

The Value of Craft

These standards are examples that demonstrate authentic connections for deepening student learning and understanding. Please note that the lessons can be adapted to cross grade levels and subject areas. ([Note to Educators](#))

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

Learning and Innovation Skills: Creativity and Innovation

- Framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions

Alabama Courses of Study

Visual Arts Standard-Grades 6-8

7.) Describe historical and cultural influences on works of art.

Social Studies Standard-Grade 6

14.1) Describing the impact of technological and social changes on the society of the United States from 1970 to the present

Learning Activity-Elementary and Secondary

Students will view portions of the documentary, *Alabama Craft: Tradition and Innovation*, dedicated to the work of potters Jerry Brown and Charles Smith (for links to these artists, see the Digital Media Resources section below.) Students will compare and contrast the two craft artists, paying particular attention to what they produce (pots, vases, plates, cups, etc.) and how they create and design their pieces (to view their work samples click on Work Samples below.) Working in small groups in this manner will allow students to deepen their understanding and respect for the cultural heritage of each artisan. Each group will report their findings to the class, explaining the role that cultural heritage has played in each man's work.

Learning Activity-Debate

One third of the class will prepare to argue the virtues of craftsman-produced wares, while another third will argue for mass-produced. Students on both teams will have to determine the merits and problems inherent within both forms of production in order to offer the best arguments possible.

The final third of the class will serve as judges for the debate. Judges will need to determine the questions to be asked and the evaluation criteria for each response. A tie-breaker question needs to be determined in advance. The teacher will serve as facilitator and moderator for the debate. Judges will explain their selection of the winning team, and students will reflect collectively on the debate as a strategy for deepening their understanding of the craftsmen, their art form, and the issue of mass-production vs. craftsman-produced.

Digital Media Resources

Jerry Brown

- [Interview](#)
- [Demonstration](#)
- [Work Samples](#) (Slides 23-30)

Charles Smith

- [Interview](#)
- [Demonstration](#)
- [Work Samples](#) (Slides 12-18)

Additional Resources

- Unbroken Tradition* (documentary on Jerry Brown); www.folkstreams.net
- Carry On* (PDF available online); www.traditionalculture.org
- Alabama Folk Pottery* by Joey Brackner (ISBN 9780817315092)
- Tradition Innovation www.traditioninnovation.org (see "For Educators" section)
- Southern Artistry www.southernartistry.org
- [Definitions](#) (PDF)
- [Supplemental Activities and Lesson Ideas](#) (PDF)
- [Teacher Resources](#) (PDF)