



# 3 Lesson Three

## Communication and Art

### Enduring Understanding

Communication is important to every culture and art is a form of communication.

### Essential Questions

What is communication? Why is communication important? How does art communicate?

### What Students Will Learn

- Communication is a basic human need and an essential part of every culture.
- There are different ways to communicate.
- Art is a form of communication.

### What Students Will Do

- Use observation, inference, and evidence to determine an artist's message.

### Assessment

Create a drawing that communicates something about an important event in your family.

### Materials

#### *For Each Group*

- A piece of visual art work, could include sketches or paintings

#### *For the Teacher*

- A piece of visual art work to assist in the discussion of how art communicates ideas "The Red Army Rock Art Panel" (this volume, or another regional rock art panel found on the database at [www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers](http://www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers)) as transparency or projection (page 50)

**SUBJECTS:** language arts, social studies, the arts  
**CCSS:** Reading Standards for Informational Text, Writing Standards, Speaking and Listening Standards, and Language Standards (see Appendix 3 pages 76-79 for correlation with standards for grades 3-5)

**SKILLS:**

- **Bloom's Taxonomy:** remember, understand, analyze, evaluate
- **Facets of Understanding:** explanation, interpretation, application, self-knowledge

**DURATION:** 90 minutes

**CLASS SIZE:** any, groups of three or four

### Background Information

**Communication** is a basic human need and an important part of culture. Communication allows individuals to interact with each other through customs, roles, rules, or rituals, thereby defining and establishing the characteristics of a particular culture. Culture is created through communication, and preserves and passes along cultural characteristics from one place and time to another.

A culture's ability to fulfill their basic needs changes over time such as the means of communication. For example, the Liberty Bell was used as a communication tool for residents in Philadelphia in the 1770s. Now, the city officials have the ability to send emails to its residents and alerts to cell phones. In addition, telephones can be a simple object lesson of how communication has changed over time from rotary phones to cordless to cell phones.

Art is one form of cultural communication. Artists create images to communicate ideas, thoughts, or feelings about their culture or their lives. In the past,



prehistoric rock artists expressed their culture through art. Petroglyphs (petra-glifs) carved in rock and pictographs (pikta-grafs) painted on rock, are a form of prehistoric communication that imparts knowledge about the culture who drew the images. One of the most famous prehistoric rock art sites in the world is the Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave in southern France which contains more than three hundred pictographs of animals including horses, cattle, lions, panthers, bears, and owls. North America contains many significant sites of rock art such as the Coso range near the Mojave desert and the Moab region.

### Preparing to Teach

1. Display the “Red Army Rock Art Panel” (page 50).
2. Explore the Bradshaw Foundation website at [www.bradshawfoundation.com](http://www.bradshawfoundation.com). Prepare to download and show a video from The American Rock Art Archive, if possible.
3. Draw or display emoticons, :-) ;-) :-(), or emojis 😊😏😬 on the board.
4. Write these ideas on the board in preparation for the group discussion at number 4 in the Discover New Knowledge Group Activity:
  - The message or messages they think the artist is communicating.
  - How the artist uses line, shape, color, composition, and images to communicate.
  - Why might the artist value his/her work as a communication tool?
5. Select a drawing to be used in Discover New Knowledge.
6. Select a drawing for each group.
7. Post this lesson’s Enduring Understanding, the Essential Questions and the Word Bank words.

### Word Bank

**color:** a quality such as red, blue, green, yellow, etc., that you see when you look at something

**communication:** the imparting or exchanging of information; the conveying of or sharing of ideas and feelings

**composition:** the way in which something is put together or arranged

**inference:** a conclusion derived from observations

**image:** a representation of the form of a person or object, such as a painting or photograph

**line:** a thin mark on a surface

**observation:** recognizing or noting a fact or occurrence

**shape:** the form and structure of a thing

**symbol:** a thing which represents something else

### Uncover Prior Knowledge

**What is communication? Why is communication important? How does art communicate?** Inform students that these questions will guide their learning. Indicate the Word Bank words (communicate, communication, inference, observation) and inform students that they will use these words as tools and define them during the lesson.

1. Point to the emoticons or emojis on the board? (emoji roughly translates to picture writing or pictograph). Ask students: What do these **symbols** mean? What emotions do they convey? Emojis can express an idea, emotion, feeling, etc.
2. Ask students: What does the word **communication** mean? Help them to include these ideas: Communication is the imparting or exchanging of information. Communication is the conveying of or sharing of ideas and feelings.

3. Ask students to think about all the forms of communication that exist in their classroom. One at a time, ask individual students to find and bring up for display one form of communication, adding items until you have a representative cross section of forms. Examples include posters, textbooks, the white board, computers, notes, and drawings. Be sure to include a drawing; this drawing will correlate to rock art in the next lesson.
  4. Ask students:
    - How does each form communicate? Why is it important to have a variety of forms of communication?
    - Why have we included a drawing as a form of communication?
    - How do drawings communicate ideas?
  5. Assist students with defining **communication** and **symbol** and adding them to their Word Bank.
- archaeologists study rock art to learn how people lived in the past.
  5. Tell students that they will study this panel in the next lesson, but that first they will think more carefully about the importance of art as a communication tool.
  6. Select a drawing for use in this segment. Explain that a drawing is a form of communication that uses **images**, **lines**, **shape**, and **color** to convey an idea. The artist wants to tell the observer something through the images.
  7. **Observation:** Ask students: What do you notice about the drawing? Instruct students to observe the drawing and note facts.
  8. **Inference:** Ask students: What inferences (conclusions) can you make about what the artist's message is? Instruct students to try to determine what the artist is communicating by drawing this image.
  9. Ask students:
    - What do you infer the artist's message is?
    - What **evidence** in the painting supports your inference?
    - Why do you think the artist wants to convey this message to his/her observers?
    - What can we learn about culture from this message?

## Discover New Knowledge

### *Class Discussion*

1. Remind students that humans have been in North America for at least 10,000 years. For most of this time they had no written language. Ask students: How might these earliest people have communicated?
2. Tell students: One way humans communicated was through the images they painted on or carved into rock. Show students the “Red Army Rock Art Panel” (this volume, or another regional rock art panel found on the database at [www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers](http://www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers)).
3. Show a video from the Bradshaw Foundation website, if desired. The video will give students more information on rock art in North America and visual images for future reference.
4. Explain that archaeologists call these collective images “rock art,” and that

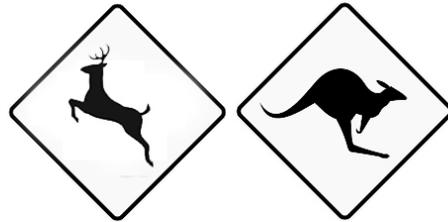
### *Group Activity*

1. Divide students into groups of three or four.
2. Tell students: You will use observation and inference to analyze a work of art. You will interpret the meaning of the work of art and use evidence to support your conclusions. Assist students with defining **inference**, and **observation** and adding them to their Word Bank.
3. Distribute a drawing or painting to each group. The drawings or paintings could be student work, a work of art from your own home, or pictures of art in books or

- on the internet.
4. Have students silently observe the drawing or painting as they consider what message the artist is conveying. They can slowly rotate the drawing so that each person can view it right side up. Tell student's that this viewing is quick, and that they will have a chance to observe it more closely as they work with their team.
  5. Assign one student to record their group's ideas. Tell students to brainstorm, as a group:
    - Some inferences for the message or messages they think the artist is communicating.
    - How the artist uses **line, shape, color, composition,** and **images** to communicate.
  6. Have each group share their work of art and their brainstormed ideas. Allow the class to respond with their thoughts and ideas.
  7. Ask students: What are some ways we can test our inferences about the artist's message? Possible answers could include research into the time period and culture, find common symbols of a cultural group, ask the artist or people from the same cultural group for their interpretation.
  8. As a class discuss:
    - What do these artists' work tell us about how we live or what is important in their culture.
    - Why is art an important form of communication?
  9. Refer again to the "Red Army Rock Art Panel" (this volume, or another regional rock art panel found on the database at [www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers](http://www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers)). Tell students that these images are called rock art, and that this is one way that prehistoric people communicated their culture. Explain that archaeologists can study rock art to learn more about past cultures, and that in the next lesson they

will investigate this rock art to learn more about the Ute culture (this volume, or another culture associated with a regional rock art panel found on the database at [www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers](http://www.projectarchaeology.org/teachers)).

10. Remind students that it is okay to not understand what all the images represent, sometimes we do not know the symbol or code. For instance, display a road sign of a deer crossing, a symbol common to most Americans because we know the code. Then show a road sign from another country where they can recognize a different code, like a kangaroo crossing in Australia.



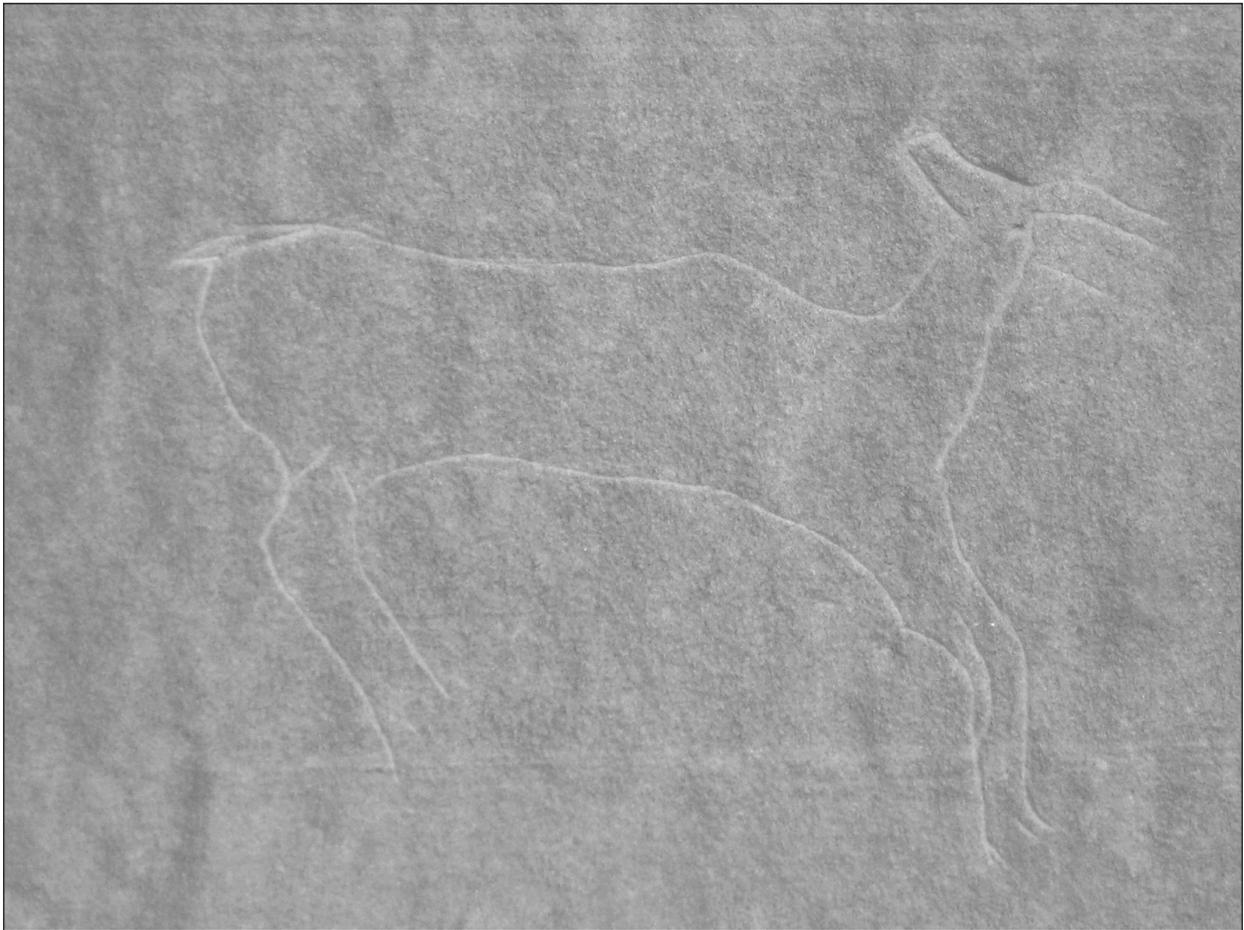
## Assessment

1. Create a drawing that communicates something about an important event in your family culture. It could be a happy or sad event. It can be:
  - About a family holiday celebration
  - Show how your family finds, makes, and serves food.
  - Playing a family game or visiting a relative
  - Anything that your family does that you think is special or important.
2. Remind students that they can communicate with line, shape, color, and images (not photography since past cultures did not have this form of technology).
3. Assist students in defining the art concepts of **line, color, composition, image, shape,** and adding them to their Word Banks.

4. At the beginning of the next lesson, students will receive someone else's drawing and describe in a few sentences what they think the artist is trying to communicate. It is not important that they get the correct message, since not all students will have the ability to adequately portray images. Archaeologists do not always understand the images they are viewing when interpreting rock art. The purpose of the exercise is to practice interpretation in preparation for the investigation.

### Reflect on New Knowledge

1. This lesson's enduring understanding is: Communication is important to every culture and art is a form of communication. Ask students: Based on your exploration of culture, communication, and art what can you say about the role of art in culture? In communication?
2. Give students a few minutes to write what "Communication and Art" means to them on their "Investigating Rock Art: Understandings" sheet. You may want to collect the sheets to check for understanding, and then return them to the students.



Chimney Rock near Billings, Montana. Photo by Zane Fulbright.

**Notes:**