



Curriculum Guide & Activity

Chris
Ofili

ICA
MIAMI



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INTRODUCTION

In this course, educators will discuss how artist Chris Ofili's work borrows inspiration from the island of Trinidad's lush landscapes and local traditions to inform vibrant colors, symbols, and interpretation in his work.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By viewing the artist's work, students will explore how landscape and mythology reflect part of artist Chris Ofili's identity and history. Additionally, students will discuss the relationship between people and the natural world around them.



All images courtesy the artist.

FOR TEACHERS - FLORIDA STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

ELA.9.C.1.3

Write to argue a position, supporting claims using logical reasoning and credible evidence from multiple sources, rebutting counterclaims with relevant evidence, using a logical organizational structure, elaboration, purposeful transitions, and a tone appropriate to the task.

Visual Art

VA.912.C.1.5

Analyze how visual information is developed in specific media to create a recorded visual image.

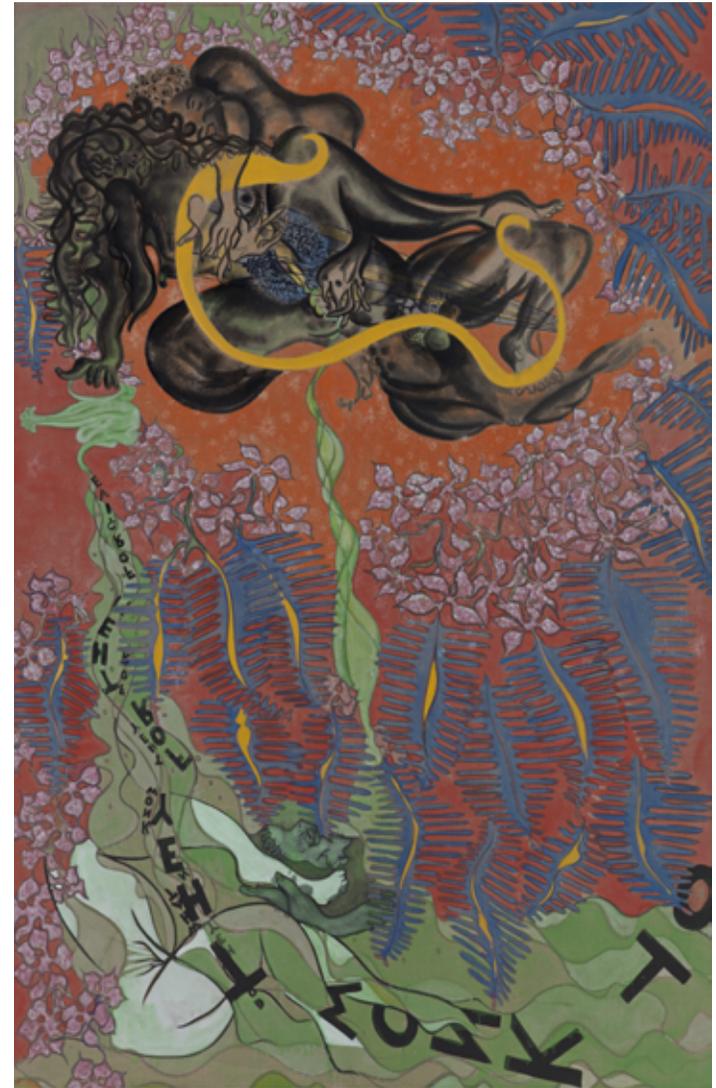
VA.912.C.1.1

Integrate curiosity, range of interests, attentiveness, complexity, and artistic intention in the art-making process to demonstrate self-expression.

KEY DISCUSSION

During the initial discussion, pose questions to students that draw upon critical thinking skills by asking them to compare and contrast how the author and/or the artist have adapted mythical, classical, or religious literary texts and symbols in his work.

Furthermore, discuss with students how Ofili's paintings are influenced by his experiences of blackness, identity, and history.



All images courtesy the artist.

VOCABULARY TERMS

FOLKLORE

The traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth.

PERSONIFICATION

A literary device that assigns human qualities and attributes to objects or other non-human things.

ABSTRACTION

The process of taking away or removing characteristics from something to reduce it to a set of essential characteristics.

INSTALLATION

The configuration of objects in a space, such as a room or a warehouse, characterized by an immersive, larger-than-life environment. The resulting arrangement of material and space comprises the "artwork."

MYTHOLOGY

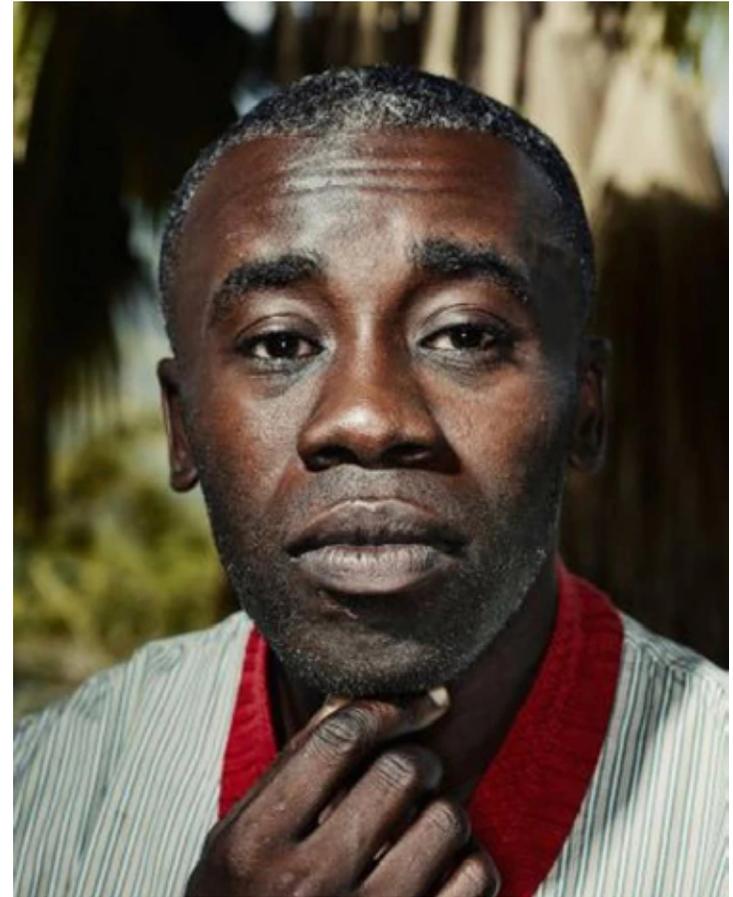
A collection of myths, especially one belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Christopher Ofili was born 10 October 1968 in Manchester to May and Michael Ofili and is a British Turner Prize-winning painter. When he was eleven, his father left the family and moved back to Nigeria. Ofili was for some years educated at St. Pius X High School for Boys, and then at Xaverian College in Victoria Park, Manchester.

Ofili has been founder and prime mover behind Freeness Project. This project involved the coming together of artists, producers and musicians of minority ethnic groups (Asian and African) in an attempt to expose the music that may be unheard in other spaces.

Ofili was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2017 New Year Honours for services to art. Ofili was included in the 2019 edition of the Powerlist, ranking the 100 most influential Black Britons. Since 2005, Ofili has been living and working in Trinidad and Tobago, where he currently resides in Port of Spain. He also lives and works in London and Brooklyn.



All images courtesy the artist.

ABOUT THE WORK

Chris Ofili is renowned internationally for his richly layered works combining imagery and influences from sources as divergent as comic books, hip-hop, Zimbabwean cave paintings, and Biblical scenes. Ofili has looked increasingly to the Trinidadian landscape and mythology to reflect his long-term consideration of history and identity. His most recent paintings have been animated by figures and scenes from folkloric myths and remind the view of themes from artists Henri Matisse and Paul Gauguin. Over the last few years, he has also experimented beyond painting through immersive installation works.



All images courtesy the artist.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Appropriate for Elementary School

[Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti](#)

This is an African folk tale about the infamous "Anansi the Spider." There are many stories about Anansi...this one is about how the moon came to be in the sky. Anansi gets into trouble, and his sons form a rescue party...They save him, and Anansi wants to reward the one who saved him (with the moon), but who saved him?

[My Father's Dragon by Ruth Stiles Gannett and Ruth Chrisman Gannett](#)

My Father's Dragon is the tale of a young Elmer Elevator who longs to be able to fly. Elmer happens upon a cat that has an idea of making this dream possible for Elmer. But, the cat cautions Elmer; he would need to travel to a place called Wild Island. On Wild Island, Elmer is sure to cross the paths of irritable tigers, a weepy rhinoceros, a vain lion, and an itchy gorilla. Should Elmer successfully bypass the animals of Wild Island and reach the riverbank, he will find a baby dragon held captive by the very animals Elmer may have encountered on his journey.

Appropriate for Middle/ High School

[Lord of the Flies by William Golding](#)

William Golding's tale of child castaways who establish a violent social order on a deserted island. Primary themes of interest to high schoolers: civilization and governance, social and moral order, savagery and primitivism, cruelty, leadership, injustice.

[Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison](#)

Ralph Ellison's meditation on race's effects, told from an African American narrator's perspective, rendered invisible by his skin color. Primary themes of interest to high schoolers: race and racial injustice, identity, ideology, and belief systems.

ACTIVITY

Folklore, Fables, and Myths

Appropriate for K-6th grade

For this activity, students explore ideas of personification and cultural identity by combining animated figures from popular media and/or scenes from folkloric myths such as the Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, and the Beanstalk, The Frog King, etc. Older students can explore imagery and sources from comic books, music, films, and historical texts.



ACTIVITY MATERIALS

Paper Bag



Assorted Colored Markers



Colored Construction Paper



Liquid Glue / Glue Stick



White Cardstock Paper

ACTIVITY

Folklore, Fables, and Myths

Things consider before making your mask

- Select a comic, story, or scene that resonates with you.
- Think about an exciting composition or pose for your character.
- Consider a unique color palette to convey mood, energy, and emotions.
- Simple shapes and forms are Good. Think about abstract elements.

Last: Have fun! Use this opportunity to flex your creativity and think outside the box with your concepts.

Activity Instructions

1. First pick a base for you to make your mask on. Used a paper bag or white paper in the shape of a mask.
2. Pick a side that will be your front. This will be the side that you show parts of yourself more often to the world. You can sketch or plan out how you would like to decorate this. Or you can skip a planning stage and go right into decorating.
3. You can use color pencils or markers to decorate your mask. You can also use the colored construction paper in your design.
4. Once you are done with your front side of your mask now flip over your base and work on the back side. This will be the side that you don't often show to others. Or sides of ourselves only a few may know. Often-times these parts of ourselves contrast to the sides we most show to the world. You can sketch or plan out your design or go straight to decorating.
5. Once you are done, take a look at your mask.