

Looking Closer and Writing about Textiles

Grade – 6 - 12 (with grade-level modifications)

Time – Two or more class periods

Essential Question

- What stories do textiles tell?
- How does “close looking” help us learn more?

Key Concepts/Vocabulary/Art Elements

Textiles, Observation/Close Looking, Writing as a Reflective Tool, Status, Gender, Religion, Ceremony

Materials

Images of artworks projected and/or reproduced, clipboards with paper or writing pads, pencils

Artworks in Focus

- Fireman’s Jacket (*Hikeshi Banten*), Japan, late Edo (1603–1868) to Meiji Period (1868–1912) 2004.31.4
- Woman’s Headcover (*Phulkari*), India, 19th century (1996.62.5)

Additional Artworks

- Man’s Formal Court Robe (*Chao Fu*), China, Qing Dynasty, c. 1800, 1990.38.1
- Coat (*Khalat*), Uzbekistan, 19th century, 2004.31.17
- Wedding Jacket (*Wonsam*), Korea, late 19th–early 20th century, 1972.30.3

Talking About Art

Take a look at the image of the Fireman’s Jacket, or *Hikeshi Banten*. What do you notice? How might you describe the texture of the cloth? What kinds of choices did the designer make about colors? How might this have been made or dyed? What questions do you have?

This coat would have once been worn by a firefighter in Japan during the Edo (1603–1868) to Meiji Period (1868–1912). Fires were frequent in cities in Japan at this time, since many buildings were built from wood and had paper walls. While more elite samurai would protect imperial fortresses, more common men would join firefighting brigades to fight the spread of fires in their neighborhoods. During this period, commoners were prohibited from wearing bright colors, so instead wore indigo, a type of organic dye with a distinct blue color. This coat is heavily quilted and padded so that it could be soaked with water for a firefighter’s protection. Firefighter’s coats were typically reversible. During ordinary life and while fighting a fire, it would have been worn with a plain side exposed. Firefighters would reverse their jackets, exposing interior decorations to celebrate their victories.

Now take a look at the Women’s Headcover, or *Phulkari* image. What stands out to you? How might you describe the motif and pattern? What stands out to you about the colors? What questions do you have?

This is a woman's headcover from Northern India that might have been worn during a wedding. The word *phulkari* literally means "flower work" in Punjabi (a language spoken by Punjabis, a South Asian ethnic group in both Pakistan and Northern India). *Phulkaris* are a traditional craft embroidered by female artisans in the North Indian states of Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. How does this headcover compare to wedding garments in the culture or cultures you identify with?

Writing about Art

Find a textile that intrigues you to explore further and reflect on in writing. You may choose a reproduction of a textile from the additional images above. You could also search pamcollections.usc.edu for more images online. You could even ask a family member or friend if they have any textiles that you could examine up close.

If you are searching on the museum website, here are a couple of hints:

- At the bottom of "Advanced Search" select "only results with images" to narrow your search, so that you will have images to look at.
- Under "Category," "TEXTILES" is an option you could choose.
- You might also consider using the "Medium" entry to narrow your search: choose a material like cotton, silk, gold, etc., to enter here.

Teachers: Please allot for extra time if students will be searching for their own images that resonate with them on the museum website.

Once you have made your selection of a textile image (or a textile in your life), you will take a close look at this image and write for 10–15 minutes. Respond to the following prompts as you write:

What stands out to you on your first look?

What assumptions can you make just by looking? Cite potential evidence from the textile to back up your claim.

What questions emerge for you as you look at this work?

What else do you notice as you keep looking?

Why did you choose this textile and how does it resonate with you personally?

After you have written about your textile, reread what you just wrote in order to help process all your thoughts. Find a classmate to share your observations, assumptions, and wonderings.

Going Deeper

Use your initial writing as a jumping off point and a first draft of a longer essay about this work. Use the questions you generated to research more information about the textile you wrote about, such as the history, technique, cultural significance, etc. Write another draft incorporating the additional information you found.

Grade Level Modification

Lower elementary – Identify the colors, lines, textures, and patterns of the textile and write a list of words describing what you see.

Upper elementary – Identify the colors, lines, textures, and patterns of the textile and write a paragraph describing what you see. Include how you think this textile may have been used/worn and what you like or don't like about it.

Reflection

- How did this process of looking and writing about art go for you? What did it feel like? What did you learn?
- What questions do you still have?
- How might you want to use writing in the future to help you learn about something new?

Curriculum Connections

CCSS for ELA Reading Standards for Literature 6 –12

1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS for ELA Writing Standards 6 –12

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS for ELA Speaking and Listening Standards 6 –12

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
2. Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

Resources

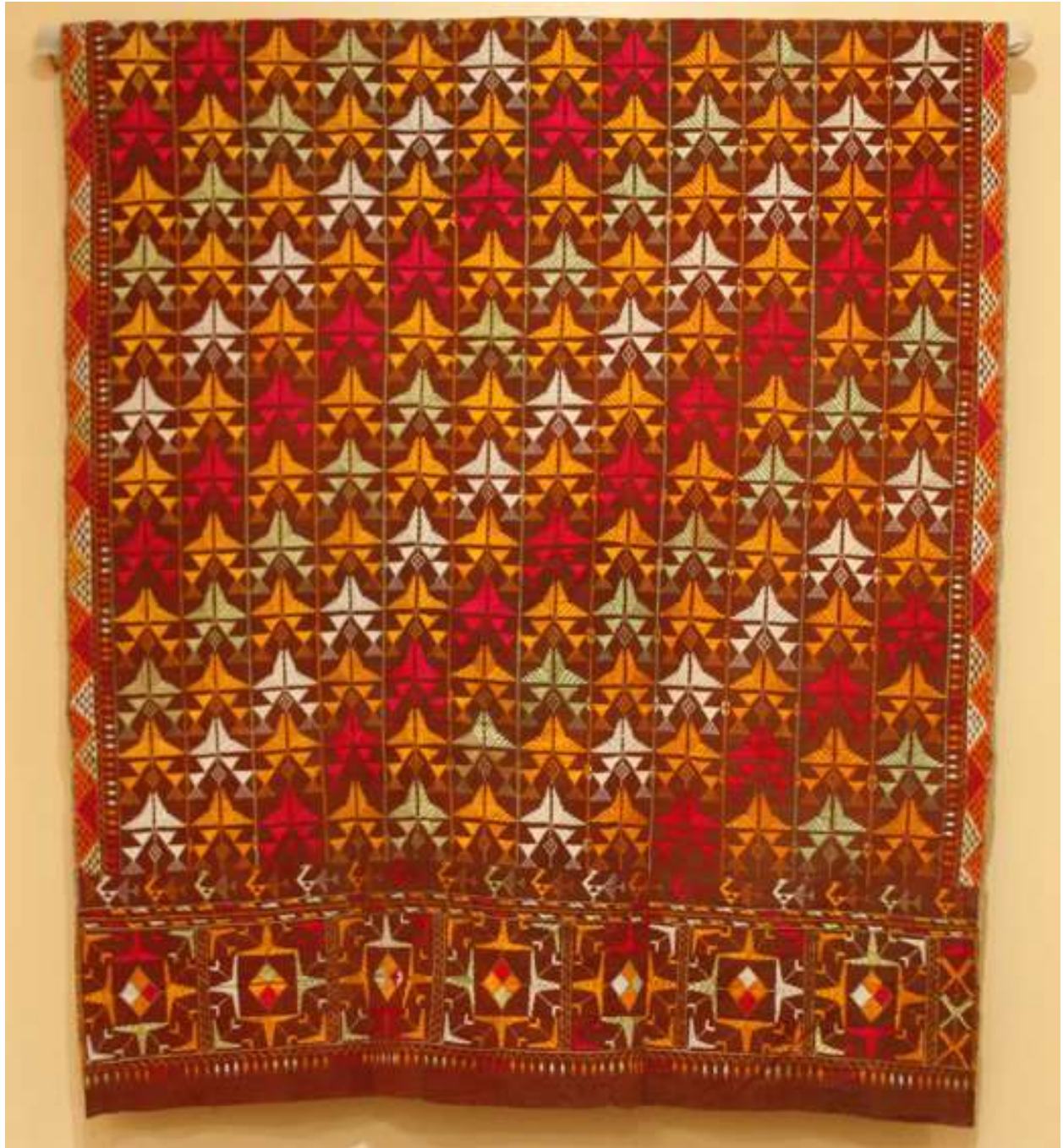
<http://pamcollections.usc.edu/>

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Lesson prepared by Kabir Singh in collaboration with USC Pacific Asia Museum Education Staff



FIREMAN'S JACKET (*HIKESHI BANTEN*)
Japan, Late Edo (1603-1868) to Meiji Period (1868-1912)
Cotton with metal fasteners, *tsutsugaki* resist and hand-woven *sakiori*
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bleifer
2004.31.4



WOMAN'S HEADCOVER (*PHULKARI*)

India, 19th century

Cotton with silk embroidery

Gift of David L. Kamansky

1996.62.5



MAN'S FORMAL COURT ROBE (*CHAO-FU*)

China, Qing Dynasty, c.1800

Silk embroidery and couched metallic threads on silk satin, metal buttons

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Hake

1990.38.1



COAT (*KHALAT*)
Uzbekistan, 19th century
Silk ikat with cotton lining
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Bleifer
2004.31.17



WEDDING JACKET (*WONSAM*)
Korea, late 19th – early 20th century
Silk, cotton
Gift of Junior League Clothes Line
1972.30.3