

Amplifying Culture Through Art



Enduring Understandings

- The act of making, displaying, and/or performing art can make survivors and descendants of a traumatic event more resilient.
- Art can build resilience by celebrating the culture, identity, and survival of the survivors and/or descendants of a traumatic event.

Activity Overview

In this activity, students will explore what it means to be resilient and evaluate how art can build resilience in survivors and descendants of traumatic events. This activity invites students to think about the meaning of resilience by reflecting on personal examples and defining its significance as a trait.

After developing a clear understanding of resilience, students will begin to examine the relationship between art and resilience by analyzing the story of Arpi Krikorian, an Armenian-American artist who creates illustrations that celebrate the joy, color, and beauty of Armenian culture.

Next, students will apply their understanding of the relationship between art and resilience as they engage with testimonies from Armenian Genocide survivors and descendants. These testimonies encourage students to think more critically about the impacts that making, performing, and displaying art can have on survivors of traumatic events and others who encounter their art.

Educator Note: *Students should watch Arpi Krikorian's video before this activity begins. Students should also be introduced to the term "resilience" and have a working understanding of its meaning prior to this activity.*

Target Audience

Grades 3–5

Activity Duration

Two 45–60 minute sessions

Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be resilient?
- Why is resilience an important trait, especially for survivors or descendants of a traumatic event?
- What role do the arts play in helping build resilience?

Materials

- Handout: See-Wonder-Connect
- Handout: Testimony as a Primary Source (2 per student)
- Handout: Artistic Expression Brainstorming

Procedure

Ask

- Begin class by explaining to students that today they will be thinking about the connection between art and resilience. Review the concept of “resilience” with the class. Remind students that resilience means the ability to recover quickly after going through challenges. Display the term and definition so it is visible to all students.
- Present the class with the question, “What might resilience look like?” and allow students to share their responses aloud. Use chart paper or a whiteboard to capture key words or ideas as students share. Students may list examples, come up with adjectives, make connections, or think of images they associate with the concept of resilience.
- Invite students to think about the concept of resilience by holding a class discussion. To help explore the theme and definition above, ask students to consider the following questions during this discussion:
 - How are our understandings of resilience similar and how are they different?
 - Why is resilience an important trait?
 - How might people become more resilient?
- As the discussion concludes, emphasize to students that one reason resilience is important is because it can help people recover after a traumatic event and one way people can build resilience is by creating works of art.

Analyze

- Next, students will analyze the relationship between art and resilience by examining the story of Arpi Krikorian.

Educator Note: *it is recommended that students be provided with historical background regarding the Armenian Genocide prior to this segment of the activity.*

- Distribute a copy of the **See-Wonder-Connect Handout** to each student.
- Watch the Arpi Krikorian video as a class. Encourage students to listen actively, paying particular attention to how Arpi shows resilience through her art.

- As the video plays, direct students to record observations from the video that are meaningful to them in the “See” column of their handout.
- After watching the video once, play it again for the class. Prompt students to think about questions they have and connections they can make about Arpi’s story. Direct students to record these in the “Wonder” and “Connect” columns of their handout. Divide students into small groups of 4–6 and invite them to discuss their selections, explaining the observations, questions, and connections they noted on their handout. The discussions should be structured in rounds, with one student sharing their reflections in the “See” column inviting others to comment and discuss.
- Groups will continue this process until they have discussed each member’s “See,” “Wonder,” and “Connect” columns.
- Invite students to reflect on their conversation within their groups by identifying the message behind Arpi Krikorian’s art and its importance given her heritage and the history of the Armenian people.

Educator Note: *if younger students require additional support, this exercise may also be done as a whole class in the form of a teacher-led discussion. As students reflect, encourage them to consider how Arpi emphasizes the importance of creating Armenian art that makes people smile, and how this speaks to the power of art to build resilience by celebrating culture and showcasing joy in the wake of traumatic events.*

- Direct students to complete the **See-Connect-Wonder Handout** by reflecting on their understanding of the relationship between art and resilience. Students may fill in the organizer at the bottom of the page using words or pictures to express this connection.

Apply

- Next, students will apply their understanding of the connection between art and resilience as they analyze testimonies from survivors and descendants of the Armenian Genocide.
- Distribute two copies of the modified **Testimony as a Primary Source Analysis Handout** to each student.
 - The **Testimony as a Primary Source Analysis Handout** is modified to help students consider the importance of art as a tool for building resilience in survivors and descendants of traumatic events.
- When viewing testimony, help strengthen the experience by:
 - sharing important biographical information for both speakers using information located at the end of the lesson. You can also share the map included with the biographies to help ground students understanding of location and build context.
 - pausing clips to allow time for students to reflect, record thoughts, questions, and ideas.
 - encouraging students to find connections to their own lives, personal experiences, or events taking place today.

- Testimonies for Analysis:
 - [Jirayr Zorthian](#) (2:19)—Jirayr describes memories of Armenian culture, including gatherings with singing and dancing, before the Armenian genocide.
 - [Alyce Vanley](#) (2:43)—Alyce and her daughter, Pat, discuss how their Armenian identity and culture are reflected in their art.
- After completing testimony analysis, allow students to discuss their reflections from the **Testimony as a Primary Source Analysis Handout** and share key ideas that stuck with them from the testimonies. The following questions may be used to prompt students to think more deeply about the connection between art and resilience:
 - How can songs, dances, and paintings help people feel better after a difficult experience?
 - Why is it important for people to celebrate their culture?
 - What connections can we make between these testimonies and Arpi Krikorian’s story?
 - What can these stories tell us about art and resilience?

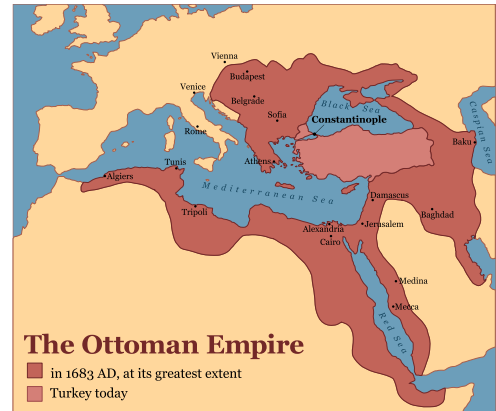
Act

- Finally, students will take action by creating an artistic expression that communicates how art is meaningful to them based on their own experiences.
- Using the **Artistic Expression Brainstorming Handout**, students will identify a form of artistic expression they would like to make and reflect on the importance of art to them as individuals.
- As they complete the handout, circulate around the room to support student thinking. Encourage students to think about the stories of Arpi Krikorian, Jirayr Zorthian, and Alyce Vanley as they consider what art means to them.
- After brainstorming, allow students to use the remainder of the session to create their pieces of art.
- Consider forming a display of finished student work to showcase their takeaways about the relationship between art and resilience with others in the school.

Connection to Student's Lives	Connection to Contemporary Events	Connection to the Future
Students will deepen their knowledge of resilience and its relationship to art and build an understanding of the importance of art as a healing tool for those who have experienced traumatic events.	Students will analyze a contemporary example of how art has helped descendants of traumatic events build resilience by engaging with the story of Arpi Krikorian.	Students can use their understanding of art as a way to foster resilience in survivors and descendants of traumatic events to inform future advocacy efforts to build resilience in themselves and their community.

Survivor & Witness Biographies

Jiryar Zorthian was born on April 14th, 1911 in [Kütahya](#), a small city in the Ottoman Empire that is now part of Turkey. Jiryar remembers spending time as a young boy going to hantes (Armenian celebrations) with his parents and his two younger brothers. During the years of the Armenian Genocide, Jiryar and his family had to hide and escape from the Turks to survive the massacres of Armenians. In 1923, Jiryar and his family moved to the United States, where Jiryar became an artist. Jiryar was interviewed and shared the story of his experience in 1991.



Alyce Vanley was an American-Armenian artist born on June 10, 1921 in California, USA. Alyce’s mother, Arous Sarkisian, was a survivor of the Armenian Genocide. Alyce recalls her mother telling her stories about her experiences before she moved to the United States. These stories influenced Alyce’s art, which reflects the culture and history of Armenia. Alyce was interviewed and shared her story in 1975.

National Standards and Frameworks

College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.Civ.6.3-5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.
- D2.Civ.10.K-2. Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
- D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.
- D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.
- D2.His.6.3-5. Describe how people's perspectives shaped the historical sources they created.
- D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.
- D3.1.3-5. Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, structure, and context to guide the selection.
- D3.4.3-5. Use evidence to develop claims in response to compelling questions.
- D4.3.K-2. Present a summary of an argument using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- D4.7.K-2. Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.7: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3: Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.4: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.5: Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

See-Wonder-Connect



STUDENT HANDOUT

Student/Group Name(s): _____

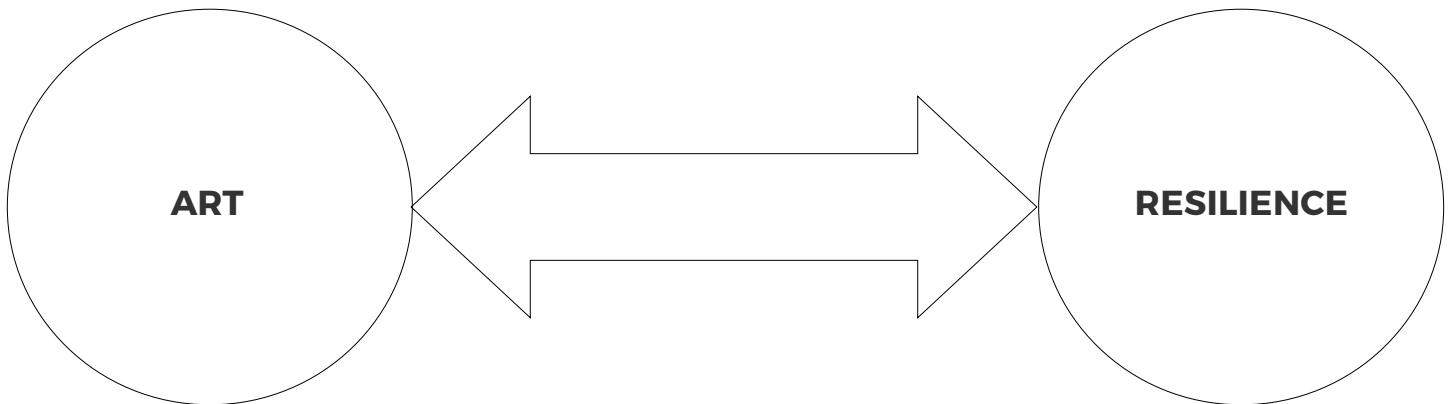
Name of Interviewee: _____

Experience Group: _____

Directions: Watch the video of Arpi Krikorian's story. Then complete the chart below, filling in what you see, what you wonder, and what connections you can make about her story.

SEE What do you see, observe or notice?	WONDER What do you wonder?	CONNECT What does this story remind you of? What connections can you make?

After thinking about the big ideas from Arpi Krikorian's story, how do you think art and resilience are connected? Fill in the arrow with your thoughts below.



Modified Testimony as Primary Source Analysis Chart



STUDENT HANDOUT

Interviewee Name: _____

Directions: As you watch the clip of testimony, write facts that are presented in the left column. Use the right column to note emotions the person demonstrates.

Facts: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How List the topic, dates, event details, location (city, region, country), and names/groups.	Emotions: What emotions did you notice? Notice facial and body expressions, tone of voice, pauses, and word choice.
Reflection Prompts (After viewing the testimony clip)	
How is art (painting, singing, dancing, etc.) part of this person's story?	
How is resilience part of this person's story?	

Artistic Expression Brainstorming



You will now create a piece of art that shows how art is meaningful to you in your life. Use the following list to select which form of art you would like to create or choose your own.

Forms of Artistic Expression		
Literature <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Poem■ Short story■ Lyrics	Visual Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Drawing■ Painting	Graphic Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Poster■ Digital illustration■ Comic strip
Decorative Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Mosaic■ Collage	Performing Arts <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Dance■ Skit/play■ Song	Multimedia <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Podcast■ Video

Use the questions below to guide you as you think about the piece of art you will create.

How is art meaningful to you?
Brainstorm how you might show your answer to this question with art.