Learn about Art and Activism by completing the following sections:

#1

Relate

In this section, learn more about **Art and Activism** by making connections to your own life.

#2

Investigate

In this section, learn more about **Art and Activism** by investigating art that incorporates activism.

#3

Create

In this section, share what you have learned about **Art and Activism** by creating your own art and caption label.





PART 1 – Explore art and activism by thinking about what the word community means to you. A community is a group of people who have something in common such as interests, race, ethnicity, religion, and culture. Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Family members form a family community. Teachers, students, and other school staff members form a school community. Children on a baseball team form a baseball community. People who go to the same church form a church community. Because there are so many different types of communities, many people can belong to more than one. Which communities are you a part of? Write down the different communities that you are a part of on a piece of paper or in the space below.

My Communities	••••



PART 2 - All communities have successes and challenges. Challenges called social issues affect communities in different ways. Social issues are the conditions, issues, or problems in a community that people want to change. Social issues can include anything from bullying and homelessness to hunger and pollution. Which social issues affect your communities? Write down the different social issues that affect your communities on a piece of paper or in the space below.

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PART 3 - Many people want to see change in their communities. Participating in activism is a way to create change in your community. Activism is a practice that emphasizes direct action especially in support of or against one side of an issue. Examples of activism include educating others about social issues, giving money or items to those in need, participating in community cleanups, volunteering, and voting. Think of the different ways you can become involved in activism to change the social issues that affect your communities. Then write your ideas on a piece of paper or in the space below.

Ways I Can Become Involved in Activism

PART 1 – Creating art is a form of activism. Artists have been creating art as a form of activism throughout history. Artists can educate others about the different social issues affecting communities through their art. Let's analyze art that incorporates activism by noticing the communities and social issues represented in the art. Take a moment to look closely at this lithograph from the Autry Museum of the American West. A lithograph is a work of art made by drawing an image on a plate and then printing multiple copies of that image.



Glossary

Analyze: to study or examine carefully



PART 2 – After looking closely at the lithograph, describe what you see in the lithograph. Write the answers to the questions in the chart on a piece of paper or in the space below.

ART ANALYSIS QUESTIONS	YOUR ANSWERS
What colors do you see in the lithograph?	
What figure/s do you see in the lithograph?	
What do you think the figure/s you noticed represents ?	
What word/s do you see in the lithograph?	
What do the word/s you noticed represent?	
What shapes do you see?	
What else do you notice in the lithograph?	

Glossary

Represents: to serve as a sign or symbol

PART 3 – Art tells stories. Make a **hypothesis** or educated guess about what story you think the artist is trying to tell others through this lithograph. Write your hypothesis on a piece of paper or in the space below.

My Hypothesis
Glossary Hypothesis: educated guess



PART 4 – Prove or disprove your hypothesis by reading the object label below. The object label gives more information about the art.

Object Label Artwork's title Blow Top Blues: The Fire Next Time Date artwork **1998** was created Betye Saar Artist's name Lithograph Artwork's Donated by Loren G. Lipson, M.D., Autry Museum of the American West; 2018.45.1 medium Betye Saar uses her art to confront and challenge the racism and discrimination experienced by Black Americans. In this lithograph, Aunt Jemima peers at the visitor from the upper left corner, Donor / wearing a bandana featuring the word "LIBERATION" as bright flames shoot out across the rest of Collection the artwork. The character, Aunt Jemima, is a racist stereotype based on the practice of enslaving information black women to work as maids and nannies in the homes of their enslavers. The image of Aunt Jemima was used on the packages and advertisements for pancake mixes and pancake syrup beginning in the 19th century. In 2020, companies finally stopped using the character to sell Artwork products, acknowledging the harm it has caused by ignoring the historical trauma experienced by description generations of Black Americans. In this artwork, Betye Saar frees Aunt Jemima from the harmful stereotypes that kept her down. She is no longer a racist stereotype used to sell breakfast foods. Instead, she is a free and powerful woman with a voice that demands to be heard and respected. The title, Blow Top Blues: The Fire Next Time, comes from a song that has been sung by Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington. In the song, a woman warns us of her new-found freedom:

I've got bad news baby, and you're the first to know,
Yes, I've got bad news baby, and you're the first to know,
I discovered this mornin' that my top is about to go!
I've been rockin' on my feet and talkin' all out of my head,
Yes, I've been rockin' on my feet and talkin' all out of my head,
Yes, and when I get through talkin', can't remember a thing I said!
Used to be a sharpie, always dressed in the latest styles,
Now I'm walkin' down Broadway wearin' nothin' but a smile!
I see all kinds o' little men, although they're never there!

I try to push the "A" trail and put whisky in my hair!

I'm a girl you can't excuse, I've got those blow top blues.

Last night I was five feet tall, today I'm eight feet ten, And every time I fall down stairs I float right up again! When someone turned the lights on me, it like to drove me blind, I woke up in Belle Vue, but I left my mind behind! I'm a gal who blew a fuse, I've got those blow top blues.

Glossary

Historical trauma: an emotional response to a historical event that caused harm and is experienced across multiple generations



PART 5 – Now that you have learned more about the story that the artist is telling through the lithograph, answer the questions in the chart about the art and the object label. Write your answers on a piece of paper or in the space below.

ART ANALYSIS QUESTIONS	MY ANSWERS
What is the title of the artwork? Look for the title in the object label.	
What year was the artwork created? Look for the date in the object label.	
Who is the artist? Look for the artist's name in the object label.	
Who is represented in the lithograph? Look in the object label.	
What does the figure in the lithograph represent? Look in the object label.	
Do you think there is a connection between the lithograph and the lyrics of the song? Look in the object label and the song lyrics.	
Which social issues are represented in the art and object label?	

PART 1 – Now it is your turn to become involved in activism through art. Using materials found in your home and in nature, make a work of art that educates others about the social issues that affect your communities. Plan your artwork before creating it by answering the questions in the chart. Write your answers on a piece of paper or in the space below.

ARTWORK QUESTIONS	ANSWER EXAMPLES	MY PLAN
What materials will you use to create your artwork?	Crayons/markers Markers Glue Paint Paper Pencils Pens Tape Other materials	
Which community/communities will you represent in your artwork? Pick from the list of communities that you created in Section 1 .		
Which social issues that affect your community/communities will you represent in your artwork? Pick from the list of social issues that you created in Section 1.		
What animals, people, places, plants, shapes, and/or things will you include in your artwork? Which colors will you use in your artwork? What will the colors represent?		
Which colors will you use in your art? What will the colors represent?		



PART 2 - Create your artwork using your plan.

PART 3 – After you create your artwork, write a caption label that gives detailed information about your artwork using the object label format below. You can also look at the *Blow Top Blues: The Fire Next Time* object label to help you write your own object label. Then explain what your artwork is about on a piece of paper or in the space below.

Object Label Format					
Title of your artwork					
Date my artwork was created					
Your name					
Materials used to create the artwork					
Write a summary explaining the artwork.					
My Object Label					

Resources

This activity was inspired by the Autry Classroom Curators partnership with Sonia Hanson of Maywood Center for Enriched Studies.

Images

Betye Saar (born 1926), *Blow Top Blues: The Fire Next Time*, 1998, lithograph. Autry Museum of the American West; 2018.45.1

Texts

Leonard Feather and Jane Feather. First recording December 29, 1944. *Blow Top Blues*. Etta Jones with Barney Bigard and his Orchestra. T-918.221.642-8. February 1945. Vinyl.

Do you want to see the artwork you created on our Instagram or Twitter?

Then send a photograph of the artwork you made along with some basic information (your name, your age, artwork title, materials used to make the artwork, etc.) to **outreach@theautry.org** for a chance to be featured on our social media!

