

MONA

Museum of Northwest Art

Age: First Grade

Lesson Duration: 1 hour

Subject: Art

Family Scratch Art Portraits Inspired by Barbara Earl Thomas

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY MONA EDUCATORS



Student example

Source: Museum of Northwest Art

Description

In this lesson, students will be introduced to Pacific Northwest artist Barbara Earl Thomas and draw a family portrait on scratch art paper. This lesson will emphasize different types of lines, shapes and how to use them to outline the figures in their composition.

Materials

- Scrap paper
- Pencils
- Scratch art paper
- Scratching sticks
- Optional extension supplies: colored oil pastels, black oil pastels, & thick paper
- Optional book: *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman ([read-aloud video here](#))

Vocabulary

- ✓ Angle
- ✓ Straight line
- ✓ Curved line
- ✓ Pastel
- ✓ Shapes

Instructions

- 1) Introduce Barbara Earl Thomas and her work using the included biography and this [short video](#) of the artist in her studio. It may be helpful to practice VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to facilitate an observation and inquiry based discussion of the artworks. Full size images and a VTS appendix (with tips & resources) are included at the end of this lesson.
- 2) As students look at images of the artwork, ask them to observe the types of lines and shapes they see. To get learners up and moving, have them practice making various lines and shapes with their bodies!
- 3) This is a good time to mention that there are all kinds of families and make sure students feel supported in sharing about their own family. You may want to read *The Great Big Book of Families* by Mary Hoffman.
- 4) Transition to the art making activity with a demonstration on how to use the stick to draw a design in the scratch art paper.
- 5) With scrap paper and pencil, ask learners to first sketch out a draft of their family portrait.
- 6) Once they have settled on their idea, give students the scratch art paper and scratching tools to create their final composition.

Optional Extension: Have students make their own scratch art paper. Have them cover the thick paper in colorful oil pastels, then cover the colorful layer in black oil pastel. They can then use their scratching tool to make a design on the paper they made. This extension can be messy, so be prepared!

Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- **VA:Cr2.1.1** (Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design)
- **VA:Cr2.2.1** (Demonstrate safe and proper procedures for using materials, tools, and equipment while making art)

About the Artist

Barbara Earl Thomas is an award-winning artist and writer living and working in Seattle, Washington. Thomas uses a range of mediums: glass, paper cutting, print, etching, large-scale installation, etc.

Whatever the method, Thomas is known for her ability to integrate storytelling into her artworks.

In this lesson, we will look at Thomas' works on cut paper. The artist carefully cuts layers of paper to reveal images and tell stories. For her most recent works, the artist created colorful paper backgrounds. First, Thomas marked out the shapes and silhouettes for each artwork on black paper. Then, she placed the black paper over the color gradient background- and cut away more black paper to create her final image. This effect may look very similar to scratch art paper! To learn more about the artist visit her [website](#), watch [this video](#) or read [this article](#)!



Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Seattle Times



Holding Fire by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Clare Oliver Gallery

True North (detail) by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Clare Oliver Gallery



Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

What's going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that...?
What more can you find?

Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to VTS in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: <https://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators>



Holding Fire by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Claire Oliver Gallery



Boy with Book by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Claire Oliver Gallery



True North by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Claire Oliver Gallery



True North (detail) by Barbara Earl Thomas
Image credit: Claire Oliver Gallery