

Indian

Dancing Ganesha

13th Century

Black stone

33 7/8 x 14 1/2 x 11 1/4 in.

Harn Museum Collection, 2002.1, Museum purchase, gift of Michael A. Singer with additional funds provided by the Kathleen M. Axline Acquisition Endowment



Ganesha is one of the most popular and adored deities in the Hindu pantheon. Revered by Hindus as the “remover of obstacles,” he may be invoked at the beginning of any endeavor. He is also renowned as the patron of letters and the god of learning.

The son of Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha’s origins and exploits are told in numerous stories. Ganesha is said to have received his elephant head after having his human one cut off accidentally by Shiva. Like many Hindu deities, Ganesha has multiple arms to hold his identifying attributes.

A famous story in which Ganesha quarreled with Chandra, the Moon god, resulted in the breaking of his tusk. Ganesha had eaten too many sweets. When his vehicle, the mouse, collapsed under his weight, Chandra laughed at him. Angry, Ganesha broke off his tusk and threw it at the moon, then cursed the moon so that it must wax and wane in the heavens.

Here, Ganesha holds a weapon that he uses to destroy obstacles such as ignorance, a bowl of sweets and his broken tusk. He stands atop his mount, the mouse or rat, known as the cunning “finder of the way” who can chew through any obstacle.

In his dancing pose, Ganesha appears very light on his feet given his considerable girth. In this way, he is also associated with Shiva, who is known as the Lord of the Dance.

Discussion Theme: Symbols

- Ganesha is one of the most popular Hindu gods.
- The story is told that when Ganesha was a baby, his father, Shiva, gave him an elephant’s head after Ganesha’s own head was accidentally cut off.
- In India, elephants are symbols of wealth and strength.
- A person who worships fat, jolly Ganesha hopes to have a rich and happy life.
- Ganesha is the remover of obstacles, because Hindus believe he can break a path through life just the way a real elephant can open up a path through the dense jungle.

Extension Activities

Language Arts:

- Use the Discussion theme information to write an essay.

Visual Arts:

- Ganesha rides a mouse that clears his path of obstacles and is the “finder of the way.” What other animal can you think of that would clear your path of obstacles? The animal could be small or large. It could be tame or wild.
- Ganesha has four arms to hold his attributes. Think about what your own attributes might be.
- Ganesha carries a tool to destroy obstacles and ignorance. Think of something you might carry that would serve the same purpose.
- Many myths and legends feature a snake that represents all that is sinister, cunning and problematic. Since Ganesha is holding the snake, it identifies him as a remover of obstacles. What might you use in today’s world to serve the same purpose?
- Substitute another animal for Ganesha utilizing all of the information and changes you thought of in the above questions, and then draw this new animal. This animal may be composed of more than one animal’s parts to create an animal that has never been seen before!

Language Arts Lesson Plan

Goal:

Students will know that there are different styles of writing.

Objectives:

Students will know that a narrative piece can be a retelling or a story.

Students will know the five W's: who, what, when, where and why.

Sunshine State Standards: (as of 2005)

LA.A.2.2.5; LA.B.1.2.1; LA.B.1.2.2; LA.B.1.2.3; LA.B.2.2.3; LA.B.2.2.5; LA.C.3.2.1;

LA.D.1.2.1

Materials:

Picture of *Ganesha*

Writing paper

Pencil

Procedure:

1. Display art picture and allow time to view the piece.
2. Hold discussion about the legend.
3. Review the five W's.
4. Using this information, students will take on the role of news reporters covering a battle.
5. Create a web of ideas using the five W's.
6. Write narrative essay.
7. Conference for clarity.
8. Peer edit for conventions.
9. Final copy for grade.
10. Share with class: options could be reader's theater.

Discussion Suggestions:

- Share background information about the legend of the art.
- Imagine the scene of the battle. Encourage using five senses, as well as five W's, when establishing the setting and the body of the story.

Point of View: First person is a character in the story. As a reader, we only know what he or she feels. Third person is an outside narrator. The information is what all characters observe, feel or know.

Important Vocabulary:

Ganesha

Narrative

Assessment:

- After hearing examples of different types of writing, students will identify a narrative piece.
- After reading two essays written in different points of views, students will be able to identify a work written in third person (examples are available in Harcourt Brace Trophies reading series).

FCAT Connection:

Knowledge: student will assemble information.

Analysis: What inferences can you make about this artwork? Hint: Use what you already know and what you learned about this artwork to make inferences. Through classroom discussion with open-ended questions, students will understand how parts relate to the whole. Use investigative strategies to learn more about this artwork.

Visual Arts Lesson Plan

Objectives:

Students will understand the Hindu myth of Ganesha.

Students will produce a drawing of a super hero in the Hindu style atop a new vehicle.

Sunshine State Standards: (as of 2005)

VA.A.1.2.1; VA.A.1.2.2; VA.A.1.2.3; VA.A.1.2.4; VA.B.1.2.1 1; VA.B.1.2.2; VA.B.1.2.4; VA.C.1.2.2

Materials:

Permanent, black, Sharpie marker

12 x 18" white drawing paper

Oil pastels

Watercolor sets

Water containers

Watercolor brushes

Discussion:

- Ganesha is depicted as a richly adorned, many armed, deity atop his companion and vehicle, the mouse, who is the cunning "finder of the way."
- Think about a new vehicle for your hero that has a noteworthy attribute. Your new vehicle can be an animal that you make up of the best parts of more than one animal.

Procedure:

1. Show students other art examples that illustrate attributes (*the Goddess Durga Slaying the Buffalo Demon*, *the Ten Avatars of Vishnu*, and *the Manuscript Cover*).
2. Make a pencil drawing of a Hindu-style super hero atop his new vehicle on 12 x 18" paper.
3. Trace pencil lines with permanent, Sharpie marker.
4. Use oil pastels to color the Hindu-style super hero and his or her vehicle.
5. Finish the work by filling in remaining space with watercolor.

Important Vocabulary:

Vehicle, attributes and Ganesha

Assessment:

- Students can identify three characteristics of Hindu style.
- Student work shows a new vehicle.

Extensions:

- Discuss why Ganesha has four arms.
- Have students draw themselves with multiple arms holding symbols of their own attributes.
- Have students draw themselves with multiple attributes atop their own vehicle.

RESOURCES

Glossary

Stories from Indian Mythology

Asanas & Mudras

Map & Websites

Books

Poems & Couplets

Rubrics

Selected Sunshine State Standards

Bibliography

Brushstroke Handouts A & B

Glossary

Ancestor Veneration (*ancestor worship*)- The custom of honoring deceased ancestors who are still considered a part of the family and whose spirits are believed to have the power to intervene in the affairs of the living.

Attribute- a material object recognized as appropriate to a person, office or status.

Avatar- in Hinduism, the bodily form a deity or released soul takes upon descending to earth to rid the world of evil.

Buddhism (*Bood-ism*)- A religion based on the teachings of Buddha (approx. 560-480 BC). The basis of Buddhist teachings are "the four noble truths" — that life is full of suffering (such as not being satisfied, old age, disease and death), that the cause of suffering is desire and wanting things only for oneself, that there is a cure for this suffering, and that this cure is the Eight-Fold Path. The Eight-Fold Path is right attitude, motives, speech (not lying or gossiping), action (not to kill or steal), effort, mindfulness and meditation.

Calligraphy- Literally means “good writing.” Chinese calligraphy is an art form, and calligraphers are highly respected. There are several styles of writing: seal, official or clerical, regular, running or semi-cursive, and cursive. Each one has its own characteristics and purpose. *Lesson of calligraphy, tools= <http://tqjunior.thinkquest.org/3614/drawing.htm>*

Confucianism (*kon-'fyü-shun-ism*)- A philosophy based on the teachings of Confucius (approx. 551-479 BC) and his followers, who stressed that everyone has a place in society with specific duties and responsibilities. Great importance was placed on five relationships: ruler to subject, parent to child, elder brother to younger brother, husband to wife, and friend to friend.

Consort (*'kon-sort*)- a royal companion or associate.

Devi (Deh'-vee) (*the Protecting Mother*)- sometimes known simply as the Goddess, Devi appears in some form in every region of India. She is often identified as the creative energy of the universe and is considered by her followers the equal of Vishnu and Shiva.

Divination- The practice that seeks to foretell the future by "reading" signs.

Dowry- Wealth a bride's family contributes to the marriage, usually consisting of clothing, household furnishings and utensils.

Dynasty- A Chinese dynasty took its name from a sequence of rulers from the same patrilineal (through the male line) family. For more than 2,000 years, China was ruled by a series of dynasties.

Extended Family- A residential group consisting of two or more families of at least two generations.

Ganesha (gäh-nesh)- The Hindu elephant-headed god of wisdom and success; the remover of obstacles.

Hinduism- A complex Indian religion (nearly 4,000 years old) with elaborate mythology, 3,000 gods, ceremonies for purification, and steps one goes through in the life cycle.

Most Hindus believe in an immense unifying force that governs all existence and cannot be completely known by humanity. Individual gods and goddesses are personifications of this cosmic force. In practice, each Hindu worships those few deities that he or she believes directly influence his or her life. By selecting one or more of these deities to worship and by conducting the rituals designed to facilitate contact with them, a Hindu devotee is striving to experience his or her unity with that cosmic force.

Lotus- a water lily of India with large pink flowers used symbolically in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Iconography- The reading of symbols in a painting or sculpture.

Islam- A religion based on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (approx. 570-632 CE) as found in the sacred book, the Koran. The followers of Islam are called Muslims. Islam originated in the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century of the Common Era and came to exert a profound influence across Asia, Europe, and Africa. Islam provided a monotheistic religious worldview in contrast to the polytheistic system that preceded it in Arabia.

Naga (nä-ga)- A cobra representing fertility and strength often seen around the neck of Shiva.

Personification- The attribution of human qualities to objects or abstract notions as in painting or sculpture.

Puja ('poo-jah) – A rite of worship; an offering. The act of showing reverence to a god, a spirit, or another aspect of the divine through invocations, prayers, songs, and rituals. An essential part of puja for the Hindu devotee is making a spiritual connection with the divine.

Shamanism ('shä-man-ism)- A belief system in which certain individuals are believed to be in direct contact with the spirit world through trance and to be able to command spirits to do their bidding.

Shiva (*Shee'-vuh*) (*the Creator and Destroyer*)- destroys the old while creating the new. His consorts include the loving Parvati and the ferocious Durga, who represent the feminine aspects of his complex nature. He is often shown with a cobra, the Naga, symbol of fertility and strength, wrapped around his neck. The god often has four arms, signifying his superhuman power.

Taoism- A philosophy formulated by Lao Tzu (either third or sixth century BC) in which the aim of life is to conform to nature's way. Yin (female, wet, dark, cool) and Yang (male, dry, bright, hot) and the five elements (fire, water, earth, wood, metal) interact to bring harmony.

Vehicle- a medium for thought, feeling or action. (*Ganesha's vehicle is the mouse or rat, known as the cunning "finder of the way" who can chew through any obstacle*).

Vishnu (*Vish'-noo*) (*the Preserver*)- with his two most popular incarnations being Krishna and Rama, represents stability and order. Vishnu is recognized by the four symbols he carries: discus, conch, club and lotus. In paintings and prints, Vishnu is often shown with blue skin, a device to accentuate his otherworldliness.

Yin & Yang- Yin is associated with everything dark, moist, receptive, earthy, and female, whereas yang is bright, dry, active, heavenly, and male. Yin and yang were believed to combine in various proportions to produce all the different objects in the universe. There is always an element of yang within yin and an element of yin within yang. Together they are symbolized by a circle divided into black and white sections, with a dot of white in the black portion and a dot of black in the white portion.

Information sources: The American Museum of Natural History Website
<http://www.amnh.org/education/teachersguides/asianpeoples/page3.html>

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Stories from Indian Mythology

As told by Premila Rao, Docent, Harn Museum of Art

An *avatar* is the form a deity takes upon descending to earth to rid the world of evil. Most Hindus have always believed that the god, *Vishnu*, is the heavenly source of avatars.

Vishnu is associated with the sun and is seen as promoting growth and preservation. He rides a sun-eagle and wears a sun-like jewel on his breast. He usually carries a *chakra* (discus) in his right hand, a *shanka* (conch) in his left hand, a *gada* (mace or club) in his third hand, and the fourth hand is open or sometimes holds an orb or a *lotus* flower. The items in his hands are reversed in some sculptures.

The objects surrounding Vishnu are used to identify him. The orb represents the world. The *chakra* and *shanka* are used to fight evil. The *chakra* is sometimes associated with the wheel of time. Vishnu is often depicted with two avatars near his head, and two *consorts* named Lakshmi and Bhumidevi near his feet.

The *lotus* is given many functions. Sometimes it is simply an ornament. Other times it represents the fragrance that is inseparable from the beautiful flower like god's grace that surrounds all human beings. The lotus is called *pankaja*, which means born of slush (muddy earth after a rain). The lotus lifts out of the slush of muddy ponds, but the leaves and petals are never dirty; they are pure and fragrant. We should all rise out of the mire and be good. Sometimes Vishnu's hands and feet are compared to a lotus.

Vishnu is associated with good deeds on behalf of humanity. When Indra, accompanied by a host of gods, drew near the mountain lair of the demon Vrtra, the gods fled in terror, but Vishnu stood steadfast and helped release the waters that flowed down in the seven beneficial rivers.

The number of the avatars has never been completely agreed upon. It is believed to be anywhere between 7 and 22. Most Hindus have agreed in recognizing 10 avatars. They are *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narasimha*, *Vamana*, *Parasurama*, *Krishna*, *Rama*, *Buddha* and *Kalki*.

1. In his *Matsya*, or fish avatar, Vishnu warned Manu of a coming universal deluge and pulled Manu's boat to safety.

2. Vishnu's second avatar, *Kurma (the tortoise)*, stood on the ocean bottom during the great churning of the ocean and provided a firm base for the churn by letting its spindle revolve on his back. See story below:

The gods, who had not yet attained exemption from death, decided to seek endless life by churning the Sea of Milk in order to extract from it the nectar of immortality, called Amritha. The churn was rotated by wrapping the long body of Vasuki, the king of serpents, around its spindle. To provide a base for the spindle on the bottom of the sea, Vishnu took the form of a tortoise. Just as the nectar started to emerge from the sea, Vasuki grew sick and vomited venom from each of his 1,000 heads, and over the surface of the sea spread a blue-black mass of deadly poison that could even kill the gods. When all the gods, including Vishnu, were almost overcome by the poison, Shiva came to the rescue. He picked up a large shell, skimmed off the dark liquid, and drank it to the last drop. But even Shiva was not immune to the poison, which lodged in his throat, turning it blue. Nila means blue and Kantha means neck; hence, Shiva is sometimes called Nilakantha.

3. As *Varaha (the Boar)*, Vishnu plunged into the sea and with his snout raised up the drowning world that lay submerged on the bottom, where it had been dumped by a demon.

4. *Narasimha* is the man-lion. Vishnu protected his devotee Prahlada from persecution by a demon, which the avatar split open with his claws. The demon king had received a gift from the gods that he could be killed neither inside nor outside, neither by man nor beast. Narasimha killed him on the threshold.

5. *Vamana* recovered the world from the demons by his famous strategy of the three steps as follows:

Vishnu went before Bali, the king of demons, in the guise of a dwarfish beggar and asked as alms the gift of as much space as he could mark out in three steps. When the demon granted him this favor, Vishnu resumed his cosmic stature and paced off in his first giant step the whole earth as an abode for the living persons. Then he marked off the atmosphere, and in the third step, he established the high heavenly world as a pleasant refuge for the deceased. Vishnu is the one god who was known to care about the happiness of the dead.

6. *Parasurama* may, along with *Krishna* and *Rama*, have been an actual person. He is said to have restored the supremacy of the Brahmans by destroying the insubordinate ksatriyas with his ax (*parasu*).

7. *Krishna* is the seventh avatar.
8. *Rama* is the hero of Ramayana.
9. *Buddha* is the founder of Buddhism and the one surely historical personality of the list.
10. *Kalki* is yet to come. He is pictured as a swordsman on a white horse or as a horse-headed figure. He is to appear at the end of the present evil age to unseat the wicked barbarian rulers of the earth from their thrones and to restore the righteous brahmanical order.

All the avatars are conceived of as benefactors of humanity. Their love gives Hindus confidence in the supportive presence of the deity in the affairs of the world.

Currently, the worship of *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Varaha*, *Narasimha* and *Vamana* avatars is rare, and *Parasurama* and *Buddha* have not attracted many Hindu devotees. *Rama* and *Krishna* are now the most popular of all Hindu divinities.

In the 19th to 20th centuries, some reform movements rejected the entire list of avatars as superstitions. Other strands of modern Hindu thought moved in the opposite direction, recognizing in avatars the extraordinary leaders of any religion, Hindu or non-Hindu. A Bodhisattva is a being who is on the way to enlightenment, who vows to use wisdom and compassion to liberate all beings.

Durga- Slaying the Buffalo Demon Mahishasura

Durga is known by many names such as Uma, Parvati and Kali. Her primary name is Durga, because this is her name in the heroic tale that her worshippers love most. It is as follows:

Mahishasura received a gift from the gods that no man could ever kill him. This caused a lot of trouble for everyone. Things became so bad, that all the gods complained to Vishnu, but even he could not do anything about it. So, Shiva came down as a woman, Durga, and killed Mahishasura, ridding the world of the demon.

Durga is worshipped all over India, most significantly in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bengal and Nepal. Every year in late September and October, the entire Hindu population of Bengal celebrates Durga Puja, a festival during which Durga's deliverance of the world from the attack of the buffalo demon Mahisha is remembered. Durga is the female power of all gods combined. Mahisha lusts after Durga but she rejects him. This is a human symbol of greed and lust.

Asanas (positions) & Mudras (gestures)

Asanas ('ä-sa-nas)

Dhyana Asana- This meditative pose consists of both legs crossed closely with the soles of the feet showing. This position is also called padmasana, and all seated Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are found in this pose (see *Seated Buddha with Naga Canopy* transparency).

Lalita Asana- This position of ease has one leg pendant and often resting on a lotus flower. The other leg is in the usual position of Buddha, as described above.

Mudras (mu-'dräs)



Abhaya Mudra- the gesture of protection- with the arm elevated and slightly bent, the hand is lifted to shoulder level with the palm turned outward and all the fingers are extended upward.

Bhumisparsa Mudra- the mudra of witness (earth-touching)- the right arm is draped over the right knee, with the palm inward and all the fingers extended downward with a finger touching the lotus throne. The left hand is on the lap with palm upward. This gesture signifies Buddha's victory over temptation by the demon Mara.



Dharmachakra Mudra- the gesture of Teaching- literally, Dharma means 'Law' and Chakra means 'wheel'. It is usually interpreted as 'turning the Wheel of Law'. In this gesture, both hands are held against the chest, the left facing inward, covering the right facing outward. The index and thumb of each hand makes a circle.

Dhyana Mudra- the gesture of meditation- both hands are placed on the lap, right hand on the left with fingers fully stretched and the palms facing upwards. Often, a begging bowl is placed in the lap.





Jnana Mudra- *the gesture of teaching-* in this gesture, the tips of the index and the thumb are joined and held near the center of the chest with the palm turned inward.

Namaskar Mudra- *the gesture of prayer-* in this gesture, the hands are kept close to the chest in a devotional manner with the palms and fingers joined



Tarjani Mudra- *the gesture of warning-* only the index finger is raised while the other fingers are locked up in the fist. This mudra is characteristic of the most wrathful deities.

Varada - *the gesture of charity or grace-* the arm is extended all the way down with the palm facing outwards, and the fingers extended downwards



Vitarka Mudra- *the gesture of argument-* the tips of the thumb and index finger touch to form a circle and all the other fingers face upward

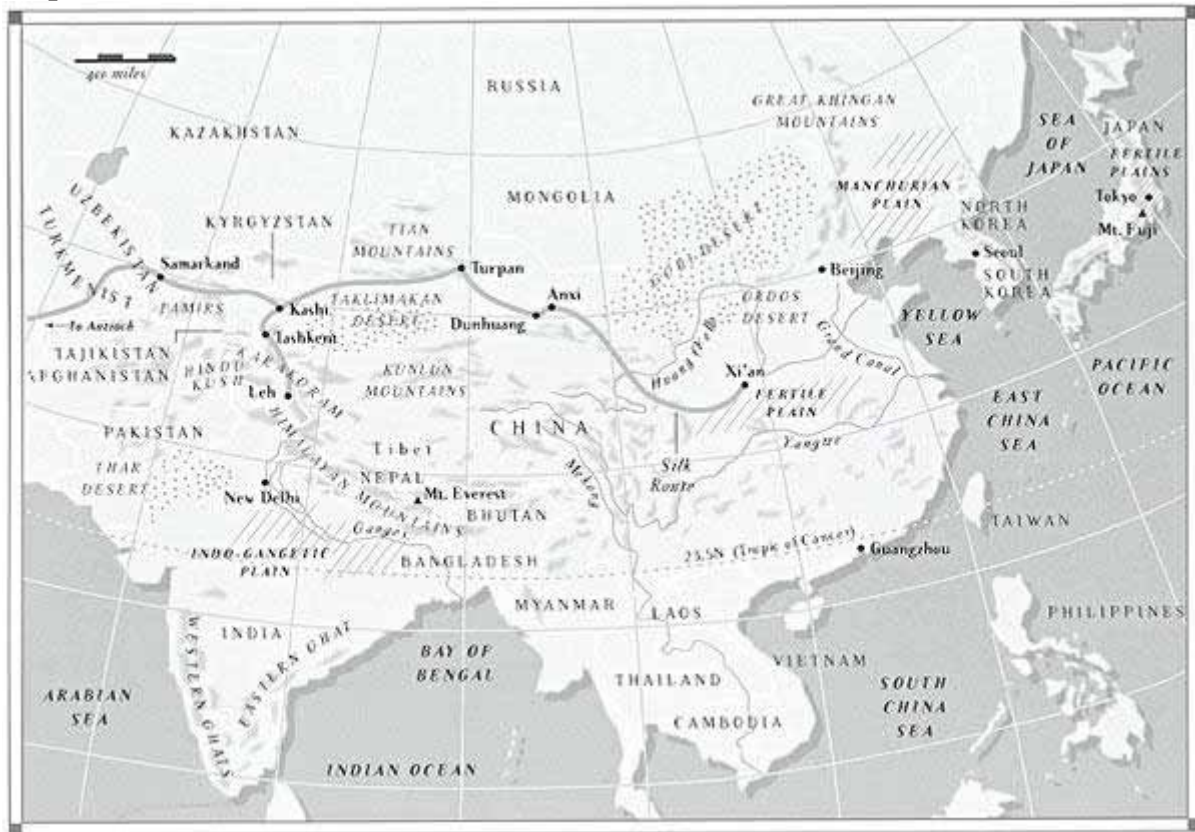
Information Sources:

Short Description of Gods, Goddesses and Ritual Objects of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal,
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Nepal.

The Dharmapala Thangka Centre: School of Thangka Painting
<http://www.bremen.de/info/nepal/Icono/Mudras/Mudras.htm>

Map & Websites

Map of India & China



Websites

The American Museum of Natural History

<http://www.amnh.org/education/teachersguides/asianpeoples/page3.html>

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PoetryTeachers.com

<http://www.poetryteachers.com/poetclass/lessons/exaggerations.html>

The WebMuseum, Paris

<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cornell/>

Selected Sunshine State Standards (as of lesson writing in 2005)

LANGUAGE ARTS

LAA

LA.A.1.2.2 -student selects from a variety of simple strategies including the use of phonics, word structure, context clues self-questioning, confirming simple predictions, retelling and using visual cues to identify words and construct meaning from various texts, illustrations, graphics and charts

LA.A. 1.2.3 -use simple strategies to determine meaning and increase vocabulary for reading, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, root words, multiple meanings, antonyms, synonyms and word relationships

LA.A. 1.2.4 -clarifies understanding by rereading, self-correction, summarizing, checking other sources, and class or group discussion

LA.A. 2.2.1 -student reads text and determines the main idea or essential message, identifies relevant supporting details and facts, and arranges events in chronological order

LA.A.2.2.5 -reads and organizes information for a variety of purposes

LA.A 2.2.7 -student recognizes the use of comparison and contrast in a text

LAB

LA.B.1.2.1 -prepares for writing by recording thoughts, focusing on a central idea, grouping related ideas and identifying the purpose of writing

LA.B.1.2.2 -student drafts and revises writing in cursive

LA.B.1.2.3 -student produces final copy that has been edited

LA.B.2.2.3 -student writes for a variety of occasions, audiences, and purpose

LA.B.2.2.5 -student creates narratives in which ideas, details, and events are in logical order and are relevant to the story line

LA.B.2.2.6 -student creates expository responses in which ideas and details follow an organizational pattern and are relevant to the purpose

LAC

LA.C. 3.2.1-student speaks clearly at an understandable rate and uses appropriate volume

LAD

LA.D.1.2.1-student understands that there are patterns and rules in the syntactic structure, symbols, sounds, and meanings conveyed through the English language

LA.D. 2.2.1-student understands word choices can shape reactions, perceptions, and beliefs

LAE

LA.E.1.2.1-identifies the distinguishing features among fiction, drama, poetry and identifies the major characteristics of nonfiction

LA.E. 1.2.5-student identifies and uses literary terminology appropriate to the grade level, including symbol, theme, simile, alliteration, and assonance

VISUAL ARTS

VAA

VA.A.1.2.1 -uses and organizes two-dimensional and three-dimensional media, techniques, tools, and processes to produce works of art that are derived from personal experience, observation, or imagination

VA.A.1.2.2 -uses control in handling tools and materials in a safe, responsible manner

VA.A.1.2.3 -knows the effects and functions of using various organizational elements and principles of design when creating works of art

VA.A.1.2.4 -uses good craftsmanship in a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional media

VAB

VA.B.1.2.1 -understands that subject matter used to create unique works of art can come from personal experience, observation, imagination, and themes

VA.B.1.2.2 -understands what makes different art media, techniques, and processes effective or ineffective in communicating various ideas

VA.B.1.2.3 -knows how to identify the intentions of those creating works of art

VA.B.1.2.4 -uses the elements of art and the principles of design with sufficient manipulative skills, confidence, and sensitivity when communicating ideas

VAC

VA.C.1.2.1 -understands the similarities and differences in works of art from a variety of sources

VA.C.1.2.2 -understands how artists have used visual languages and symbol systems through time and across cultures

VAD

VA.D.1.2.1 -develops and justifies criteria for the evaluation of visual works of art using appropriate vocabulary

VA.D.1.2.2 -uses different approaches to respond to and to judge various works of art

VAE

VA.E.1.2.1 -understands the influence of artists on the quality of everyday life

VA.E.1.2.2 -knows the types of tasks performed by various artists and some of the required training

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American Museum of Natural History

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