

STEAM LESSON PLAN

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Grade Level Middle school (adaptable for lower and higher grades)

THEME Still Life

INSPIRED BY Jacob Fopsen van Es, *Still Life*, 1630

PROJECT TITLE: ON YOUR TABLE

DRIVING QUESTION

What does a still-life painting tell us about the trade culture of a specific time period?

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES: Put these on the board or have students write them in a notebook/journal.

- *I will create a still-life artwork.*
- *I will respond to the deeper meaning of a still-life painting.*
- *I will present research on trade to my classmates.*
- *I will connect to the fine arts to deliver research discoveries.*



Jacob Fopsen van Es (Flemish, c. 1596–1666), *Still Life*, 1630, oil on wood panel, 29 3/4 x 42 in., Museum purchase with funds from the Art Acquisition Endowment Fund and Major Art Purchase Fund in memory of Edith Larsen Jonas, 1974.56

CONTENT STANDARDS

[NEBRASKA CONTENT AREA STANDARDS](#)

[IOWA CORE STANDARDS](#)

THE FOUR C'S FOR STEAM CAREER READINESS SKILLS

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will consider the deeper meanings of Dutch still-life paintings.
- **Creativity:** Students will be challenged to present their research using the fine arts.
- **Collaboration:** Students will work together to create a table setting to depict on paper.
- **Communication:** Students will teach each other about the idea of trade.

VOCABULARY: commerce, economy, fine arts, luxury, reformation, still life, symbolism, trade, value, vanitas

RESOURCES: [Es Teaching Poster](#); [Es Pinterest board](#); [Nelson Teacher Resource Center](#)

- Video – ["Dutch Still Life and Global Trade in the 17th Century," PCC Videos, YouTube](#)
- Video – ["'Old master' style still life painting time lapse demo," josvanr, YouTube](#)
- Video – ["Art from the Dutch Golden Age," Art Gallery of NSW, YouTube](#)
 - Preview all videos before sharing with students.
- Lesson Plan – [Trade in the 1600s, National Geographic Society](#)
- Website – [Jacob Fopsen van Es Artworks, The Athenaeum](#)
- App – [Brushes, App Store](#)

SUGGESTED MATERIALS: drawing or mixed media supplies, tablets, and velvet tablecloth

PROCEDURE

Overview: Students are going to examine what is on “their own table” and compare it with what was on a Dutch person’s table in the seventeenth century then discover how the items got there due to the importance of trade.

Engage: What’s on your table? Have students share what they have on their table at home or at school. Have them be as specific as. Then show students Jacob Fopsen van Es’ *Still Life* (1630). Discuss the items on his table and note if any overlap with what students have on their tables.

Ask students...

- What does it seem like just happened with the scene?
- Could this painting have a special meaning? Why or why not?
- Why do you think van Es included each item?
- Which items stand out on the table? Why?
- Do any items seem out of place? Which one(s) and why?
- Would you like to be a guest at this table? Why or why not?
- Imagine your ideal table – what is on your “happy table?” How did it end up on your table?

Deliverables: Tell students they will...

- Create a still-life artwork.
- Discover the secrets of citrus fruits and give presentation using one or more of the fine arts.
- Explore the idea of trade and teach each other about it.

Art Talk: Introduce students to van Es and share his role in seventeenth-century still-life paintings in the Netherlands. Discuss the purpose of a still life—specifically “breakfast pieces” in which van Es excelled and the symbolism of the items in *Still Life* (1630). See the Es teaching poster for aid in this exploration.

Description of Activity:

- Start with a celebration. Have students think a holiday they celebrate and describe the food that was likely on the table. Think about possible ways the items could symbolize something in their family, culture, or the holiday.
- Have students start to list this items—perhaps they sketch them and write their meaning down.
- Take those items and compose a still-life set-up on a table in a drawing or mixed media project (using images from magazines or the Internet). It will be a challenge unless you have students bring in the items to set-up so images from which to draw will be helpful.
 - Note how van Es positioned his items—each having their own space with little overlap. You could have students practice contour drawings (or blind contour drawings).
 - Also share how his works were meant to appear as though someone just left the table, mid-meal, and encourage students to do that with their composition.
 - Take time to share the still lifes with each other and describe the celebration in which this tablescape represents.

- Optional: Have students bring one item from home. Put a table in the middle of the room and have students put their items on it. Then they can create their still-life artwork—each student will have a slightly different perspective of the table.
- Show students more of van Es' works and focus on the fruit he depicted. Explain that he and other still life artists rendered the fruit cut open or peeled as a way to demonstrate their technical skills.
 - Have students think about when these works were created. Why would citrus fruit be considered a luxury item?
 - Together, research how fruit was kept fresh and transported to the Netherlands. Find out what diseases came with poor food preparation or preservation during the travel.
 - What are the parts of citrus fruits? Have students diagram an orange or lemon. Bring some fruits to class and have students study them. Using the app Brushes, students can render the fruit from the *Still Life* (1630) or the real examples you brought.
 - Discuss idea of commerce—focusing on the economics and trade routes associated with this product.
 - Have students work in pairs or small groups to share the research they discover and encourage the to use one (or more) area of fine arts (fine, media, dance, theater, or music) to present their findings.
 - Optional: With older students, introduce the concept of *vanitas*, or the transience of earthly goods. Compare and contrast van Es' *Still Life* (1630) with [Kent Bellows' Self-Portrait with Wine Glass \(Gluttony\) \(2000\)](#). Both images are rich in detail that will evoke meaningful conversations.
- Take any of the other luxury items and trace their route to the table or their preparation for the feast in van Es' painting.

Ask students...

 - What do you value?
 - What do you consider to be a luxury item?
 - What food is a luxury to you? Why?
 - Would you consider any items on van Es' table a luxury? Why or why not? Share which item.
 - Optional: Consider investigating curing meats and what that amount of sodium does to a person's health. Was it too much?
- For older students: Delve more into the idea of trade. Compare what it was like 300 years ago and how it evolved into what it is today.

Ask students to investigate...

 - Why is trade necessary for a successful economy?
 - How did technology affect trade?
 - How have trade routes changed?
 - What was the best innovation in the trade industry?
 - What items are traded today?
 - How does trade with foreign countries affect American farmers who produce the same crops?
 - How is van Es' painting a vehicle for discussions of trade?

- Could this painting be considered media? Why or why not?
- Have students, working in pairs or small groups, tackle one of those questions (or others they may have about trade).
 - Take the opportunity to have students share their results with by having students rotate through stations in the classroom.
- For younger students: Have students work in pairs or small groups. Assign them a country and discover select one of the items that country exports. Create representations of those items (enough to trade with their classmates).
 - Turn the classroom's floor into a giant map with a path or "trade routes" to follow and have students go from country to country.
 - Discuss the modes of transportation needed to trade their items with another country.
 - Optional: Have students select in which century this activity will take place, from the seventeenth to twenty-first.

Closing: Have students go back to their table at home or school, and look at the things that may be on it. From where did they originate? Was trade involved?

Assessment: 3-2-1. Ask students to share three things they learned, two things they want to investigate further, and one question they have.

STEAM LESSON PLAN Joslyn Art Museum uses the Nebraska Department of Education's STEM Approach as a guide, but we took the liberty of adding the "**A**" to emphasize the **ARTS**.

NDE's STEM Approach reflects an integrated and interdisciplinary philosophy to teaching and learning that emphasizes collaborative school-based, work-based, family-based, and community-based experiences as a context for helping students to master key competencies within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Teaching and learning resources, experiences, and example activities included within NDE's STEM Approach serve as a standards-based framework for supporting the engagement of students in hands-on, authentic, and contextual learning experiences that provide students with the opportunity to learn STEM content while promoting essential career readiness skills, including communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

NDE's STEM Approach strives for compatibility with all content-areas, all grade levels, and all career clusters, not just those traditionally defined as STEM.