

Theme One: Our Place in the World

Theme in Life

We all need to belong somewhere.

Theme in Art

Art can help us find our place in the world.

Introduction to the Theme

Most people have a place where they eat and sleep and spend time with their families. This home place is located somewhere on a plain or on a mountain, in a forest or in a desert, by a lake or by a river, or even on an ocean. Most people's homes stay in one spot, but some people's homes move with them as they travel from place to place. For thousands of years people had to move from place to place in order to find animals and to follow the cycles of ripening wild plants. They carried everything they owned with them.

Each of us needs more than a place to shelter us from the weather. We also need a place among people. We each have our place in our family, our place among our friends, and our place in the community.

For thousands of years artworks have helped people find their place both in the physical world and their place within groups of people.

Key Inquiry Questions

Question about Artworks:

SENSORY ELEMENTS: What shapes do I see in the artwork?

Question about Artworks in Context:

NATURAL CONTEXT: How can natural materials be used to make art?

Key Cultures

Traditional Native American

Prehistoric European

Prehistoric Australian



Fee of the Meadow People

Long, long ago in a land far from here, a girl named Fee lived at the edge of a great forest with her mother, Rana, her father, Fayger, and her brother, Little Fayger. Fee's best friend was Wala, the daughter of a family who lived on the other side of the meadow. Almost every day Fee and Wala played together running around the meadow and climbing the trees just at the edge of the forest. Sometimes Fee and Wala sat together for hours high on a tree limb retelling the old stories about how the people found the meadow and made it their home.

Sometimes Fee and Wala frightened each other by making up stories about monsters who lived in the forest and came at night to carry away the children of the Meadow People. Once Fee heard a voice and yelled, "Watch out! What's that?" Wala jumped and looked around for a monster. Fee and Wala were startled but not really afraid. They knew that day and night, whether the men were near the meadow or far away, one woman was always watching. Every woman of the meadow took her turn. When Fee's mother was the watcher, Fee took care of Little Fayger or went to stay with Wala's family across the meadow. Fee always knew who the watcher was because that person stood on one of the four great stones around the edge of the meadow. The watcher always wore a large cape that she could take off and wave in the air to warn the Meadow People of danger.

Fee knew that one day soon she would be old enough to be a watcher and looked forward to the day when she would be told she could wear the cape. On that day she would be known no longer as Fee, the girl, but as Fee-na, the woman, a person to be trusted with grown up responsibilities.

Fee had never been far from the meadow where her family lived. She had heard her father, Fayger, tell of his travels through the forest to hills and valleys far away. He and the other men collected berries and roots and they sometimes trapped animals for meat and skins in the lands far away. Everyone knew there were bears in the forest and that it was dangerous to travel far from the meadow alone.

One day, Fee decided that she could explore new places without going far from the meadow by climbing high in the largest tree at the edge of the forest. She thought that Wala might be afraid to climb so high so she went to the great tree and began to climb all by herself, higher and higher, from branch to branch, until she was higher than she had ever been before. "Ooh", she cried aloud. Sure enough, just as she thought, she could see far, far beyond where she had ever been. She saw the tops of smaller trees, distant hills, and clearings in the forest. Fee thought, "If I can climb just a little higher on these smaller, topmost branches, I will be able to see over the trees of the forest and perhaps see the far away hills and valleys that father told me about. But will I fall or will a branch break?"

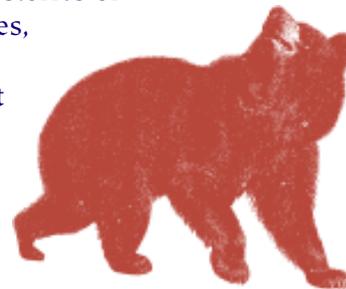
Fee let out a breath when she finally made it safely to her high perch. She clung to the topmost branches straining her eyes to see the distant hills. Her foot slipped and she looked down to set her foot more carefully on the branch. As her eyes moved back to the distant hills, they scanned across the trees below. She thought she saw something move down there. Straining her eyes to see through the sunny treetops she spotted a movement. It was Little Fayger running and then squeezing himself through the leaves and low branches of a bush. Little Fayger should never have been so far from the meadow by himself. Why was he running? Why had he squeezed himself into that scratchy, prickly bush? "He must be afraid and hiding," thought Fee. Carefully, slowly, she turned and looked back in the direction from

which Little Fayger had run. There it was: a big bear, sniffing the air and swinging his head back and forth, looking for Little Fayger.

Fee had no time to lose. No one could hear her call from high in the tree so she scrambled down as fast as she could, scratching her arms and legs and tearing her clothes as she came down. When she neared the ground she ripped a leafy branch from the great tree and ran to the nearest watcher's stone. There she pulled herself to the top of the stone and yelled, "Help! Help! Little Fayger is in trouble!" She waved the leafy branch back and forth until many of the Meadow People saw her. Leaving the littlest ones with the older children, the grown-ups all came running, led by the watcher from the stone across the meadow. Fee shouted, "A bear is after Little Fayger. He's hiding in a bush. We must help him!" She raced ahead showing them the way to Little Fayger's hiding place. All the Meadow People yelled and waved and struck sticks and stones to make a great racket. The bear, startled by the people and noise, turned and lumbered off into the forest. Fayger pulled Little Fayger out of the bush and carried him to Rana's open arms. She held him and spoke softly to him until he stopped crying and knew he was safe once again.

Rana and Fayger were so proud of their daughter that they called a meeting of the elders that night to ask if Fee could be initiated as a watcher the very next day. The elders agreed and set to work early in the morning making preparations for the late-afternoon initiation ceremony. The area around the largest watcher's stone was cleared of rocks, leaves and twigs to make it ready for all the Meadow People who would attend the ceremony. The elders sent the children to gather berries, charcoal, grease, and pieces of red stone. Quickly they prepared their paints as the children brought the materials. They carefully repainted the symbol shapes on the face of the watcher's stone so they were fresh and clear for all to see.

All day Fee was kept inside. Wala and Fee's other girlfriends washed her and dressed her in her very best clothes, then left. An old woman came to paint Fee's face with lines radiating from her eyes to show that soon she would be a trusted watcher. Finally the late afternoon sun shone golden on the freshly painted pictures of the watcher's stone and the ceremony began. All the people gathered at the stone to hear again the stories of the first Meadow People, of the placing of the four great stones, and of the bravery and dependability of the first watcher. Fee was led to the face of the stone so she could see as the oldest meadow elder showed everyone the symbols and explained the meaning of each.



At last the time came for Fee to become a watcher. The painted lines on her face were washed away and were slowly and painfully replaced with permanent lines made by pricking her skin until it bled and rubbing ashes into the many tiny wounds. The pricking hurt and the ashes stung. Fee shut her eyes tightly and fought the pain. She did not want to cry out and did not. Now everyone would know that she, like the first watcher, had the courage and dependability to stand guard on the great watcher stones. Finally Rana came forward with a beautiful, new cape decorated with radiating watcher lines and other symbols of the first Meadow People. Rana draped the cape over Fee's shoulders and called her by her watcher name. As she turned to show off her fine cape, all the people raised their voices together and chanted "Fee-na! Fee-na! Fee-na!" Wala looked on, proud to be Fee's friend, looking forward to the day when she too could prove her courage. Fee stood tall, smiled at Wala, looked at each Meadow Person one by one and walked proudly home, the newest watcher in the meadow.

Activities

Introduction



Introduce students to the Theme Title, the Theme in Life, the Theme in Art, and the Key Inquiry Questions to help focus their attention as you (or they) read the story.

Story



Present the Story:

- Read or ask students to read *Fee of the Meadow People*.

Discussion on Theme and Key Questions



Discussion of the Story's Theme:

Discuss how the story relates to the theme.

- Where do the Meadow People live?
- What did you learn about the Meadow People?
- Who are the watchers?
- Who ventures away from the meadow to gather food?
- How did Fee's place among the Meadow People change at the end of the story?

Students' Experience with the Theme:

Help students identify how the theme relates to their own lives.

Explain that “place” can mean a geographical location and also a cultural location or community.

- Where do you live?
- Can you describe some of the people who live in your community and what they do?
- To what groups do you belong (family, club, class, community, religion, political party, gender, etc.)?
- What do you do in these groups?
- Can you think of a time when your place in a group has changed?

Inquiry into the Story:

Use the key questions to further analyze the story.

- What shapes do you imagine might have been on the watcher stone? On Fee-na's new cape? Why are these shapes important?
- What are the land and climate like where the Meadow People live?
- What plants and animals live there?
- What materials and tools from nature did the Meadow People use?

- to make shapes on the Watcher Stone? To tattoo Fee's face?
- What natural tools and materials do you think Fee's mother might have used to make the shapes on Fee's cape?

Inquiry into Students' Experience:

Use the key questions to help students make connections to their own experiences.

- What shapes can you name that are symbols in your life?
- What are the land and climate like where you live? What plants and animals live there?
- How does your geographical place make a difference in your life (type of house, clothes, recreational opportunities, jobs, etc.)?
- Can you think of any shapes or other visual signs that symbolize either your geographical place or your place in your community? Examples of regional motifs include Southwestern cacti and chilis, Amish colors and quilts, New England and Southern neo-classical architecture, Texas cowboy hats and boots. Examples of role-in-community motifs include school colors and mascots; religious clothing or jewelry; military rank insignia; sorority/ fraternity or club pins or clothing; or patriotic color schemes.

Transfer to Diverse Cultures

The following instructions are written for students who are able to work independently. If you teach younger students, the instructions offer helpful guidelines as you gather and present information in order to optimize transfer potential for your students. Depending on the grade level of your students and their access to appropriate library and Internet sources, you can choose to build transfer across cultures either 1) through student investigation or 2) through your own investigations and presentations to students.

Inquiry about Artworks:

- Assign a team of students to locate reproductions of artworks made in one or more Native American cultures that show interesting shapes. Have them display the reproductions, describe the shapes, and, when possible, explain the meaning of any symbols they find to their classmates. Assign other teams to similarly investigate Aboriginal Australian artwork and artwork made by the prehistoric people who painted caves in Lascaux in France or Altamira in Spain.

Inquiry about Artworks in Context:

- Assign a team of students to research one or more Native American cultures. Ask them to focus specifically on the natural environment (land forms, climate, animal and plant life) and on the natural tools and materials used by art makers in that culture. Ask them to share their findings and, when possible, explain how the natural environments of the art-makers affect the art made in those cultures. Assign other teams to similarly investigate the culture and the natural environment of the

Aboriginal Australians and of the prehistoric people who painted caves in Lascaux in France or Altamira in Spain.

Transfer to Studio

Review the unit themes and key questions to help students transfer what they have learned to their own art making.

Thematic artwork:

- Challenge students to relate the theme to their own experiences or an imaginary experience to develop an idea for their own artwork. For example they can make a regional or group membership flag or a self-portrait showing geographic and cultural place. Ask students to focus on shapes that symbolize place. If possible, use local natural materials as tools or art supplies, or ask students to identify the natural materials from which their commercial art materials were made. Working in cut paper can help students focus on shapes. Creating found object collages can reinforce the use of natural materials in art making.

Story Illustration:

- Since *Fee of the Meadow People* is not illustrated, you might consider asking students to use their imaginations to make their own illustrations, focusing on the symbolic shapes on the Watcher stones, symbolic shapes on Fee's cape, a character from the story playing his or her role among the Meadow People, the natural environment in which the Meadow People live, or how the Meadow People worked with natural tools and materials.

Exhibition:

- Display student artwork with Unit Information (Theme Title, Theme in Life, Theme in Art, and Key Questions), sample student reports, and reproductions of artworks from diverse cultures. If your students make story illustrations, display a copy of *Fee of the Meadow People*.

Interdisciplinary Transfer

Life Sciences:

- Components of an ecosystem

History:

- Legacy and cultures of prehistoric Native Americans

Geography:

- Climate, landforms, plant and animal life in different regions of the world