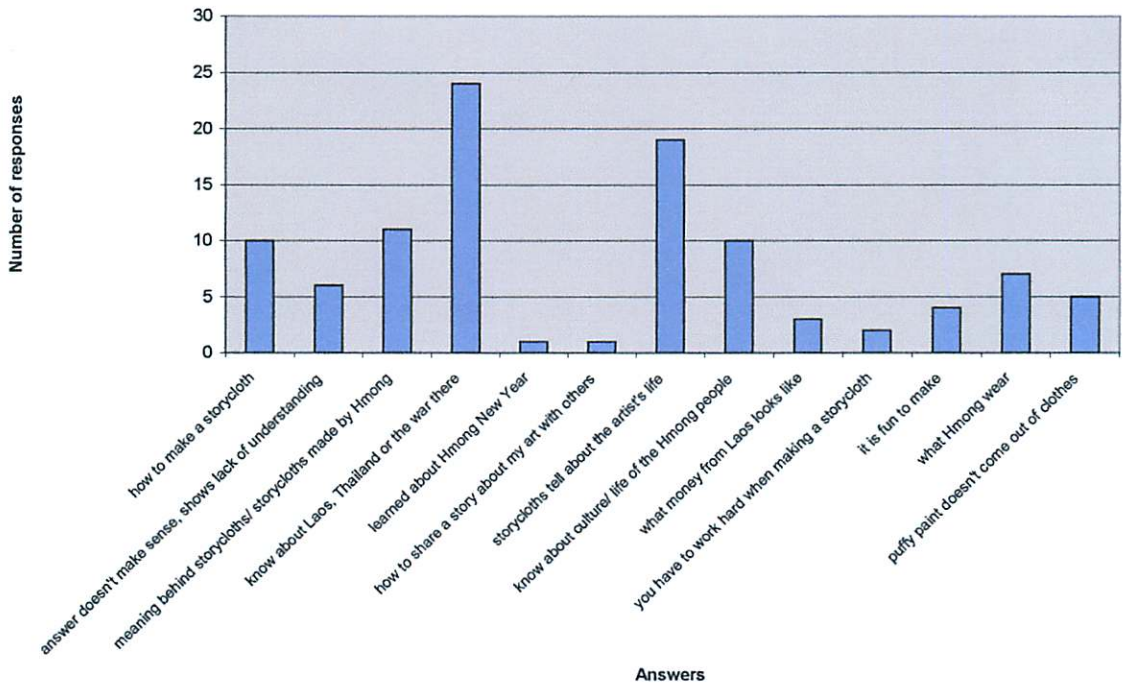
2nd grade: My storycloth is about...



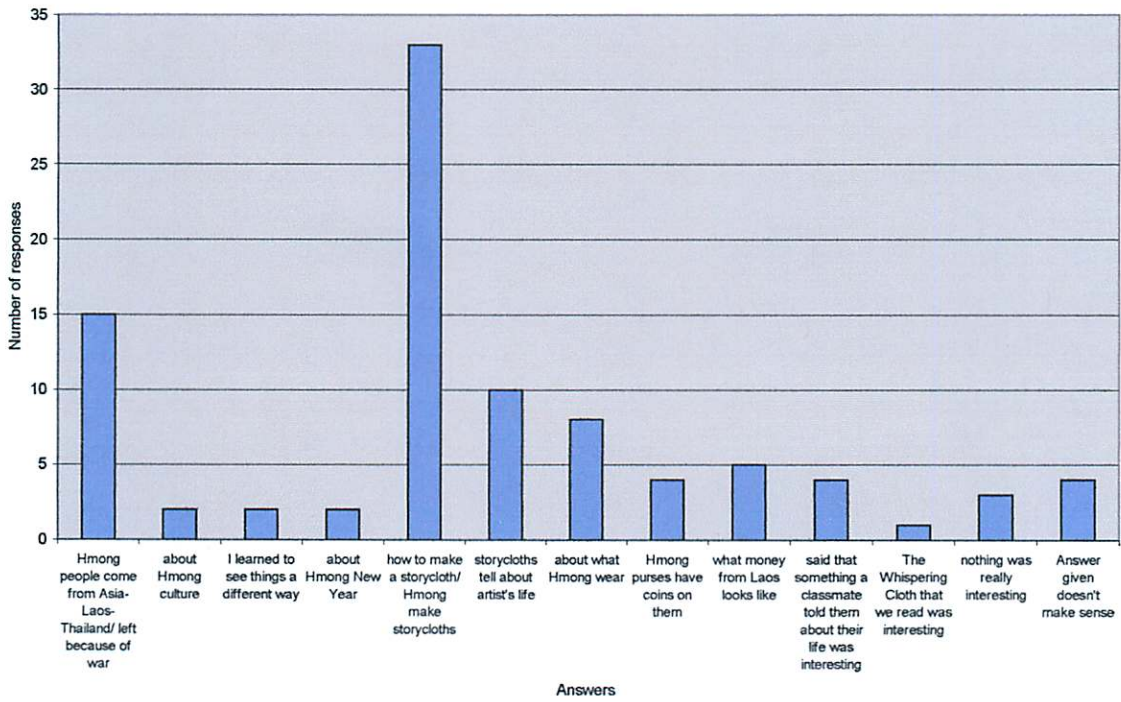
3rd grade: What did I know before we did the storycloth project?



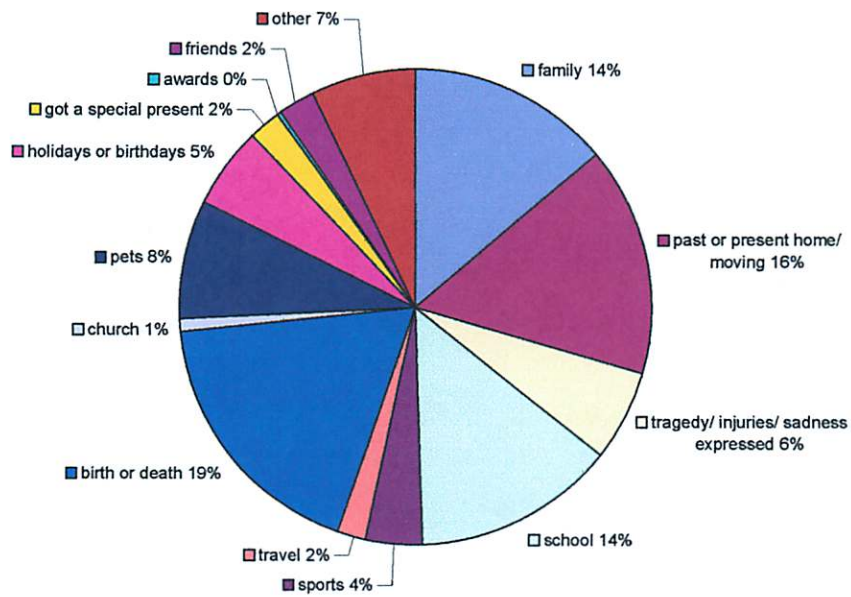
3rd grade: What do I know after doing the storycloth project?



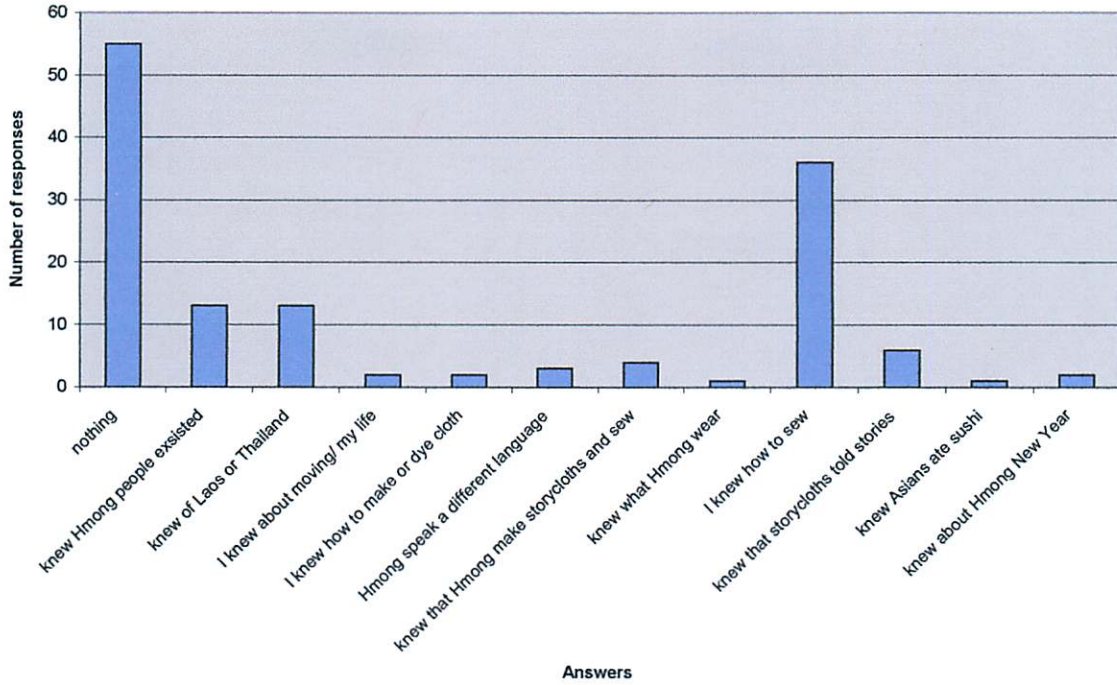
3rd grade: What was the most interesting thing I learned?



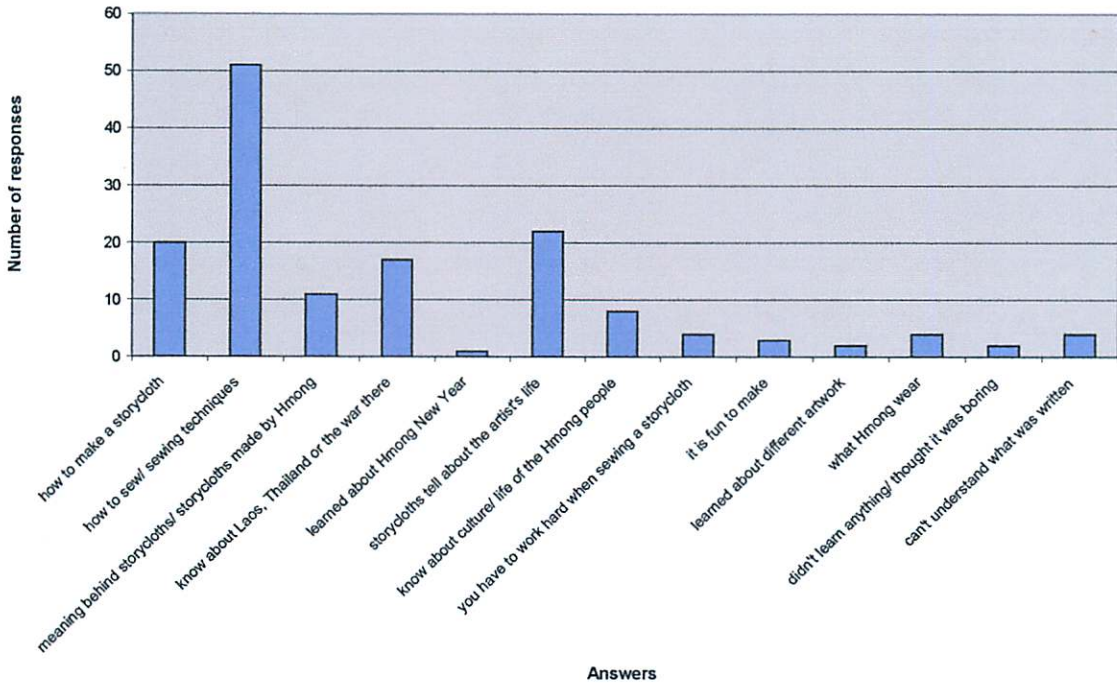
3rd grade: My storycloth is about...



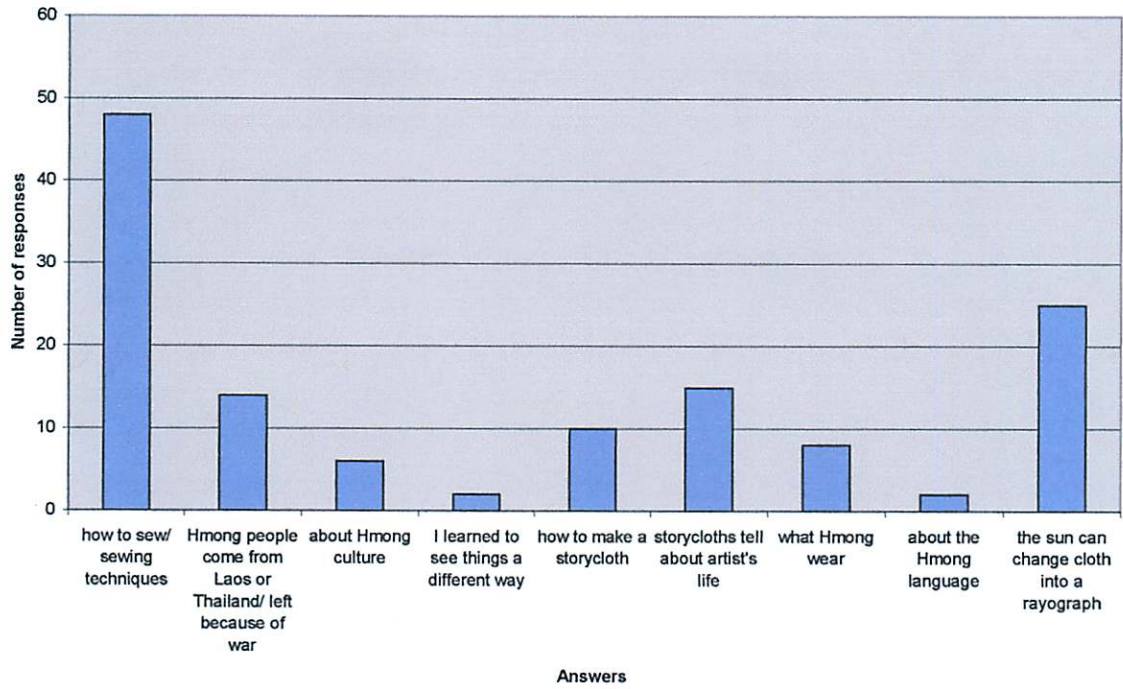
4th grade: What did I know before we did the storycloth project?



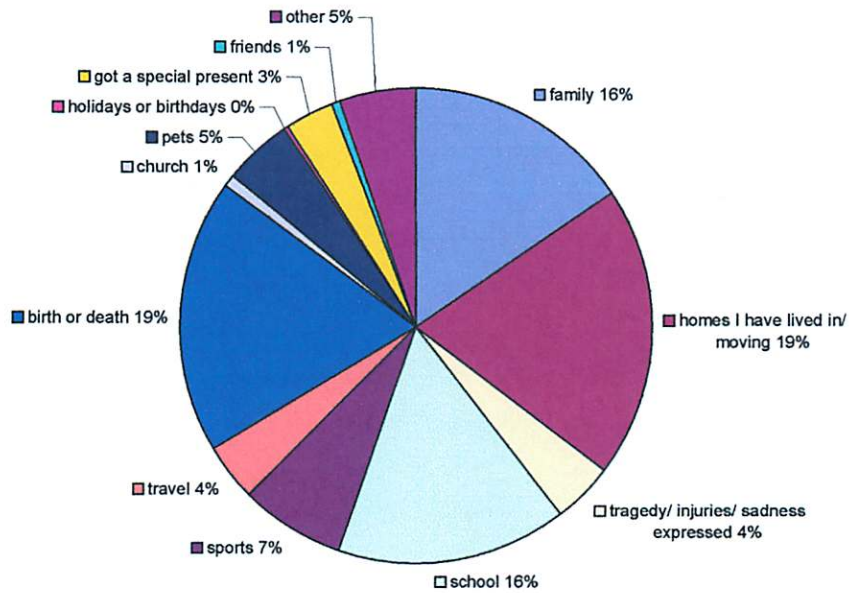
4th grade: What do I know after doing the storycloth project?



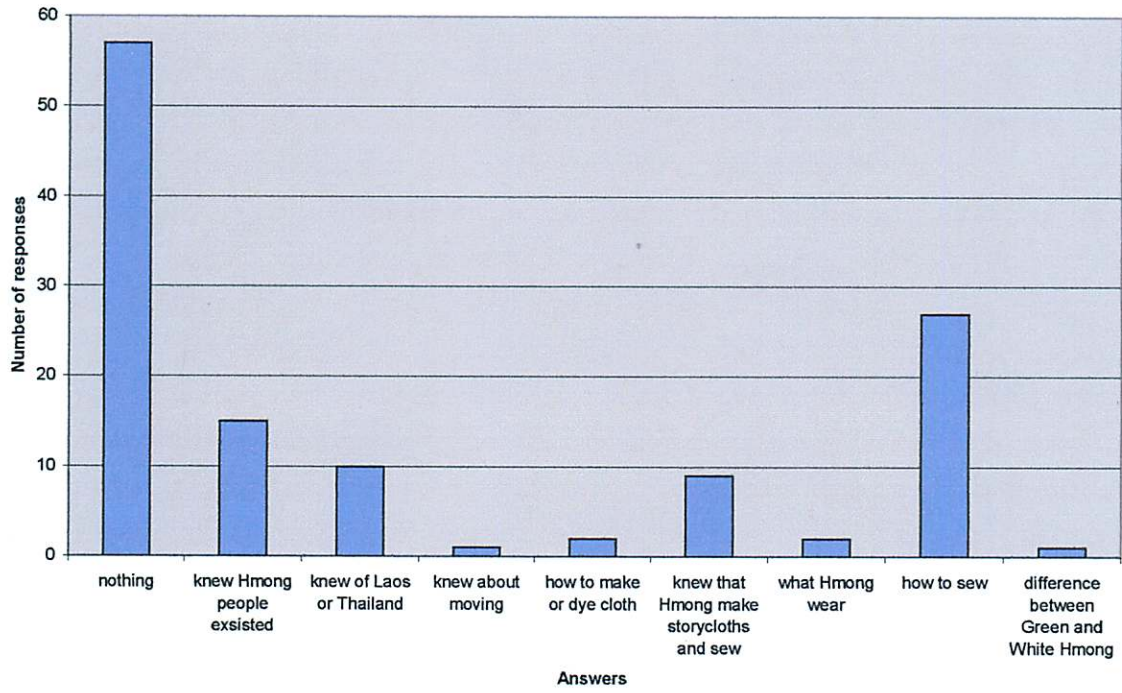
4th grade: What was the most interesting thing I learned?



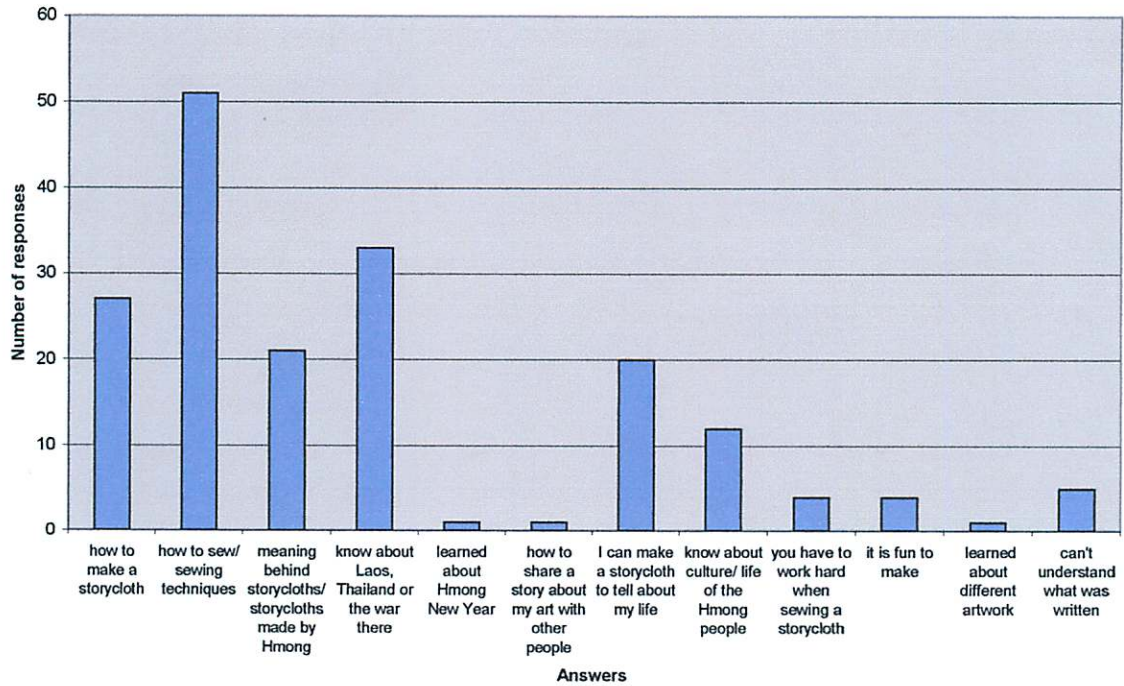
4th grade: My storycloth is about...



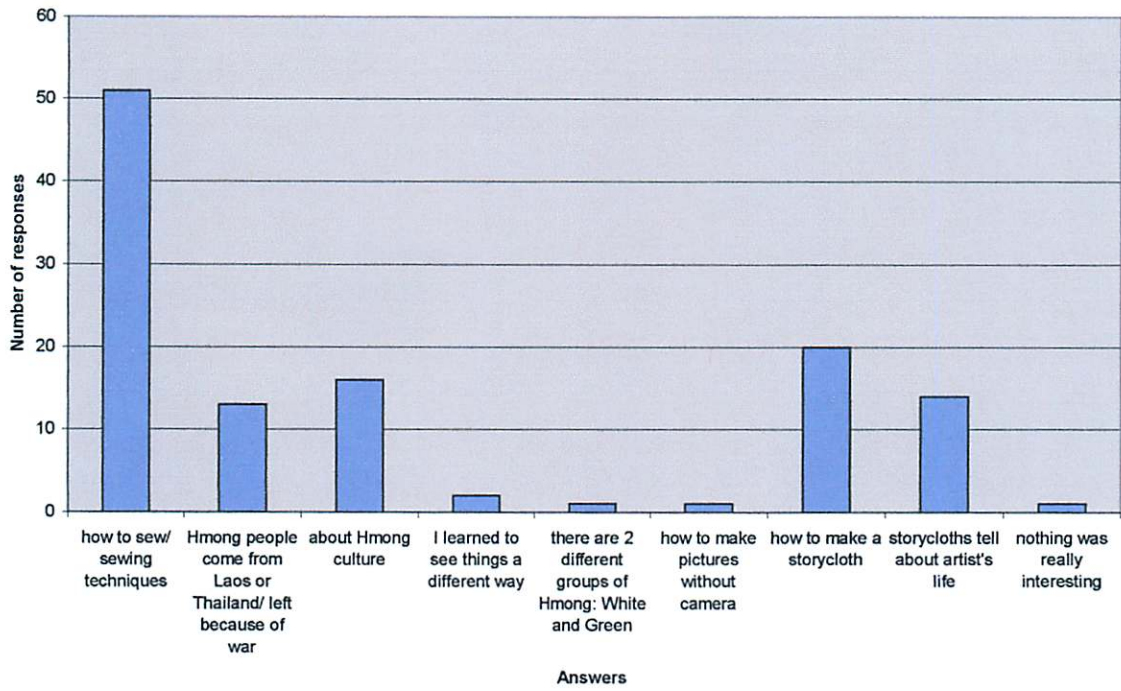
5th grade: What did I know before we did the storycloth project?



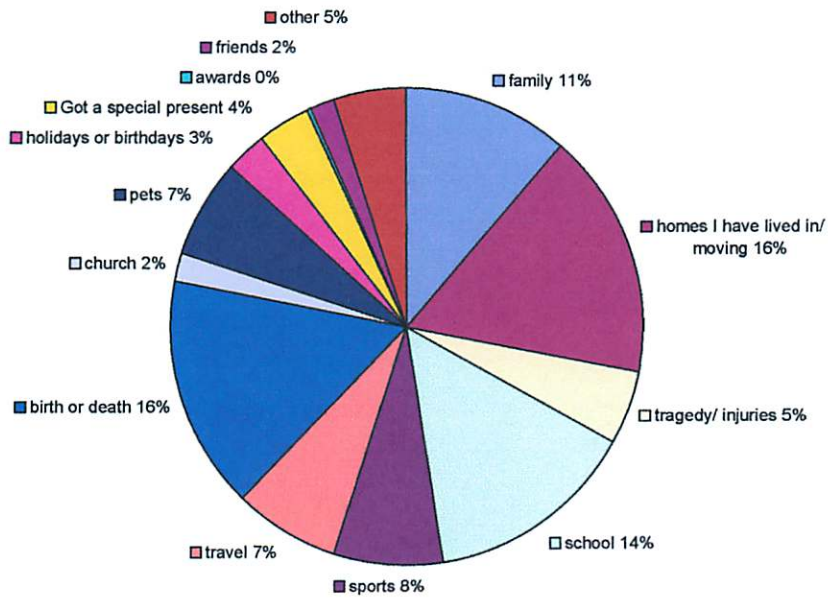
5th grade: What do I know after the storycloth project?



5th grade: What was the most interesting thing I learned?



5th grade: My storycloth is about...



APPENDIX E

Sociogram Chart for Data Collection

APPENDIX F

Brief History of the Hmong

The Hmong have been shuffled from place to place for thousands of years, never really having a place to call “home.” Their roots can be traced back to Siberia before this group of people migrated to China in 1000 BC. The Chinese never accepted this cultural group and often ordered mass executions of the Hmong, especially the light-skinned, blond ones (Quincy, 1988). As a result there are rarely any fair-haired Hmong today. The Hmong left China and moved to Laos to get away from the Chinese in the 18th century.

Laos fell to communism in 1975. Many Hmong fought with the Americans against that regime, but a large number were killed in combat, concentration camps, or from starvation and disease during that time. News stories back in America told of the oppression, chemical warfare, and Hmong who fled for safety. If Americans know anything about Hmong today it is of their suffering, not their culture. Forty thousand Hmong escaped to Thailand and lived in refugee camps there under difficult conditions (Quincy, 1988). The Hmong were given a minimum amount of food to discourage new refugees from staying there. Jobs were rare to non-existent and women were often victimized by Thai men (Quincy). Eventually 100,000 Hmong fled to America. Today some live in China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, France, Australia, and the United States (Brittan, 1997). There are about 6 million Hmong worldwide, 5 million of which remain in China, and 80,000 of them reside in the United States (Quincy, 1988).

Obstacles

The Hmong face many obstacles in America, both culturally and economically. The most difficult adjustment to make, though, was an economic one. Many other Southeast Asian immigrants, like the Vietnamese, had good job skills because they owned their own businesses before coming to America. The Hmong had a minimal education and knew only of war and farming. Few could speak any English and by 1987, over sixty-three percent of Hmong in the United States were on welfare. The biggest problem was that many Hmong did not see anything wrong with being on welfare. They were so used to getting a hand-out in the refugee camps that it had become a way of life that was better than most ever dreamed of in Laos (Quincy).

In 1982, the U.S. government reduced the amount of federal aid given to Indochinese refugees, such as the Hmong. This caused many Hmong people to move to states that gave the most welfare benefits such as Wisconsin, Minnesota, and California (Quincy). Hmong families settled in large groups, as they continue to do now. The forty or so Hmong children that I teach all seem to come from about four different family groups: the Xiong, Yang, Thao, and Moua. There are a lot of first and second cousins among the groups, and they have a great time playing together and taking care of one another.

Education

Family is very important to the Hmong. Traditionally they have big families with many children to help with the farm work (true mostly back in Laos). But here in America, families are finding that it is financially difficult to support many children (McInnis, 1991). Parents place much value on education and want their children to do

well in school, but often lack the skills in English to help their children with school work or communicate with teachers. Four years ago, our school earned a grant to pay for a full-time family literacy coordinator. This person taught English as a Second Language (ESOL) classes at night for willing parents of Hmong and Hispanic students. The program was well-received and produced many parents who felt more confident in seeking a job and talking to school staff. An added bonus was that it brought parents into the school and got them more involved with their children's education.

Family Groups

The family unit and group identification is central to the Hmong culture. There are three main people groups of Hmong: white (khao), striped or green (lai), and black or blue (dam). It is possible that the differences between these groups originated from the clusters of people that were forced to disperse at particular times by the Chinese. Now the only really visible difference between these groups is the color and make of their costumes (Ellis & Butcher, 1993). The most special clothing items they have are worn for ceremonies and celebrations like the Hmong New Year. The groups also have a slightly different language dialect.

The New Year

The most celebrated festival of the year that brings all of the groups together is the New Year (*Khin Tieng*). It occurs around November or December after the 30th day of the Hmong Twelfth Month. Many Hmong people put much energy into cleaning their homes, clothes, and bodies before the celebration. Spirits are called home, in case they

have wandered away. Girls look to find a suitable marriage partner at the celebration and traditionally worked for months on creating beautiful costumes to wear to the festivities. The New Year's festival is highlighted with feasting, drinking, fighting displays, horse and buffalo racing, and playing a game similar to badminton. I went to the Hmong New Year festival in Winder, Georgia in November of 2005, held on a baseball field. It was a bit different than the festival would have been in Laos. There were no fighting displays or horse and buffalo racing. Instead of badminton, there were soccer and volleyball tournaments.

It was interesting to see the mix of traditional and American clothing worn by the people there. Vendors sold favorite foods, Hmong music videos, and embroidered clothing. There was a stage set up for dancers and singers to perform. I saw my first Hmong rapper and break-dancer. The high school girls went wild over him. The highlight of the whole festival was watching the soccer and volleyball tournaments between Hmong families and friends. The winners were awarded several hundred dollars.

Art

Most Hmong people do not hang art on the wall as many Americans and other cultures do. Their art is found in their homes, their clothes, the way they tell stories through story cloths and the everyday things that they craft by hand. Traditionally the Hmong did a large amount of embroidery and appliqué work on their clothing. Hmong girls in Laos are often taught to embroider when they are only five years old. It takes many years of practice and a dose of patience to learn to embroider the dragons, tigers, lions, and flowers that decorate their fabric (Brittan, 1997). Other art that is traditionally

made includes baby carriers, baskets, and ceremonial textiles. Some of the Hmong also embroider story cloths that depict the true-life events that happened when the Hmong were forced from their homes in Laos in the 1970's. Today very few people have time to embroider story cloths (only one parent in our school had made one). Along the same lines, few Hmong-Americans make their Hmong New Year outfits. Many families can buy them at the festival for around \$200 an outfit, which is quite a low price for all the work involved in the garment.

APPENDIX G

Photographs of the Hmong New Year Festival



From (top left) Figure 28. Scarves for Sale. (top right) Figure 29. Hmong Girls Choose to Wear American Clothing. (bottom row, left) Figure 30. Woman Waits for Turn to Be Photographed. (bottom row, right) Figure 31. Hand-crafted Children's Clothing for Sale.

(right) Figure 32. Hmong Couple in Traditional Dress. (left) Figure 33. Hmong Student in Traditional Outfit. (bottom) Figure 34. Food for Sale at the Festival.



APPENDIX H

**Lesson Plan:
Dyeing with Onion Skins**

Technique and Historical Background Information

Why do people dye textiles?

Most of the fibers that make up a piece of fabric are dull, beige-like colors. To create cloth with a bright color or pattern, a person must dye the fibers or the finished fabric. Dyes are “absorbed into the very fibers of textiles, ensuring a much longer lifetime than paints or pigments” (Gillow and Sentence, 1999, p. 118).

Where do dyes come from?

People began wearing textiles around 6000 B.C. Before that, they wore animal hides. Ever since people have been wearing textiles, they have tried to color them. People probably first used clay, chalk, and charcoal to color textiles, because that is what they used to paint their bodies and cave walls. Eventually humans discovered these things wash out easily in the rain (Kassinger, 2003, p. 25). “Until just over 100 years ago, all dyes came from natural things like insects, shellfish, colored earths and minerals and plants. Most plants give color of some sort. Every part of the plant- leaves, stalks, roots, flowers and fruit- can be used” (O’Reilly, 1991, p. 26-27). Most natural dyes give a yellow, brown, or sometimes red color. Some dyes work better with animal fibers than they do with plant fibers, and vice versa. For example, turmeric (made from an Indian plant root) makes a bright yellow on cotton, but not on silk.

What is the difference between natural and synthetic dyes?

Natural dyes are dyes that are made with things that grow naturally on our Earth, such as minerals, plants, or insects. Synthetic dyes are man-made dyes that are created with chemicals in a factory.

Natural dyes do not work well on synthetic fibers and they do not always create the same color when dyed repeatedly. Most people now use synthetic or chemical dyes on their fabric. In 1856, a chemistry student named William Perkins accidentally created the first chemical dye when he was intending to make a cure for malaria. The liquid turned everything purple, and was consequently called Perkins Mauve (O’Reilly, 1991, p. 28). Four years later, the trend caught on and the textile industry began creating many more chemical dyes for use in a variety of products. Even though chemical dyes produce brilliant colors, they are often toxic, so they are not recommended for children and will not be included in this unit.

How is cloth dyed?

There are three different kinds of dyes, and therefore there are several methods for dyeing with those dyes. The first kind of dye is called a *direct dye*. Direct dyes bond to fabric by themselves, without the help of other chemicals. The second kind of dye is an *indirect dye*. It needs a mordant (a metallic element with positively charged ions such as aluminum, chromium, copper, iron, or tin) to attach to the textile. The textile is soaked in the mordant first and then is soaked in the dye. The mordant helps the indirect dye to soak into the textile. The third kind of dye is called a *vat dye*. It is a dye that will not dissolve in water. It has to first be dissolved in an alkali such as potassium or sodium. After the dye is dissolved, then the textile can be added to the dye. The color becomes permanent once it is dried (Kassinger, 2003, p. 42-45).

What are some of the strangest things that can be used to dye textiles?

Not only can earth pigments and fruits be used to produce beautiful cloth colors, but also sea snails can too. The Phoenicians, who lived from about 1100 to 850 B.C., used the mucus of sea snails to produce a rich, purple color for dyeing. The mucus could be used as a direct dye because it colored the cloth once it was exposed to air and light, however using that method made the fabric splotchy. The Phoenicians instead mixed the mucus as a vat dye. At first the dyed cloth turned green, but as it was exposed to more air it became purple. The Phoenicians made a good living trading their purple cloth with other people in the Mediterranean. "When Alexander the Great conquered Persia in 333 B.C., one of the great prizes he took was 5,000 talents of purple cloth, which would be valued today at more than 68 million dollars" (Kassinger, p. 31-33).

Another interesting way to dye textiles was discovered by the Aztecs in southern Mexico. They took some insects called cochineal that live on cactus plants and used them to create a very bold, red dye. The female insects produce the dye when they are pregnant, under the right conditions. In the 1500s Spain conquered Mexico and kept the dye's origin a secret only for Spain. The Spanish sold cloth dyed with cochineal throughout Europe. The dye became so popular, that pirates were just as happy to steal a ship-full of cochineal dye as a ship of silver and gold. In 1777, One French botanist named Thierry de Menonville was so eager to steal some of the bugs for himself, that he set sail for Mexico. In Oaxaca, Mexico (the center of cochineal farming) he was ordered to leave on the next ship by a Spanish viceroy. Instead of following orders, he "scaled the walls, disguised himself as a Catalonian physician looking for herbal medicines, and set out on foot for Oaxaca, about 125 miles away" (Kassinger, p. 52-54). Thierry ended up buying cacti and cochineal bugs from unaware farmers, hid his collection in boxes on his ship, and set sail for the French colony of Haiti. The ship unfortunately went through some terrible storms and most of his plants and insects died. A sufficient amount was left however, for him to start his own cochineal plantation in Haiti (Kassinger, p. 52-54).

Essential Question

What from our environment can we make into dye?

Aims

Students will learn about the origin and technique of using natural dyes.
Students will create a piece of colored cloth from onion skin dyes.

Materials

plastic tablecloth to cover work areas
natural fabric squares like linen or cotton- soak them in water for at least 30 minutes prior to dyeing
hotplate or stove and permission from an administrator to use it
large pots
long-handle spoons and tongs
strainers
several old trays
sink or bucket for rinsing
long rubber gloves
clothesline and clothespins for wet fabric (outside)
yellow onion skins

Resource

Gillow, J. & Sentence, B. (1999). World textiles. London: Thames and Hudson.
Kassinger, R. G. (2003). Dyes: From sea snails to synthetics. Brookfield, Connecticut: Twenty-First Century Books.
Kavanah, D. (2006) Natural dyes [On-line]. Internet. July 4, 2006. Available: <http://parenting.ivillage.com/gs/gsactivities/0,,88lh,00.html>
O'Reilly, S. (1991). Textiles. New York: The Bookwright Press.

Instruction

Students look at several examples of dyed fabric and yarn and learn about the process of dyeing fabric as well as some of the historical information listed in this lesson.

In a large pot, the teacher mixes 1 cup of onion skins (mashed all the way down in the measuring cup to fit more skins) and 11 cups of water. Bring the water to a boil and simmer for about fifteen minutes. The teacher removes the pot from the heat, strains it, and discards the skins. Each student drops their wet fabric square in the dye and responsible students with gloves on stir it periodically while simmering for 20 minutes. Students can rinse their fabric one at a time in water and hang it up to dry on a clothesline outside. The fabric will be a brilliant gold color.

If you don't have time to do everything in one session, cover the strained dye with a lid, put it in the fridge and use it within 48 hours.

Adaptations for Special Needs Students

If a student has visual impairments, assign a buddy to that student who can describe what they are seeing to the visually impaired student.

Students with physical or mental impairments may also need a buddy to help them rinse their fabric and hang it on the clothesline outside.

Students with auditory impairments need to stand close to the teacher to hear what is happening with the dye.

Assessment

The teacher will check to see that students followed directions. Before students leave, their “ticket out the door” is to tell the teacher one new thing they learned during the lesson. Students could also tell the teacher one natural material other than onions that could be used for dyeing.

Clean-Up

If ordinary hand washing doesn't remove coloring stains from your fingers, dry thoroughly, then rub with olive oil and wipe with paper towels. This removes most skin stains. The best protection is to invest in long rubber or latex-free gloves for each child.



Figure 35. Cloth Simmering in the Onion Skin Dye.

APPENDIX I

Consent Forms Approved by the Institutional Review Board

Dear Parent(s),

I am currently working on my Master's degree in the field of Art Education at the University of Georgia. To complete my thesis, I am required to teach an applied project and report on my findings. My applied project was writing and teaching an art curriculum where my students made fabric art that told a story about their life. As a part of the lessons, I had students reflect on what they learned during the project by doing written self-assessments and classroom discussions.

You have received this letter because I would like to use your child's reflections and/or artwork in my research project. Your child's name will not be used in my project, only their writings and their grade level. I may also want to include a photograph of your child creating art and/or child's artwork (see the attached permission form or forms). The attached permission form describes your rights and the rights of your child.

The purpose for including student reflections is to enhance understanding of how well the themes and objectives of the applied project were met. If you allow your child's reflections and or photographs to be included in my project, please sign each type of permission form, and return a copy of each to me as soon as possible. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call or email me.

Thank you for your support of my research.

Yours sincerely in art,

Karen Low
Art Teacher
770-267-8311
klow@walton.k12.ga.us

University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board
Approved: 1/18/06
Expires 1/17/07

PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

I agree to allow my child, _____, to take part in the research study titled "Story cloths: Creating a Personal Narrative", which is being conducted by Karen Low from the Art Education Department at the University of Georgia, 770-267-8311, under the direction of Dr. Carole Henry, University of Georgia, Associate Professor of Art Education, 706-542-1631. I do not have to allow my child to take part if I do not want to. I can ask to have the information related to my child returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

- The reason for this study is to learn about the ways that children use art to record their past.
- If I allow my child to take part, my child's written reflections, which were a part of a whole class assignment in art, and/or my child's artwork will be photographed and used confidentially in Karen Low's applied project paper. My child's name **WILL NOT** be used with the reflection and/or photograph. Written reflections and/or photographs will be labeled with participant's grade level **ONLY**.
- The research is not expected to cause any harm or discomfort. My child's grade will not be affected if my child decides not to let me put their writing or photograph in my project. My child will not benefit directly from participating in this research study.
- Any information collected about my child will be held confidential unless otherwise required by law. My child's identity will be coded, and all data will be kept in a secured location.
- Karen Low will answer any questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached at 770-267-8311, or at: klow@walton.k12.ga.us . I may also contact the professor supervising the project, Dr. Carole Henry, at 706-542-1631, or ckhenry@uga.edu .
- I understand the study procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to allow my child to take part in this study. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Karen Low
 Name of Researcher
 770-267-8311
klow@walton.k12.ga.us

Karen Low

 Signature

 Date

 Name of Parent/Guardian

 Signature

 Date

****Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to Ms. Low.****

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to the IRB chairperson in the Human Subjects Office at the University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411. Telephone: (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

University of Georgia
Institutional Review Board
 Approved: 1/18/06
 Expires 1/17/07

January 16, 2006

Child Assent Form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in my research project titled, "**Story cloths: Creating a Personal Narrative**". Through this project I am learning how students create fabric art that tells a story about their life.

I would like to use a photograph of your artwork or a sample of your writing that you made for this project in my research. If you choose to let me use your artwork, it will be included in my applied project, but your name will not be used. Your participation in this project will not affect your grades in school. I will not use your name on any papers that I write about this project. I hope this project, and your artwork, help you to think about art in a more meaningful way.

If you have any questions or concerns you can always ask me or email my teacher, Dr. Carole Henry at ckhenry@uga.edu.

Sincerely,

Karen Low
University of Georgia, Art Education Dept.
770-267-8311
klow@walton.k12.ga.us

I understand the project described above. My questions have been answered and I agree to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

Signature of the Participant/Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address: IRB@uga.edu

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