

# Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson

## Music Box Lesson Plan

### Ohio Standards

#### Connections:

##### Fine Arts

Historical, Cultural and Social Studies

-Creative Expression and Communication

- Analyzing and Responding

- Valuing the Arts/Aesthetic Reflection

- Connections, Relationships, and Applications

##### Social Studies

**History-** Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns, and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States and the world.

**People in Societies-** Students use knowledge of perspectives, practices and products of cultural, ethnic, and social groups to analyze the impact of their commonality and diversity within local, national, regional, and global settings.

##### **Social Studies Skills and**

**Methods:** Students collect, organize, evaluate, and synthesize information from multiple sources to draw logical conclusions, communicate this information, and apply what they have learned.

##### Language Arts

Acquisition of Vocabulary

Concepts of Print,

Comprehension Strategies and

Self-Monitoring Strategies

Informational, Technical and

Persuasive Text

Literary Text

Writing Process and

Applications

Writing Conventions

### **Lesson Summary:**

Students create a work of art with a musical element and examine ways in which artists connect visual art and music. They explore the origin of spirituals in the fields of the American South during slavery times and of their importance during the Civil War. Students understand symbolism through the artist's use of the female form to represent a spiritual. They discuss pattern and texture in regard to both art and music and design music boxes that feature texture and pattern created with fabric, beads, buttons, and shells.



My Lord, What a Morning



One Day in 1307 AD: King Abubakari II

**Estimated Duration:** 2-4 class period

**Commentary:** Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1940. When she was a little girl, she knew she wanted to be an artist and began going to art school on Saturdays while she was still in high school and then continued after she graduated from high school. Aminah created sculpture, paintings on cloth, drawings, and books. As she was growing up, she listened to the spirituals that she heard in the churches in her neighborhood and on the radio. As early as the 1970s, she began putting music box workings in her RagGonNons and sculptures. Whenever she could find them, she would use music boxes that played spirituals. Music is very important in Aminah Robinson's work because it comforts people in difficult times and helps them celebrate good times. Spirituals grew out of the experiences that African Americans endured as enslaved people.

### **Pre-assessment**

Play examples of African-American spirituals and discuss their dual origins in Africa and in work songs in rural America before and after the Civil War. “Go Down Moses” is one spiritual many students might know. Show examples of Aminah Robinson’s work in which she includes music boxes that play spirituals. Print *My Lord, What a Morning* from Downloadable Images. Discuss the artist’s use of large wooden pipes from an old organ. Also download and discuss the two-dimensional work, *The Teachings*, in which Robinson uses the female figure to symbolize a spiritual. *One Day in 1307 AD: King Abubakari II* is another example in which the artist uses several music boxes.

### **Discussion Questions:**

Why is music important to people? Has anyone heard a spiritual or hymn? If so, where did they hear it and what was the subject matter? Have students do a Web search to find information about spirituals. Ask them: Where did spirituals originate? What is the difference between a spiritual and gospel music? Who sings spirituals? Have spirituals had any effect on pop music? If so, how? What are some examples? Listen to three examples of spirituals and tell how they are similar and how they are different.

Why might Aminah have used women to symbolize the spirituals. Why do you think Aminah included music boxes in so much of her work? What do you think the iron elements on top of the pipes might symbolize? (crowns, hats, headdresses, etc.)

**Scoring Guidelines:** The pre-assessment discussion and exploration provide opportunities to gather information on students’ prior knowledge about music, spirituals, and symbolism. Participation notes could be made to monitor students individually.

### **Post-Assessment**

At the completion of all sessions, the artwork and final assessment are combined in the evaluation of student learning. Guide students as they participate in discussion to develop criteria for the finished artwork.

**Scoring Guidelines:** Refer to attached Assessment Chart.

**Objectives:** Students might

- create a unique work of with a musical element
- explore texture and pattern in both art and music
- understand the multimedia work of Aminah Robinson
- understand the use of symbolism in the artist's work
- use buttons, beads, shells, etc. to create texture and pattern
- understand the importance of spirituals, their relation to enslaved people, and their role in people's lives

**Instructional Procedures:**

1. Each student will need one small box and one music button. Let the students select the song they want to use. An array of fabric scraps, buttons, beads and shells can be set out for all students to use. Have students bring small "found objects" from home to use as symbols for something in their lives such as nature, sports, a family member, or a holiday.
2. Students select some fabric pieces. Students should think about where they want to place the fabric on the box. It works well to overlap the fabric pieces and cover the entire box. Students glue the fabric scraps to the box.
3. When the box is covered with fabric, students embellish the fabric with the other items. Buttons, shells, beads, and the music button may all be affixed with white school glue. These objects might be arranged to form interesting patterns of color and shapes. Students may also choose to decorate the inside of the box.
4. Students think about their box and write (or dictate) a sentence or two about the meaning of their symbolic object and what they plan to keep in the box. After practicing writing their sentence on a piece of paper, they should use markers or pen and ink to carefully write their sentence on the inside of the box in the same manner Aminah uses words in her work.

**Differentiated Instructional Support**

This lesson can be adapted to different grade levels. For K-3, emphasis is on using objects to make patterns and determining what to keep in the box; for Grade 4 and above, emphasis is on the historical context of spirituals, the Civil War period, and the evolution of this musical form. High school students can examine examples of protest music from the Viet Nam era and compare them with Civil War era spirituals.

### **Extension**

For middle and high school students, examine relationship of spirituals to protest songs of the 1960s and 1970s and to the development of rock and roll. They might examine contemporary music as it relates to current events

### **Homework Options and Home Connections**

Students look for and discuss with their families found objects such as political buttons, photographs, postcards, and other mementos that they can use in designing their boxes.

### **Interdisciplinary Connections**

This lesson relates directly to social studies, music, and language arts.

### **Materials and Resources:**

<i>For teachers</i>	Downloadable images of Aminah's work; books by or about Aminah (see list in Teach section of this Web site); <i>Symphonic Poem: The Art of Aminah</i> Brenda Lynn Robinson from the library; to demonstrate examples of spirituals being sung
<i>For students</i>	White cardboard school box for each student Music buttons with a variety of songs- one for each student Fabric scraps, rickrack, lace, ribbon Buttons, beads, shells White school glue Markers, pen and ink

### **General Tips**

Have lots of examples of spirituals for students to hear and images to see of Aminah's RagGonNons (*Precious Memories, Dad's Journey, One Day in 1307 AD: King Abubakari II, My Lord, What a Morning*) in which she inserted dozens of music boxes. When discussing what students might keep in the box, encourage them to think about both tangible objects such as letters or photos and more abstract ideas such as memories or dreams.

**Attachments:** Student Self-Assessment and Final Assessment.

### **Key Vocabulary**

**Hogmawg**- Aminah Robinson's mixture of mud, pig grease, dyes, sticks, glue, and lime that she uses in her two- and three-dimensional work

**Pattern** - a design system based on the planned relationship of parts; in music, pattern is part of the time relationship that creates rhythm

**RagGonNon** - Aminah Robinson's word for a complex work of art that is never finished

**Spiritual** - a religious song usually of deeply emotional character developed especially by Blacks in the southern United States

**Symbolism** - using an object to stand for another object or idea

**Texture** - the way something would feel if you could touch it; in music, texture is the many layers of sound in the composition and the relationships of those sounds to each other

## MUSIC BOX PROJECT - STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Student	Excellent 4	Good 3	Average 2	Needs Improvement 1
<u>Design:</u> incorporates fabric and found objects in unified design				
<u>Creativity:</u> Work demonstrates original thought and execution and personal meaning				
<u>Research:</u> complete Web search and can define spirituals, explain their origin, and give examples				
<u>Craftsmanship:</u> Project is completed on time, is neat and well-executed				
<u>Total</u>				

OVERALL RATING OF PROJECT \_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU COULD DO THIS PROJECT AGAIN, WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY?

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM COMPLETING THIS PROJECT?

## Music Box Project - Final Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student:	Excellent 4	Good 3	Average 2	Needs Improvement 1
<u>Design:</u> uses fabric and found objects in unified design				
<u>Creativity:</u> Work demonstrates original thought and execution and conveys personal meaning				
<u>Research:</u> complete Web search and can define spirituals, explain their origin, and give examples				
<u>Craftsmanship:</u> Project is completed on time, is neat and well-executed				
<b>Total</b>				

Overall Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: