



Grandma Moses box.

# Artist Boxes

## Betsy Menson Sio

Think back to getting your driver's license: Not only did you have to pass a written test, but the state also tested your skills behind the wheel. You had to perform in two different ways to demonstrate your competence. Similarly, when I had my eighth-grade students learn about artists, I wanted them to demonstrate their knowledge in several ways—I wanted them to go a little deeper and develop their own insights.

Keeping in mind students' different learning styles and array of intelligences, a multifaceted approach to art history seemed the most appropri-

ate means for deeper understanding of the great artists. Also, by appealing to different aspects of each student's learning, I hoped to engage more student interest.

### Starting with Research

The project started in the school's library. I gave each student a sheet from which to conduct his or her research. I started with a PowerPoint presentation about the artists to familiarize students with the artists represented in the school's library.

After students had chosen the artist who most appealed to them, they researched biographical informa-

tion, world events during the artist's lifetime, and important stylistic concerns. They were also asked to interview two people on their opinions of their chosen artist, and to make a list of objects that appear in the artist's work, or that influenced them in some way.

### Art-Making

With the research complete, we returned to the artroom. I gave each student a 2 x 5 x 8½" (5 x 12.5 x 21.25 cm) white box to use to create an artist box. I required some representation of the artist's work to be on the outside of the box, along with the art-

ist's name. The inside had to hold five objects representing the artist, along with a written explanation of each piece's importance.

The final work exceeded my expectations! Not only was it technically impressive, students really thought about the images and objects they included. Many included the artist's national flag along with different items, such as a piece of cheese in Georgia O'Keeffe's box because she grew up in Wisconsin, or a lighthouse ornament for Edward Hopper because of his Cape Cod paintings. René Magritte's box included a ration card because he went through rationing during WWII, a piece of cotton denoting

**When I had my eighth-grade students learn about artists, I wanted them to demonstrate their knowledge in several ways to show their "competence" about an artist.**

the clouds in his paintings, an apple, a map of Brussels, and a toy house. The Grandma Moses box was filled with objects the student thought Grandma Moses might like: an eggshell to represent nature, a charm bracelet for all the parts of her long life, a wooden train, a bonnet, and a small Amish woman statue.

### **Making Connections**

Students made connections with the artists, their styles, and the time periods in which they lived, and made a functional container to use for many years. They used different intelligences and learning styles to create their box, making their knowledge

more personally meaningful. They proved their understanding of their artists. This was an art project that didn't get left behind! 🌀

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### **NATIONAL STANDARD**

*Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks.*

### **WEB LINK**

[www.globalgallery.com/artist.bio.index1.php](http://www.globalgallery.com/artist.bio.index1.php)



Georgia O'Keeffe box.