STORM KING
ART CENTER

Material Matters

Teacher Resource: A Guide for School Groups

Observe and experience a variety of sculptural materials at Storm King Art Center. Make connections between materials and ideas and consider the processes and choices of artists as they combine, transform, and experiment with diverse mediums.

Recommended for grades K-12.

How to Use This Resource

This Teacher Resource is designed to help you explore the theme of *Material Matters* with your students. It is designed for classes planning a visit to Storm King and is accompanied by a slide deck. The resource can also be used in classrooms that are **not** planning a visit to the Art Center. For those classes, the *Storm King Visit* section is included in the slide deck.

By approaching artworks through a thematic lens, we hope to engage learners in focused close looking, activities, and conversations, providing a solid foundation as students construct connections throughout their experience.

Content

This resource and accompanying slide deck is organized in four parts.

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About Your Storm King Visit

Storm King Art Center is pleased to welcome K-12 school groups. Availability is limited and requests must be submitted at least three weeks in advance. Plan your visit now.

School groups may select a guided tour or facilitate their own visit to Storm King. If you choose an educator-led walking tour, students and chaperones will spend 45-60 minutes with a museum educator exploring three to four artworks through close looking and inquiry-based discussions. While you will not see all the artworks in this packet during a guided tour, we invite you to visit additional works after the tour, if time allows. If you are planning a self-guided visit, use the *Visit to Storm King* section of this resource when you are onsite.

Most artworks featured in this resource packet are located within one mile of the School Group arrival area. Routes between artworks may include paved paths, unpaved paths, and grass.

Contact Us

For more information about accessibility, to request alternative suggestions for this theme, or if you have any additional questions about your upcoming visit, please contact us at groups@stormkingartcenter.org.

Introduction

Learning Objectives

Students will:

• Describe and compare materials that artists use in their work. Use descriptive language to discuss texture, color, form, and physical properties of materials.

• Consider how artists combine and transform materials. Make observations and use evidence to hypothesize how a sculpture might have been made.

• Analyze the relationship between form and material in sculptures. Examine how particular materials might exist in harmony or in tension with the forms they create.

• Make connections to their own experiences with materials. Consider how materials can evoke meaning. Consider how their previous experiences with a material might be similar or different to experiencing it in the context of sculpture and landscape.

Connections to Educational Standards

Here are a few ways in which this lesson plan connects to the New York State Department of Education learning standards. This list is not exhaustive.

Visual Arts:

- **Enduring Understanding 2.1:** Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.
- **Enduring Understanding 6.1:** Objects, artifacts, and artworks collected, preserved, or presented communicate meaning and function as a record of social, cultural and political experiences; resulting in the cultivating of appreciation and understanding.
- **Enduring Understanding 8.1:** People gain insight into meanings of artwork by engaging in a process of art criticism.

Science:

- **5-PS1-3:** Make observations and measurements to identify materials based on their properties.
- **2-PS1-2:** Analyze data obtained from testing different materials to determine which materials have the properties that are best suited for an intended purpose.

Language Arts:

- **Reading Anchor Standard 7**: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats.

Social Studies:

- **3.10:** Each community develops an economic system that addresses three questions: what will be produced, how will it be produced, and who will get what is produced?
- **10.3 CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:** Innovations in agriculture, production, and transportation led to the Industrial Revolution, which originated in Western Europe and spread over time to Japan and other regions. This led to major population shifts and transformed economic and social systems.

Pre-Visit

Introduction to Storm King Art Center

Storm King Art Center is a 500-acre outdoor museum where visitors experience large-scale sculpture under open sky. **We strongly recommend using our free digital guide on Bloomberg Connects,** via the QR code here. You'll find photos, videos, audio recordings, maps, suggested routes, activities for children and families, and more. Use the guide to plan your visit, then easily access helpful insights when you're onsite. Afterward, use it in the classroom to dive deeper into your favorite works. You and your students can also learn more about Storm King's environmental stewardship, collection, and community connections in this brief video.

Introduction to Material Matters Theme

A material is the substance from which something is made. For example, the sole of a shoe might be made of rubber, or a bottle might be made of glass or plastic. As you explore Storm King, you'll find sculptures created by artists who transform and combine a variety of materials.

For Younger Students: Invite students to work in small groups to identify various materials found around the classroom. How many materials can each group find? Ask students to list adjectives that describe each material and share some ideas that each material makes them think of.

For Older Students: Individually or in small groups, ask students to brainstorm what materials come to mind when they think of sculpture. Ask them to share materials that they think would be particularly interesting or surprising to discover in sculptures. As students share back, invite the class to consider different associations they have with each material they mention (textures, scents, experiences, etc.).

Observe and Discuss

Project or print an image of Chakaia Booker's sculpture *A Moment in Time* for students to observe. Ask students what they notice. How would they describe the shapes and textures they see? What does the sculpture make them think of?

Share that Chakaia Booker created this sculpture out of rubber tires. What do you think she might have done to the tires to create these shapes and textures? What are some ideas that tires make students think of? Why do you think Booker might have chosen tires as a sculptural material?

For older students, add some more context about the artist (refer to artwork page linked above). Ask students to talk with a partner and then share back: How do they think the artwork might relate to its title, *A Moment in Time*?

Share archival images of Booker's work at Storm King. Invite students to describe and compare multiple works. What are some different choices Booker made as she transformed rubber tires into art?

Visit to Storm King

If you are on a self-guided visit, or have time before or after your tour, walk the grounds. Try to identify and describe materials in each sculpture. What ideas does each sculpture inspire? Compare/contrast sculptures made of the same materials and sculptures made of different materials.

Artwork Engagement

Artwork: Dennis Oppenheim, *Architectural Cactus* #6 (2008)

Location: North Woods | **#117** on our Map

Engagement: Ask students to count how many different materials they find in this sculpture. Older students might read the material list on the nearby placard and try to identify each material in the work. What words would they use to describe the various parts of this sculpture? Challenge students to use a range of different marks to capture the work's textures in a pencil drawing. What title might students give this artwork? What do they think of the artist's title, *Architectural Cactus #6*?

Artwork: Rashid Johnson, *Stacked Heads* (2020)

Location: North Woods | **#112** on our Map

Engagement: Invite students to explore the work from multiple angles and distances. What do they notice from close up that they might not notice from far away? Consider techniques the artist might have used to create the textures on the surface of the sculpture. Compare the plants used in the sculpture to the plants in the surrounding landscape. Rashid Johnson has said, "I always thought it was interesting to make something that people had to take care of." What are some things you take care of?

Artwork: Chakaia Booker, *A Moment In Time* (2004)

Location: Meadows | **#308** on our Map

Engagement: Ask students what they notice about the artwork in person that they did not notice when viewing a photo of it in class. Invite them to use their sense of smell. Ask younger students to recreate some of the larger and smaller shapes with their bodies. Invite older students to zoom in on one area of the sculpture and sketch or take a photo of that detail. Consider techniques the artist might have used to transform rubber tires into these shapes and textures. Revisit conversations about students' associations with and ideas related to tires.

Artwork: Martin Puryear, *Lookout* (2023)

Location: North Woods | **#603** on our Map

Engagement: Ask students to walk around and enter the sculpture. Invite them to stand on the central stone circle and look up. Compare this artwork with other brick structures students have experienced. How do they think this form might have been created? What does it make them think of? How is it similar to other sculptures they explored today? How is it different?

Post-Visit

Reflect

Ask students to individually journal or talk with a partner about their visit to Storm King. What are some materials they saw and ideas they discussed?

Material Choices

Single Material Focus: Consider works at Storm King that incorporate one primary material, such as rubber tires in Chakia Booker's *A Moment in Time* and bricks in Martin Puryear's *Lookout*. Ask students why they think an artist might find it valuable to focus on one material. Invite older students to list all the actions they think each artist might have performed to transform their material (ex: cut, stack, bend, etc.). Invite younger students to act out the process of manipulating rubber tires by cutting, bending, and attaching, and to act out the process of making bricks and stacking them at an angle. You might show this video to share more about Puryear's process.

Material Juxtaposition: Sometimes, artists juxtapose—or combine and arrange—multiple materials in one artwork. Show an image of Dennis Oppenheim's, *Architectural Cactus #6*. Ask students why they think the artist might have chosen to combine multiple types of metal and plastic instead of using just one material. Revisit their thoughts about Rashid Johnson's *Stacked Heads*. What comes to mind when they see the cast bronze structure of Rashid Johnson's *Stacked Heads* juxtaposed with plants?

Art Exploration

Prompt for Students: How will you create a sculpture using one or two familiar materials?

Gather simple materials for an art making exploration. Students might bring in recycled materials from home, or you might pull together materials in the classroom. Materials might include: newspaper, aluminum foil, pipe cleaners/wire, string, etc. You might also provide tape or glue for binding and scissors for cutting.

First, lead students in an inquiry with each material. What are different ways to transform paper (ex: roll, fold, tear, tab, etc.)? What are different ways to transform foil? Etc.

Then, ask students to choose whether they would like to experiment by focusing on just one material, or whether they would like to choose two materials to juxtapose.

Older students might consider ideas and associations that each material makes them think of, and they might begin by sketching an idea. Will their sculpture be abstract, exploring the properties of the materials? Will it be representational, relating to some ideas the materials make them think of?

After students create their sculptures, provide an opportunity for them to share. Students might take turns sharing the title of their work and one choice that they made. Alternatively, students could create a label for their work and then do a "gallery walk" around the room to explore each other's work.

Ask older students to imagine their sculptures as large-scale, and draw or discuss how and where they might be positioned in an outdoor setting like Storm King.

Resources

Storm King Art Center Collection
https://collections.stormking.org/index.php/About/collection

John P. Stern Oral History
https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/oralhistory/4867

Exhibition website for Storm King Art Center's 2016 exhibition, *Dennis Oppenheim: Terrestrial Studio*
https://stormking.org/exhibitions/oppenheim/ac6.html

Exhibition website for Storm King Art Center's 2004 exhibition, *Chakaia Booker*
https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/133

Archival images of Chakia's Booker's work at Storm King
https://collections.stormking.org/Browse/archival/facet/rel_entity_facet/id/32

Martin Puryear Exhibition video
https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/204

Exhibition website for Storm King Art Center's 2023 exhibition, *Martin Puryear: Process and Scale*
https://collections.stormking.org/Detail/occurrences/207

Storm King Art Center Groups
https://stormking.org/groups/

Vocabulary

Perspective: Typically the representation of 3-D objects or spaces in two-dimensional artworks. In sculpture, perspective relates to the angle or view one has of an artwork and the space around it.

Positive and negative space: Positive space is the material form of a sculpture; negative space is the "empty" space within and around the form of the sculpture.

Material: A material is the substance from which something is made. For example, the sole of a shoe might be made of rubber, or a bottle might be made of glass or plastic.

Architecture: The art or practice of designing and constructing buildings, or sculpture at Storm King.

Juxtapose: To place different things side by side to compare and contrast them.

Harmony: Creating visual cohesion or unity by placing similar or complementary elements (color, shapes, lines, textures) side by side.

Credits

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Cover Image: Martin Puryear, *Lookout*, 2023. Photo by Jeffrey Jenkins.