

THEME TWO: FARM FOLK, CITY FOLK

THEME IN LIFE

We all need to be part of a community.

THEME IN ART

Art can help organize and strengthen a community.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

When people learned how to plant and tend crops, how to raise animals for food, and how to use animals to help them work, they were able to stay in one place for the first time. They did not have to move from place to place following animals and looking for plants. Groups of people built communities near water for their plants and animals.

When we live together and have a dependable source of food, we have time to do many different jobs. We can figure out ways to live together through religion and government. We can specialize in making different things. We can trade things we make for things other people make in other communities. In almost all communities, some people become artists who make special things such as pictures, carvings, and weavings. Many of the things they make are both beautiful and useful, such as pots, clothing, and buildings.

In some ancient cities, people developed writing as a way to keep track of things and ideas. Even when no writing remains, we can “read” the stories of ancient communities by studying the buildings and special objects those people left behind. What will people of the future be able to discover about our community from the buildings and special objects we leave behind?

KEY INQUIRY QUESTIONS

Questions about Artworks:

MASS: What masses (three-dimensional forms) do I see in the artwork?

CONDITION: What did the artwork look like when it was new?

Question about Artworks in Context:

FUNCTIONAL CONTEXT: How was the artwork used?

KEY CULTURES

Ancient Egyptian
Ancient Indus Valley
Ancient Chinese



KAG AND THE RIVER PEOPLE

Kag was tired and hungry. All day, with dark rain clouds looming far up river, he'd been helping his father lay stones for the foundation of a new house down the river from where he and his family lived. They were following the plans of a master builder as they helped to construct a big house for a rich merchant. Most of the houses of the River People were small like Kag's, built with sun-dried bricks made from mud and straw. These houses had thick walls, tiny windows, and one or two rooms inside. Some families had a storehouse for seed, grain, and for dried and smoked food. Kag's family also had a small barn made of sticks to shelter their animals. Many small buildings were clustered along the road by the river or along the paths to the canals that carried water from the river to nearby fields.

Weary from a long, hard day, Kag was glad to be on his way home. As Kag approached the house, he saw his mother stirring a pot hanging over her cooking fire next to the storehouse. He could smell the rich aroma of simmering meat and vegetables. "When can we eat, Mother?" he asked.

His mother answered, "As soon as you've put away the team and washed your hands."

"Come on Po. Come on Gip," he urged gently as he tugged on the leads of the two great beasts as they lumbered into their stalls in the barn. He unfastened the harness, pulled it over their broad backs, and took it off over their horns. These patient beasts were tired too. They had pulled the sledge back and forth all day bringing stones for the foundation of the new house. A few more chores and Kag would be ready to eat; fill Po and Gip's troughs with grain, brush off their sweat, wipe the harness clean, shut the birds in their coops for the night, wash up; and then into the house for stew.

The stew was delicious. Kag's mother flavored the grains and root vegetables with spicy dried leaves and berries. She grew many different plants in her garden plot just above the high water mark of the river's annual flood. Through the years she had collected the seeds of many different plants and kept them in pots in the storehouse to be planted in the spring. Even though she had dependable food from her garden and from the fields of grain, Kag's mother still went searching for food far from home. She followed some of the old ways taught to her by her mother. Several times a year Kag's mother walked far from the river, over the plains to the high meadows in the mountain country. There she collected wild berries, roots, nuts, and herbs. Some she used for cooking and others for medicine.

Just as the family was finishing their stew, Kag's grandfather spoke. Grandfather was a respected elder, so everyone looked up and listened carefully to his slow, raspy words. "My children, the River People have lived along the great river for a very long time. We have tamed the wild beasts, learned to grow plants, and built the canals that carry water to our fields. But it was not always so. Long, long ago, when the world was young, the ancient ones had the wisdom and courage to travel from the mountain meadows to this fertile land by the great river. Let us remember them as we eat these

dried meadow berries.” After his words, Kag ate his berries and thought about what a scary adventure the ancient ones must have had as they trapped the wild animals and tried, for the first time, to control some of them with ropes and leather straps. He imagined the ancient ones rewarding Po and Gip’s ancestors with water and grain, and also with kind words and gentle pats on their sleek shoulders.

Kag had fallen asleep immediately, as soon as he lay down on his pallet near the wall. Sometime in the night Kag was awakened by his mother’s commanding voice, “Kag, get up!”

Kag jumped up and ran to the door. There was a crash of thunder and a flash of lightning. He could see his father harnessing the team to the sledge while his mother gathered up belongings.

“What’s wrong?” cried Kag. Then he saw it. The river was raging out of its banks far above the high water mark of the annual flood. The garden plots were gone, covered with swirling, brown water, which was already lapping at the walls of the neighbor’s storehouse.

“Quick, take this to your father,” directed Kag’s mother. Kag did and came back to help her pack and carry bundles out to the sledge. At last, he helped his grandfather climb on top of all the belongings. His father tugged on the team’s leads. They bent low into their harness and the overloaded sledge began its slow journey to high ground.

As the sledge moved slowly past the barn and pens, Kag saw that his father had opened all the doors and gates and the animals had already escaped to safety. Then he remembered the birds. “Father, the birds, did you let them out of their coops?” he cried.

“No, I didn’t think of them, Kag. But there is still time. Run in the barn and open the coops, then run and catch up with the sledge. Hurry, the river is getting closer.”

Kag did as he was told. He woke the sleeping birds and shoed them out of their coops. As he ran past the storehouse, now at the very edge of the angry river, he remembered the garden seeds, hidden in their tiny sealed pots high above the grain bags. Should he go get them? The River People had saved seeds from their best garden plants year after year to begin their new gardens each spring. And now the gardens were gone. He looked at the rising river and ran into the storehouse. Climbing atop the stacks of grain, he grabbed the seed pots and threw them into an empty grain bag. As he began to climb down he saw the water rushing across the floor. It was too late. He couldn’t get out the door. What could he do?

Just under the roof was an air hole. Was it big enough? Could he squeeze through it? Kag scrambled up and up till he reached the hole. As he stuck his head out he saw his mother leading the team and sledge up the slope, away from the river. But where was his father? Kag called out desperately, “Help! Help!” hoping someone would hear him and help him out of his trap.



Then Kag saw his father running toward him with two neighbors, each carrying a coil of rope. The water slapped against the side of the house, while the neighbors tied ropes together. Kag held the precious seed pots out of the hole and then squeezed his shoulders through. Water now reached as high as the windows on the house where his father called out to him.

“Grab the rope and tie it around your waist, then jump. We’ll pull you out of the water!” After several tries Kag caught the rope, tied it securely, looked toward his father and jumped into the angry, brown water.

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As the sun came up over the plains, hundreds of River People huddled by fires on the highlands overlooking the river. Kag, now safe and warm, checked the seed pots to see if they were still sealed and the seeds still dry. Most of them were. In the spring, his mother would plant a new garden on the high ground and they would have food to eat next year. They would have food to share with the friends and neighbors who would help his family build a new home.

Looking down from above, Kag could see that the water was already receding. Many of the old buildings closest to the river were gone now, but the stone foundations of the merchant’s new house still stood. The elders were gathered around a big fire making plans for a new city—a city of stone and wood, a planned city, with wide streets, storehouses for river traders, and a special place where the River People could gather. In this special place, they would listen as the elders told of the adventures of the ancient ones and of the great flood. Kag knew one day, long after this terrible night, there would be a new beginning for his family and for his friends and neighbors—a new beginning in a new city on higher ground along the river.



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 *Kag and the River People*.

DISCUSSION OF THEME AND KEY QUESTIONS



Discussion of the Story's Theme:

Discuss how the story relates to the theme.

- ☉ Where do Kag and his family live? Why do they live near the river?
- ☉ Where do the River People get their food?
- ☉ How do animals help the River People?
- ☉ Where does Kag's family store its precious seeds for the next year?
- ☉ How is the merchant's house different from Kag's house?
- ☉ How do you think the new city will look different from the old city?

Students' Experience with the Theme:

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

- ☉ What community (city, town, or village) do you live in or near?
- ☉ Where does your community get its water?
- ☉ What crops and garden plants do people in your area grow?
- ☉ Do farmers or ranchers in your area raise animals for meat, milk, eggs, wool, or feathers?
- ☉ Do you know anyone who has an animal helper/worker?

Inquiry into the Story:

Use the key questions to further analyze the story.

- ☉ What masses (three-dimensional forms such as cubes, cylinders, pyramids, and complex forms made from combinations of simpler forms) do you imagine you would see in Kag's home and barn? In the merchant's new house?
- ☉ Describe the masses of the seed pots, as you imagine them.
- ☉ Describe how you think the merchant's house and Kag's might have looked after the flood. What do you think the River People might do to protect the new buildings they plan for their new city?
- ☉ What uses did Kag's house and barn serve?
- ☉ List some of the functions that different buildings might serve in Kag's community.
- ☉ How do you suppose the pots were designed to function to hold seeds (for example, not to spill, or to protect the seeds from mice)?

Inquiry into Students' Experience:

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

- ☉ What masses make up the school building? What masses can you identify in the art room?
- ☉ How would you compare the mass of a simple art tool (eraser, jar, or pencil) with more complex art tools (paper cutter, hammer, or stapler)?
- ☉ How do you think your classroom or school might have looked different when it was new?
- ☉ What are some of the natural and human causes of damage in your classroom or school?
- ☉ What do you and others in the school do to keep it looking its best?
- ☉ Look carefully at a family treasure or heirloom which is not in perfect condition. How do you think the object looked different when it was new?
- ☉ What might have happened to the object through the years? Does it look as if it's been repaired?
- ☉ Do you, your family, or community have an artwork or other special object that may be damaged, but that you still care about? What can you do to protect a special object from future damage?
- ☉ List as many functions of your school building as you can. What do people do in your school?
- ☉ Name buildings in your community that were made to serve particular functions.
- ☉ List as many things as you can that were designed to store things.

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 three-dimensional artworks, such as buildings, monuments, or containers, made in Ancient Egypt. Ask them to display the reproductions, then describe the mass and the condition of the artworks to their classmates. Assign other teams to similarly investigate three-dimensional artworks made in the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley and China. You might extend students' investigations to include information about restoration, conservation, and archaeological methods.

Inquiry about Artworks in Context:

- ☉ Assign a team of students to research ancient Egyptian culture. Ask them to focus specifically on agriculture (plants and animals), cities, religion,

government, trade, and writing. Ask them to share their findings and, when possible, explain how the art of ancient Egypt served particular functions within that culture. Assign other teams to similarly investigate the culture and functions of artworks in the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley and China.

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, ask individual students to construct three-dimensional models of buildings (using both simple and complex masses) designed to serve particular functions. Groups can then work together to plan a larger community using the models. Or students can make simple or more complex containers designed to store particular objects.

Story Illustration:

- Since *Kag and the River People* is not illustrated, you might consider asking students to use their imaginations to make their own illustrations, focusing on buildings, fields and gardens, beasts of burden, or seed pots.

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 *Kag and the River People*.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRANSFER



Science:

- Physical condition of artworks, causes of damage, and protective measures

Mathematics:

- Simple and complex geometric solids

History:

- Ancient civilizations and archaeology

Geography:

- Domesticated plants and animals, food staples across the globe; beasts of burden across the globe