Pennsylvania Art: From Colony to Nation/ PreK Lesson Plan
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Shawmont Bright Futures, B6

Title: Samplers and Silk

Objectives: To reinforce the children’s knowledge of the initial letters in their and their classmates’ names by looking for them in colonial art and in their own work. To introduce the children to colonial and modern sampler making and basic cross stitching. To encourage the children to extend their knowledge of silk and its production to working with silk thread and appreciating its use in colonial craftwork.

Materials Needed:
--Collection of modern samplers (including from my family and families of the children) along with reproductions of colonial samplers
--poster of “Embroidered Picture,” c. 1800 by Sarah Montgomery Thompson from Pennsylvania Art PMA set, with Elizabeth Hudson’s 1737 sampler reproduced on the back
--poster of “Embroidered Picture,” c. 1750-1760, by Anonymous from Five Women Artists PMA set, with three samplers of the time reproduced on the back
--individual plastic scrim shapes for 20 children; blunt-edged plastic needles; yarn; silk embroidery thread; silk thread from our cocoons; blunt scissors
--graph paper; plain drawing paper; magnifying glasses

Procedure:
1. Display two teaching posters of embroidered pictures next to each other. Explain to the children that these are posters of two very special pieces of art work done long ago by young artists, one of whom (Sarah Montgomery Thompson) lived in Philadelphia. Ask them to describe the pictures one at a time, seeing if they can tell how they are made as well as describing their subject matter.

2. Ask focused questions as necessary:
   How did the artist make this picture?
   What materials did the artists use?
   What kind of artists do you think made these pictures?
   Have you ever seen pictures like this?
   What is the same/different between these two pictures?

3. Introduce the terms “sampler” and “embroidery.” Explain how young girls in colonial America used to go to special schools for girls only where they were taught things like sewing and embroidery. Introduce examples of other samplers, including “Marking Samplers” which focused on alphabets
and family names as a family's initials would be sewn on their sheets and
towels to "mark" to whom they belonged. Show how some of the letters
were written very straight and simple, while others were done in more
fancy, curvy ways (like cursive). See if the children can find their own
initials on one or more of the samplers.

4. Introduce silk thread used in colonial needlework, as well as now, and
remind children of where silk comes from and the connection to the
silkworms they raise in the classroom. Discuss how silk thread from
unhatched cocoons created by silkworm caterpillars was a luxury item in
colonial times. Much silk thread was imported from Asia, and the
American colonies tried to grow their own silkworms to create their own
thread which they wanted to weave themselves into fancy cloth. Let
children feel the silk embroidery thread and compare it to the threads
which they unwound from their cocoon.

5. Project Time: Ask the children to use regular paper, then graph paper to
sketch out the first letter of their names. These will be sewn the next day
after I transfer their designs onto the plastic scrim. They can make their
letters plain or fancy, as long as it is clear what letter they are. Also, give
children a chance to look more closely (with magnifiers) at the sampler
examples and embroidered pictures in the classroom.

6. Day 2,3: Give each child a choice of yarns or embroidery threads in
different colors. Using the scirms personalized from their drawings of their
initial letters, demonstrate how to sew one small x at a time, and what to
do if the needle ends up in the wrong place. If they finish their letter and
are eager to do more, encourage them to make a border around the edge
of the scrim.

The teacher and children can lay out the completed letters in a rectangular
shape and an adult can use yarn to stitch the scirms together like a quilt to
hang in the classroom.

Bibliography/ Literature Connections:
Bourne, Miriam Anne and Gloria Kamen.  *The Children of Mount Vernon: A
Egger-Bovet, Howard and Marlene Smith-Baranzini. *US Kids History: Book of
C. Winston Co., 1948.
Labor for learning
Before you grow old
For it is better than
Silver or gold.
When silver is gone and
Money is spent
Then learning is most
Excellent.

An American woman sewed this poem on a sampler in 1736.
Title: Symmetry and “Treasure” Chests

Objectives: To help the children attend to symmetry in the decorative arts and in their own work. To help the children to look at pieces of furniture as works of art. To encourage the children to make decisions about their own use of symmetry in their artwork.

Materials Needed/Bibliography:
----poster of “Chest over Drawers,” 1803 Pennsylvania German, made in Berks County, Pennsylvania, from Pennsylvania Art PMA set
--pattern blocks, plastic mirrors
--templates of rectangles with borders, and two arched shapes with borders, empty inside, like the mirror shapes on the top and front of the chest
--20 flat bakery boxes, jelly roll shape, 10-12 inch base
--stickers of geometric shapes, flowers, trees
--assorted pencils and markers, child-friendly scissors, glue sticks

Procedure:
1. Day 1: Ask children to close their eyes and think of their bedrooms. Have them picture their beds, their closets and any other furniture that is in or near their room. Ask them to open their eyes and ask the group to share where they store their shirts and socks. Where do they keep their dress-up clothes? Where do they keep extra towels and blankets? What would they do with their clothes and towels, etc., if they didn’t have closets? Tell children that long ago in Philadelphia, people did not have closets in their bedrooms. Instead most of their things were kept in dressers with drawers, or in chests or large trunks or hung from hooks on the wall. Where would colonial Philadelphians get pieces of furniture from? There were no furniture stores. See if the children can deduce that the colonists made furniture themselves out of wood or that they would go to a carpenter or cabinetmaker.

2. Introduce the image of cabinetmakers at work in 1760 from the Copeland book. Show some of the tools and the example of the oak water bench with drawers and cabinets.

3. Take out the poster of the chest over drawers, and explain to the children that today we are going to look closely at a very beautiful piece of furniture made in Pennsylvania 200 years ago. Ask them to look closely and answer:
--What can you tell me about this piece of furniture?
--What does it look like it is made of?
--What might it have been used for? (Show close-up of the inside of the chest on the reverse side of the poster.)
--How is it decorated? (Encourage them to describe the colors, patterns, images, animals and shapes that are painted onto the chest.)
--What do you notice about the designs on the top of the chest? (Show close-up from reverse side of poster.)
--What do you see the same about the two top designs and what is different?
--Are there any other places on the chest where you see both sides matching in symmetry like the wings of a butterfly or the picture in a mirror?

4. Introduce pattern blocks to the group (not for the first time usage) as a tool to also make designs that are symmetrical. Demonstrate on a whiteboard tray with a line drawn down the middle. If I make this shape on one side of the line, who can make it symmetrical on the other side of the line? (Begin with very simple 3-5 block shapes and remind children of the symmetry they learned about with the butterflies they raised.)

5. Project time: Give children patterns from the Pasternack book to try to complete across a central line of symmetry using pattern blocks and small plastic mirrors. Give them the opportunity to practice symmetrical designs and to challenge their friends to create mirror symmetry from their patterns.

6. Day 2: Bring out the poster of the chest again for the group to see. Ask if anyone has special painted furniture in their own home, and if so to tell the class about it. Show photos of my own wooden (stained, but unpainted) chest, both open and closed. What do they keep in their special furniture? Discuss how the Pennsylvania German artist who made this chest not only wanted it to be useful, but also beautiful. Why might that be?

7. Show a “built” bakery box to the children, with the white side in and the tan unfinished side out to simulate the wood. What is this box missing? How could we decorate it so it would look as special as the chest in the poster? Explain that for today’s project children will get a chance to design two symmetrical shapes to put on the top of their own box, and, if they want, two (not three, like the real one) to put on the front of their box.

8. Giving children the rectangular templates first, ask them to draw in a border on each frame so that they match, then to think of a beautiful shape or design to put in the middle of each rectangle. If it would help, children can use stickers of flowers, trees or shapes to help create a design. The alternative is to draw a design of their own with pencil first, then adding color. With a teacher’s help, the mirror side should also be
drawn (or traced by an adult from the first side). If the children would like, they may also do this for the arched frames.

9. The teacher needs to take these colored designs, make sure the symmetrical side is reproduced closely, then use a color Xerox to shrink the designs to a size that will allow them to be cut out and glued on to the face of the bakery box.

10. Day 3: The children will construct their boxes, cut out their symmetrical designs and glue them on the top and/or front. They will sign their names to the bottom of the box, as the artist, and will be given an opportunity to imagine and discuss with each other appropriate treasure to keep in their special decorated treasure boxes.