AMERICAN ART | Grades 5-8
Colonial Social Structure and American Persona

ABOUT THIS TOOLBOX
This toolbox provides educators with hands-on activities and discussions relating to the Detroit Institute of Arts’ collection into the classroom. Offering students the opportunity to closely examine and touch replica artworks, the toolbox helps them better understand the messages, materials, and methods of art production and design.

LEARNING TARGET
Students will explore the concept of social class in colonial and early American art through household goods, portraits, fabrics, and other material culture. Students will be able to explain how social station was communicated through visual mediums as well as synthesize hypotheses about what motivated early Americans to portray their own social station in certain ways. Students will also evaluate the role of slavery in the early American social class system and analyze the inequalities in early American society through its arts and artifacts.

STUDENT OUTCOMES
Students will...
• compare living conditions, clothing, and household items from different social classes in early America.
• analyze how wealth and social class were shown in portraits of early Americans.
• evaluate the types and amounts of labor needed to produce art objects in pre-industrial America.

This educational resource was developed by teacher Elisabeth Wood-Wallace in collaboration with the Education Programs and Curatorial departments at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

This DIA Delivered resource is supported by the Ford Motor Company Fund.
TOOLBOX OBJECTS
All toolkit objects, except for the plastic needles, are contemporary reproductions made in the style of items from the colonial and early American periods.

1. Handblown glass cup
2. Wooden mug
3. Porcelain teacup from China
4. Stoneware mug
5. Jicara drinking gourd
6. Handmade lace samples
7. Fabric samples
8. Plastic needles

CONSUMABLE ARTMAKING SUPPLIES
1. Yarn
2. Burlap

STUDENT BOOKS

VIRTUAL TIPS
Share photos of the Toolbox Objects and copies of the graphic organizers through a Learning Management System (LMS).

Conduct an online meeting to showcase the Toolbox Objects in order for students to investigate the objects.

Post the Student Activities on a LMS for quick, easy-to-use, student-centered directions requiring little teacher instruction.
21ST CENTURY STANDARDS

Collaborate
Communicate
Creativity

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Grade 5

Michigan Social Studies

5 – U2.2.2 Describe the lives of enslaved Africans and free Africans, including fugitive and escaped slaves in the American colonies.

5 – U2.3.3 Describe colonial life in America from the perspectives of at least three different groups of people.

Examples may include but are not limited to: perspectives of wealthy landowners, farmers, merchants, indentured servants, laborers, the poor, women, enslaved people, free Africans, and Indigenous Peoples.

5 – U2.3.4 Describe the development of the emerging labor force in the colonies.

Examples may include but are not limited to: cash-crop farming, slavery, indentured servants.

Michigan Merit Curriculum

ART.VA.IV.5.2 Compare and contrast works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.

ART.VA.IV.5.3 Demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts interrelate in making and studying works of art.

ART.VA.V.5.1 Explain how visual arts have inherent relationships to everyday life.

Grade 8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Michigan Social Studies

8 – U4.2.1 Comparing the Northeast and the South—compare and contrast the social and economic systems of the Northeast, the South, and the Western Frontier (Kentucky, Ohio Valley, etc.) with respect to geography, climate, and the development of: • agriculture, including changes in productivity, technology, supply and demand, and price; • industry, including the entrepreneurial development of new industries, such as textiles; • the labor force, including labor incentives and changes in labor forces; • transportation,
DIA COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

A. Joseph Jonathan Blackburn (American, 1700–80), Mrs. James Pitts, 1757, oil on canvas, unframed: 50 1/8 × 40 in. (127.3 × 101.6 cm); framed: 57 5/8 × 47 1/2 × 2 7/8 in. (146.4 × 120.7 × 7.3 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 58.356

B. Joseph Jonathan Blackburn (American, 1700–80), James Pitts, 1757, oil on canvas, unframed: 50 1/8 × 40 in. (127.3 × 101.6 cm); framed: 57 3/4 × 47 5/8 × 3 in. (146.7 × 121 × 7.6 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 58.357

C. John Smibert (American, 1688–1751), Mrs. James Pitts, 1735, oil on canvas, unframed: 36 1/2 × 28 1/8 in. (92.7 × 71.4 cm); framed: 43 3/4 × 35 1/2 × 3 7/8 in. (111.1 × 90.2 × 9.8 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 58.352

D. Joseph Badger (American, 1708–65), James Bowdoin, 1746 or 1747, oil on canvas, unframed: 51 1/8 × 50 1/8 in. (129.9 × 127.3 cm); framed: 56 3/4 × 46 7/8 × 2 5/8 in. (144.1 × 119.1 × 6.7 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 58.354

E. John Singleton Copley (American, 1738–1815), Head of a Man, 1777 or 1778, oil on canvas, unframed: 21 × 16 1/4 in. (53.3 × 41.3 cm); framed: 27 × 23 3/4 × 2 1/2 in. (68.6 × 60.3 × 6.4 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 52.118

F. John Singleton Copley (American, 1738–1815), Watson and the Shark, 1782, oil on canvas, unframed: 36 × 30 1/2 in. (91.4 × 77.5 cm); framed: 45 3/16 × 39 2 1/2 in. (114.8 × 99.1 × 6.4 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. Fund. 46.310


H. Nathan Bowen (American, 1752–1837), Chest on Chest, 1774, mahogany, white pine, and brass, overall: 90 1/2 × 45 1/2 × 23 1/2 in. (229.9 × 115.6 × 59.7 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 48.274

I. Paul Revere II (American, 1734–1818), Sugar Basket, about 1780, silver, overall: 7 3/4 × 6 3/4 × 4 13/16 in. (19.7 × 17.1 × 12.2 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 35.40

J. Paul Revere II (American, 1734–1818), Mug, about 1780, silver, overall: 5 3/8 × 4 1/4 × 5 3/4 in. (13.7 × 10.8 × 14.6 cm). Gift of Robert H. Tannahill in memory of Mrs. William Clay. 44.197

K. Paul Revere II (American, 1734–1818), Teapot, between 1790 and 1795, silver and ebony, overall: 5 3/4 × 3 1/2 in. (14.6 × 8.9 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 37.92

L. Paul Revere II (American, 1734–1818), Creamer, about 1780, silver, overall: 6 9/16 × 2 7/16 × 4 11/16 in. (16.7 × 6.2 × 11.9 cm). Founders Society Purchase, Gibbs-Williams Fund. 35.41

M. Chinese export, Chinese, Punch Bowl, between 1785 and 1800, white porcelain, grey-green glaze with polychrome decoration, overall: 4 1/2 × 10 1/8 in. (11.4 × 25.7 cm). 46.111

N. Chinese export, Chinese, Punch Bowl, between 1785 and 1800, porcelain, overall: 6 15/16 × 15 3/4 in. (17.6 × 40 cm). Gift of Robert H. Tannahill. 55.516
PORTRAITS | Old-School Storytelling through the Self(ie)

TOOLBOX OBJECTS

Claim, Support, Question handout

DIA Collection Connections: A-F

DESCRIPTION

In this activity, students make observations, comparisons, and draw conclusions about class, gender, age, and race by examining portraits created in the 1700s.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Students will...

- analyze how wealth and social class were shown in portraits of early Americans.
- explore how one or more of the following concepts was portrayed in early American society: class, gender, age, and race.

DIRECTIONS

1. Set up stations for students to view and analyze each artwork up close. To help tailor the lesson to a variety of subthemes, review some possible pairings and themes below before setting up your stations.

2. Ask students to compare the idea of a selfie and a portrait. Beyond what is similar and different on the surface, ask students to consider their purposes, mediums, what is required to create a selfie and a portrait, and how much thought might go into their creation.

3. Explain the labor and material costs of creating portraits during the colonial and early American periods. Portraits were expensive luxury goods that required a skilled artist and a significant amount of time to produce. This meant that typically only the wealthy could commission portraits, and the details, mood, and messages in the portraits were considered very carefully.

4. For additional support on the concept of social class, read Molly Bannaky by Alice McGill. Explain to students that at the top of the hierarchy were wealthy landowners, in the middle class were merchants and small farm owners, and that the lower class consisted of laborers, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans.

5. Share the essential question with students: How did some early Americans think about social class? Explain that students will examine different portraits as evidence of how colonial and early Americans might have thought about social class (as well as adjacent and overlapping concepts such as gender and race, based on the selections of the teacher).

6. Pass out a copy of the Claim, Support, Question handout. Students will visit stations with different prints of portraits and fill out the handout, which asks them to make claims and support them using observations from the paintings. Next, students will write down their questions about the paintings and assess what is still unknown about the subjects.
Note: there are two ways to organize the painting analysis:

a. Option 1 is to provide multiple copies of the handout for each student. This will allow each student to examine all of the paintings at each station and complete their own comparison of each image set before sharing with the class.

b. Alternatively, divide the class into two groups and have each member of the group examine only half of the paintings at each station. This can create an atmosphere of collaboration and may fit better if you have time restrictions.

7. After using the Claim, Support, Question handout to guide their initial analysis, facilitate a group discussion regarding student findings.

8. The Question Bank provides suggestions for building a meaningful discussion.

**QUESTION BANK**
Think of the group comparison process as three steps: collection of evidence, building meaning, and answering the essential question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collection of evidence and groundwork for understanding</th>
<th>Building more complex meaning</th>
<th>Putting it all together and answering the essential question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is going on in this picture?</td>
<td>For the portraits, why do you think this person had their picture painted?</td>
<td>How did some early Americans think about social class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you see that makes you say that?</td>
<td>What is the artist and/or subject trying to convey about the subject?</td>
<td>What evidence can we find? (See teacher’s notes for further questions and focused themes)</td>
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<td>What more can we find?</td>
<td>What do you see that makes you say that?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What type of job might the subject(s) have had? What do you see that makes you say that?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do the paintings differ and what conclusions might we come to about why the subjects are painted differently? (See teacher notes for more specific, themed questions.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**VIRTUAL TIP**
The Gallery Walk and comparison can be done in a virtual classroom. Teachers could share their screen or create a shared PPT that students can click through on their own.

**STANDARDS**

5 – U2.2.2  
5 – U2.3.3  
5 – U2.3.4  
ART.VA.IV.5.2  
ART.VA.IV.5.3  
ART.VA.IV.5.1  
ART.VA.IV.8.1  
ART.VA.IV.8.2  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7  
8 – U4.2.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATIONS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Station 1</strong></td>
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FORM VS. FUNCTION | What makes something “fancy?”

TOOLBOX OBJECTS
Handblown glass cup
Porcelain teacup from China
Stoneware mug
Wooden mug
Jicara drinking gourd

DIA Collection Connections: G-N

STUDENT OUTCOMES
Students will...

• Compare living conditions, clothing, and household items of people of different social classes in the colonial and the early American periods.
• Evaluate the likely labor required to make and the cost of each drinking vessel.
• Reflect on the labor required to create objects in a pre-industrialized (or early industrialized) society.
• Connect these labor requirements to expense, social class, and conspicuous consumption.

DESCRIPTION
Students will examine and hold five different types of drinking vessels similar to those used during the early American period. Students will collaborate to put the vessels in order of estimated cost. Students will work through a thinking routine concerning the production, social expression, and probable user of each vessel.

DIRECTIONS
1. Set up five stations for students to closely examine and hold the five drinking vessels.
2. Encourage students to guess what materials were used and how each cup was made, based on their observations and prior knowledge.
3. Ask students to work in pairs to answer the following questions:
   a. Which vessel would have been the most expensive during the early American period? What do you see that makes you say that?
   b. Which vessel would have been the least expensive during the early American period? What do you see that makes you say that?
   c. What factors would make a vessel more expensive during this time? List as many as you can. Possible responses include but are not limited to: shipping costs, labor costs, materials, decoration, origin of materials, and skill.
4. Instruct students to collaborate as a class to put the vessels in order of expense during the colonial and early American periods. Ask students to state their reasons for the order.
5. Review each vessel and explain what factors would make one more or less expensive (material, labor costs, shipping, etc.) than another. For example, it cost a lot to import a Chinese porcelain teacup. Though most glass was imported from Europe during the Colonial and early American period, American-made glass, like the cup reproduced in this kit, would have been made locally and was therefore less expensive than porcelain.
6. Show students DIA Collection Connection photographs G–N of objects from the Whitby Hall collection. Ask:
   a. Why do you think the owners of these objects spent so much money to buy them?
   b. When visitors enter a room like Whitby Hall, what might they think of the owners?

7. Contrast the items in Whitby Hall with the drinking gourd, a vessel used by many members of the poor and working class, but especially associated with enslaved people. Why would someone use a drinking gourd? Return to the list of factors making items more expensive as a comparison point. Explain to students that unlike silver or ceramic, gourds were cheap and available. Enslaved people also had very little time to see to their needs and making a drinking gourd did not require a lot of labor. There is no decoration. There would be no shipping costs as gourds could be grown in most gardens.

8. Explain that the economic success of many wealthy colonists, and indeed the colonies themselves, came at the cost of enslaved people. Whitby Hall was owned by slaveholders. Some advocates for independence from England denied basic rights and freedoms to others.

9. Assessments
   Option 1: Write a reflection on why some people choose to surround themselves with expensive objects. Possible themes to consider are power, conspicuous consumption, and inequality.

   Option 2: Choose one or two luxury objects from modern society. Why are they considered luxury items and what do they communicate to society about the owners?

   Option 3: Are power, wealth, and prestige always built at the cost of others or is there a way to achieve material success without harming other people? What modern examples support either side of the argument?

VIRTUAL TIP
The Gallery Walk and comparison can be done in a virtual classroom. Teachers can share their screen or create a shared PowerPoint that students can click through on their own. Using Padlet or Jamboard might allow students to arrange the drinking vessels in order of expense, as well as explain why they positioned each vessel where they did.

STANDARDS
5 – U2.2.2                  CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
5 – U2.3.3                  8 – U4.2.1
5 – U2.3.4                  ART.VA.IV.8.2
ART.VA.V.5.1
WHAT WE WEAR | Making a Tapestry of Style

TOOLBOX OBJECTS
Plastic needles
Colored yarn
Burlap
Handmade lace samples
Fabric samples

Additional supplies needed: Scissors

DIA Collection Connections: A–D

STUDENT OUTCOMES
Students will…
• Evaluate the types and amounts of labor needed to produce art objects in pre-industrial America.
• Analyze what makes a garment or household item prestigious, desirable, or valued.
• Describe how clothes and household items communicate messages.
• Create samplers demonstrating their preferred values, designs, and aesthetics.

DESCRIPTION
After comparing the aesthetics of modern clothes and those in early American portraiture, students will create patterns and designs to combine in a tapestry that reflects the aesthetics they value in their own lives.

DIRECTIONS
Part I
1. Ahead of time, ask students to wear their favorite outfit for the first lesson. (Schools with strict dress codes or uniforms may wish to ask students to take a selfie or to bring in the item separately.)

2. To introduce this activity, show students a series of designs (patterns, embroidery, logos, etc.). Teachers can select examples of designs from modern sources (such as fashion brands, music logos) or from historical sources (such as traditional embroidery and weaving patterns from around the world), depending on what they feel students will respond to and identify with best. Ask students to describe the impressions they get from the designs. Are some warm? Cool? Sharp? Expensive? Wild? Controlled? Probe student thinking. What design elements (color, line, etc.) bring out these impressions or emotions?

3. In a Think, Pair, Share, encourage students to explain why they chose this outfit. What do they like about it? What do they think it says about them and how does it show their personality?

4. Facilitate a class discussion. As a class, build a consensus about why people tend to choose certain clothing. What is valued in clothes? For example: comfort, colors, name brands, humor, expression of personality, etc. Create a master list.

5. Next, students examine DIA Collection Connections A–D, the handmade lace samples, and fabric samples in a gallery walk. Encourage students to look closely at the samples, guessing how much time and skill it would take to make lace and other fine fabrics by hand.
6. Explain to students that portraits took an enormous amount of time to make and cost a lot of money, so it is likely the subjects are shown in their best, or favorite, clothes. Ask: Why do you think the subjects chose these clothes to be painted in? What do you see that makes you say that? Have students make a list.

7. Compare the lists. Did students choose their outfits for similar reasons as the subjects of the portraits? Or are the lists different? Why or why not?

8. Teachers can take this opportunity to explain to students the labor and material investment necessary to make clothes in a pre-industrial society.

**Part II**

9. Explain to students that they will now design their own image or logo and embroider it onto a burlap square. The squares will later be stitched together to create a class tapestry.

10. Students should identify two or three traits from their favorite outfit that they want to replicate in their project. Next, students sketch out design ideas that recreate those traits.

11. After finalizing their designs, students can begin to embroider their design on their 10” X 10” piece of burlap.

12. Next, ask students to share their traits, design decisions, and process. This can be done as students complete their work.

13. Finally, students who finish early can begin to sew the burlap squares together until all the squares have been joined into one sampler.

14. Optional: students can review the finished sampler together and analyze what traits the class chose to display. Did students choose similar traits to recreate or was there variety? What do these choices show about what the students or modern society value?

**VIRTUAL TIP**

While the embroidery supplies might be difficult to distribute in a virtual environment, students can still sketch their designs and reflect on those ideas virtually.

**STANDARDS**

5 – U2.3.3  
5 – U2.3.4  
ART.VA.IV.5.2  
ART.VA.IV.5.3  
ART.VA.V.5.1  
ART.VA.IV.8.1  
ART.VA.IV.8.2  
8 – U4.2.1
# Claim, Support, Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What can we tell about the subject of the painting?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you see that makes you say that?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who do you think they were?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you see that makes you say that?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why do you think the subject had their portrait painted?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you see that makes you say that?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What do you think the subject wanted people to notice about their portrait?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you see that makes you say that?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FORM VS. FUNCTION | What makes these vessels fancy or not?

Closely look at the five drinking vessels. With your partner, put them in order of least to most expensive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record three observations about each drinking vessel.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Handblown glass cup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which vessel would have been the least expensive during the early American period? What do you see that makes you say that?

Which vessel would have been the most expensive during the early American period? What do you see that makes you say that?

What factors would make a vessel more expensive during this time? List as many factors as you can!