

Past Forward: Contemporary Art from the Emirates

Teacher's Guide

Overview

History of the United Arab Emirates

Parts of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were settled around 3000 BCE by Bedouins who were desert-dwellers, and people who made a living from the sea. The Bedouin tribe was the principal building block of society. Each Bedouin tribe was headed by a leader, referred to as a sheikh, with its members tending to share ancestry. They were mostly nomadic, living in various terrains in tents. Depending on the season, they moved in response to extreme desert and coastal climates. In the summer, they traveled through the desert with their herds of camels and goats, using oases as water sources for cultivating date palms and growing vegetation. During the winter, Bedouins moved to the coast where they subsisted on fishing.

Many Emiratis preserve some customs inherited from Bedouin and ancestors. These include the following:

Traditional marriages – Most Bedouin marriages are prearranged, but now more Emiratis choose their own partners than was the case in the past. Historically, Emirati Bedouins rarely married foreigners, but this custom has changed over the years and today, marriages to foreign women are more common.

Family life – Traditional Bedouin families in the UAE have between six and eight children. They are taken care of by their mother with some input from their father, but the whole tribe is involved in raising Bedouin children. Tribal members lived together in the past, while today many families build homes next to or close by their extended family members. Although certain aspects of this still remain, some Emirati families in the UAE are getting smaller and generally both parents are in the workforce.

Hospitality – Hospitality is an important aspect of traditional Bedouin culture. According to tradition, the Bedouin extend their generosity to all travelers in the desert, even allowing complete strangers to stay with them for up to three days. Guests benefit from the clan's protection and often are welcomed with song and dance. Today, the essence of hospitality still remains an important aspect in Emirati culture.

As the oil industry began to grow and dominate the country's economy, the pace of development in other areas began to accelerate. Many Bedouin gave up their rural, nomadic lifestyle and gradually adapted to urban living.

On December 2, 1971, the UAE was unified by the late President His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. It consists of seven independent city-states, called emirates, linked by a federal structure. Each of these territories—Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain – is administered by a ruling family. The country's capital is located in Abu Dhabi.

Today, in just over four decades, the UAE has transformed from a tribal culture reliant on agriculture and fishing to an entrepreneurial success story with a sophisticated infrastructure, and an open, diversified economy. Consistent with its history and cultural values, the UAE has modernized and

embraced change while improving its education and advanced health care system. With more than 1,000 U.S. companies and approximately 10 million tourists visiting in 2012, the UAE is a popular tourist destination as well as international business hub. The country is also active in the international community, with membership in the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Arab League, and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Geography & Topography

The country is similar in size to the state of Maine. It is situated in Southwest Asia, bordering the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Gulf, between Oman and Saudi Arabia. The climate is subtropical-arid with warm winters and hot summers, and maximum temperatures climb to 113°F in July and August. The region is prone to dust storms, which can limit visibility.

Although the UAE is four-fifths desert, it also is made up of contrasting landscapes – from the towering red sand dunes of the Liwa oasis to the rich palm-filled oases of Al Ain, and from the precipitous Hajar Mountains in the East to the more fertile stretches of the coastal plains.

Flora & Fauna

Besides the numerous palm trees, desert plants also include acacia, tamarisk, and eucalyptus trees. Flora is limited because of the harsh climate and includes grasses and thorn bushes. Since native animals had been hunted nearly to extinction, shortly after the UAE's founding it initiated a conservation program that has saved species such as the Arabian Oryx and leopards. Other notable animals are the Arabian mountain gazelle and the Arabian tahr. The country's coastal areas are a paradise for divers. Marine animals include mackerel, perch, and tuna, as well as sea turtles, dugongs, sharks, and whales.

Population

In 2013, the population of the UAE was just over 8 million. Nearly 200 nationalities live and work together in the UAE, making the country one of the most diverse societies on earth. In fact, Emiratis comprise only about one million of approximately eight million in total population. Nearly 88% of the country's residents live in urban areas.

Government

The UAE system of government has three branches of government similar to that of the U.S. It is led by a policy-making body known as the Supreme Council of Rulers which has both legislative and executive powers and is led by the seven leaders. This council elects a president and vice president from its membership for renewable five-year terms. The president appoints the prime minister who nearly always serves concurrently as vice president. The vice president then appoints his own 20-member Council of Ministers or cabinet to oversee the development and implementation of federal policy involving all sectors of government.

The Council of Ministers works closely with a forty-member body known as the Federal National Council (FNC). Similar to the U.S. legislative branch, members come from each of the emirates and are responsible for examining legislation and advising the Council of Ministers, when required. In the past, FNC members were appointed, but in 2006, an Electoral College system was implemented with half of the 40 seats chosen by designated electors. This latter body represents the beginning of a process to

incorporate additional representatives across the country and expand political participation amongst citizens.

The Federal Judiciary, another key arm of the UAE government, is a constitutionally independent body that includes the Federal Supreme Court, Courts of First Instance, and Courts of Appeal.

Economy

Before 1960, the economy of the UAE was dominated by the pearling industry. Pearls from the UAE were considered the finest in the world, and at the peak of this trade (1900-1930), the industry employed over 20,000 people. This began to decline after 1930 due to the global economic depression, but efforts to revitalize the industry are currently underway. Between 2003 and 2011, the value of natural and cultured pearls traded through Dubai grew by an average of 25% annually. Pearling is now worth over \$30 million a year.

Since the discovery of oil in 1966, the petroleum and natural gas industries have become dominant, positioning the UAE as the second largest economy in the Arab world. Between 1971 and 2013, the country's economy grew nearly 231 times. In 2009, over 85% of the country's economy was based on natural resource exports, but the country has worked to diversify, with other major elements of the economy now including real estate, tourism, and retail sales.

The UAE is the United States' single largest export market in the region. In 2013, the total trade between the UAE and the US topped \$26.9 billion, with \$24.6 billion in exports from the US to the UAE.

Education

One of the UAE's highest priorities is the education of both men and women. In 1975, the rate of adult literacy was 54% among men and 31% among women. The government provides free education of all levels to Emiratis. In 2011, literacy rates for both genders were 92.5%.

New initiatives are being launched at all educational levels. A key area of focus has been to transform K-12 programs to ensure that UAE students are fully prepared to attend universities around the world. In addition, some of the world's top universities – such as New York University and Paris-Sorbonne University – are creating programs in the UAE, attracting talented students from all over the world. Three of every five students in the public higher education system are women.

Religion

Islam is the official religion of the UAE and conditions workdays and holidays. The UAE is tolerant of other religions and people are free to practice their faiths. Pious Muslims pray five times a day, including during working hours. Men generally go to mosques, while women pray at work in designated prayer rooms or at home. Friday is a religious holiday.

Traditional Sports

Falconry

Falconry has been practiced in the Emirates for centuries. Originally used for hunting by Bedouin groups, it is now practiced purely for sport. Although the purpose of falconry has changed over time, the process of falcon training remains the same. Once a falcon is captured, a leather hood is placed over its eyes. Food conditioning is a technique often used to train the falcons. The falconer remains with the bird at all times for the first few weeks. As training continues, the hood is removed and the bird is allowed to make short flights, always returning to the falconer. Raw meat and small birds are used as rewards. Once trained, a falcon will hunt small animals, such as hares and quail. The skills involved in falconry are sophisticated and often are passed down from generation to generation.

Camel Racing

Camels are essential to Emirati history. Traditionally, Bedouins relied on these animals for food, transportation, and other resources. Camel racing was originally employed to mark important social occasions, but over time it has emerged as a modern, well-organized sport.

Three main breeds of racing camel are Al Mahaliyat, a brown breed indigenous to the Emirates; Al Sudaniyat, a large white Sudanese camel; and Al Muhajanat, a crossbreed of the two. Racing camels are the product of selective breeding, and thoroughbreds begin training when they are about two years old and learn to obey basic commands given by a jockey.

Racing season lasts from October to March, and races typically are held on weekends at race tracks. In 1992, the Emirates Camel Racing Federation was established to regulate the sport and promote it internationally. Although betting on these races is illegal, winning jockeys sometimes receive expensive prizes, such as luxury cars.

Dhow Racing

A dhow is a sailing vessel with a triangular sail, called a *lateen*. Traditionally employed for transporting cargo during early trading days, dhows are now also used for racing. The UAE racing season begins in September and lasts for nine months. Twelve-man teams compete for expensive prizes and the honor of maintaining a valued ancient tradition. Although previously men with seafaring backgrounds participated in the sport, it is increasingly attracting young people who might otherwise be drawn to yacht racing.

Cuisine

Traditional Emirati cuisine features meat, grain, and dairy. Meats traditionally include chicken, small fowl, and goat, as well as fish. Since camels are highly prized for their milk and utility as beasts of burden, camel meat is reserved for special occasions and harkens back to earlier times.

Rice is also a staple in the local diet and often is eaten with stewed dishes. Saffron, cardamom, turmeric, and thyme are important spices found in almost every Emirati dish. Other traditional foods include the following:

Dates	Wheat
Sesame seeds	Truffles
Mint	Nuts
Arabic coffee	Raisins
Eggs	Honey
Cucumbers	Lamb
Pumpkin	Quail
Onions	Rabbit
Lemons	Prawns
Pomegranates	Chicken
Melons	Bread

UAE Facts and Figures

- Founded: December 2, 1971
- Founder: H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan
- President: H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
- Vice President and Prime Minister: H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum
- Total area: 32,000 sq mi (83,000 sq km; the size of the state of Maine)
- Population: Approximately 8 million
- Capital: Abu Dhabi
- Largest city: Dubai
- Monetary unit: UAE dirham. The dirham is index-linked to the US dollar, with a fixed exchange rate of Dh 3.671 = US \$1.00
- Languages: Arabic (official), English, Farsi, Hindi, Urdu
- Nationalities: 200 nationalities among the resident population
- US citizens in UAE: 40,000
- Religions: Islam 96% (Sunni 80%, Shiite 16%); Christianity, Hinduism, and other faiths make up the remaining 4%
- Literacy rate: 93%
- Time difference: +4 hours from GMT
- Neighboring countries: Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran
- Bodies of water: Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman
- Highest point: Jebel Jais (approximately 1,900 m)

In-Gallery Activities: Ages 7-11

You Be the Critic

Have students think about the artworks in the exhibition and answer the five questions in the Education Guide.

Optional Activity: When your students have finished writing their answers, give them each five tokens that represent the questions they were asked.

- heart (personal favorite)
- diamond (least favorite)
- clock (took the longest to create)
- light bulb (most creative)
- hand (best craftsmanship)

Students should place one token under each of the artworks they identified. For example, the heart would be placed under their personal favorite. Once students have completed the activity, lead a discussion about the artworks that received the most tokens for each category. Ask them why they think this was the case. Some students might want to move their tokens and should be encouraged to explain why.

NOTE: Before carrying out this activity, be sure to get approval from the gallery attendant or museum staff. Please remind your students to be careful and not touch any of the artworks.

Enhanced Viewing

Students will study one of the artworks listed for two minutes and document their first impressions. Once they have completed this, the next step encourages them to delve deeper by dividing the work of art into four quadrants (in their minds) and studying each quadrant for details they may have missed the first time. After students have completed this second step they should use their observations to infer what is going on in each artwork and identify questions they would like to ask the artist.

Teachers should refer to the following artists' statements to guide a discussion, in which students can share their answers with classmates.

Zeinab Al Hashemi *Pearl Tale, 2010*

Zeinab Al Hashemi's work ranges from installation to video, and her process heavily depends on personal encounters and the environment. She creates visual narratives using innovative techniques to pursue culturally relevant themes. In *Pearl Tale*, the artist explores the historic significance of maritime culture in the United Arab Emirates through depictions of sea life, fishermen, and a *dhow* – an Arab

sailing vessel with one or two masts. With an eye for design, Al Hashemi prefers to transform an already existing object into new forms. For this work, she appropriates scanned UAE currency to tell the story of pearl diving. Historically, people living on the coast relied on the pearl trade due to a lack of arable soil and scarcity of freshwater sources onshore.

Farah Al Qasimi
Ice Cream Truck, 2014

Often finding inspiration in music and film, Farah Al Qasimi regards her photographs as stills from a movie. Working primarily in large-format photography, she searches for oddities in everyday life, which often involves entering the homes of friends and creating images that reflect the owners' personalities. With her art she retraces the intimate journey of her Emirati roots along with her departure from adolescence. Al Qasimi created a series of photographs that features her family's ancestral homeland, Ras Al Khaimah, the emirate located in the northern part of the country. In *Ice Cream Truck* she identifies the uncanny in a mundane moment with the whimsical vehicle parked at a makeshift roadside stop. The scene reminds the artist of the tangible remnants of childhood dreams, playful summer days, and endless possibilities of youth.

Critical Thinking

"If you look at Dubai, there is the modern side and the traditional side, but they all interact with each other. If I'm in the car, I can go from one place to another and see different backgrounds, different people, and different surroundings." – Zeinab Al Hashemi, 2012

The statement above represents the spirit with which many Emirati artists approach their work. Ask students to consider why the curators decided to call the exhibition *Past Forward*, and have them select one artwork other than Zeinab Al Hashemi's that best represents her thoughts. Students should then write several sentences explaining why they chose a particular work. When the writing activity is complete, ask several students to share which artwork they chose and why.

Be an Art Detective!

When you view a work of art in a gallery or museum one of the first things you wonder is, "What is this about?" The underlying story or idea referenced by the things depicted or included in an artwork is the *subject*. Identifying the subject is the first step in determining what an artist hopes to tell us about his or her work. Have students find each of the artworks in the Education Guide. Then ask them to identify the subject of each work by looking for clues that indicate where, when, who and what they are seeing. Once they have identified the subject, students can write their answers in the space provided next to each image.

In-Classroom Activities: Ages 7-11

Where in the World?

Using a map, globe, or the internet, have students answer the following questions about the geography of the UAE:



1. What continent is this country in? **Asia**
2. Label the surrounding countries and color them each a different color. **Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran**
3. Label the major bodies of water and color them blue. **Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman**
4. Label the capital and mark it with a star. Identify one other major city and mark it with a triangle. **Abu Dhabi; any of the cities indicated in the map above**

Favorite Sports – Falconry & More!

Refer to the information in the introduction to teach students about the traditional Emirati sport of falconry.

Ask students to consider their favorite sport and write a paragraph describing it. They should include answers to the following questions:

- What is the objective of the sport?
- Is it an individual or team sport?
- Why is it important to you?
- Who taught you this sport?
- Is this sport uniquely American or do people in other parts of the world play it too?

Upon completion of the activity ask volunteers to share their paragraph with the class. After several students have spoken, begin a discussion about the similarities and differences between the sports they chose and Emirati falconry. They should provide specifics and also address whether their sport is a traditional activity and how skills used to play it might be passed from generation to generation.

Be a Hospitable Host

Life in the UAE is centered on family and community, with hospitality playing an important role in daily cultural activities. Emiratis strive to be excellent hosts – keeping a nice home, receiving guests, and sharing meals are important points of pride.

Have students pretend they are hosting an event for their friends or loved ones. Ask them to write a paragraph describing the event in detail. They should include answers to the following questions:

- Who is invited to the event?
- What will you serve them?
- What kind of entertainment will you provide?
- How else can you best show your guests that they matter?

When students have finished writing this paragraph, ask them to consider the following:

- How does the event you have planned represent who you are and where you come from?

Several students should share details about their event with the class and discuss their answers.

Riddle Me This

Clips from the animated series *FREEJ* can be accessed at the following URL:

<http://www.freej.ae/bookofriddles/en/index.aspx>.

The selected episodes in the Education Guide highlight specific aspects of Emirati culture. There are twenty-seven episodes in total, and students can access the others at home if they wish. Students can

work individually or with a partner. Answers to all of the riddles can be found in the answer key at the end of this guide.

Traditional Emirati Food

Have students look at the images and descriptions of traditional Emirati cuisine and write their reaction to each item in the space provided.

Once the students have written about these foods and similar dishes they have experienced, they should compare their responses with those of their neighbors. After this, open the discussion to the class, asking why people from around the world eat different foods. Then evaluate some of their responses to the food items and consider how and why people tend to judge what is unfamiliar.

What's going on in this Picture?

Have students look carefully at Khalid Mezaina's *Vibrant Future*, consider all of the details, and explain what they think is going on. Refer to the artist statement below to help students understand the artwork and its meaning.

Ask the students to share their ideas about the image with their classmates. After discussing everyone's responses, the teacher can explain how the artist has created a superhero for his country. After the discussion, the students can create superheroes about their own lives and culture, considering what they have learned about the artist's inspirations for his characters.

Khalid Mezaina *Untitled, 2012*

Khalid Mezaina conveys his personal vision for the future of the UAE by combining aspects of modern life and popular culture (including American comics and superheroes) with Arabic traditions. His works represent the influence of popular culture, such as comic books, music, fashion, and art, on his personal life and professional practice. In his artistic approach, the artist gravitates primarily to hand-drawn illustrations on paper. His designs emerge from a particular mood to communicate social messages – or for pure amusement. Mezaina also expresses Emirati culture in a hip or pop-art manner. Drawing on inspirations from everyday life, his illustrations allow his audience to embrace the beauty of Arabic traditions while living in a complex, modern world.

In- Gallery Activities: Ages 11-14

You Be the Critic

Have students think about the artworks in the exhibition and answer the five questions in the Education Guide.

Optional Activity: When your students have finished writing their answers, give them each five tokens that represent the questions they were asked.

- heart (personal favorite)
- diamond (least favorite)
- clock (took the longest to create)
- light bulb (most creative)
- hand (best craftsmanship)

Students should place one token under each of the artworks they identified. For example, the heart would be placed under their personal favorite. Once students have completed the activity, lead a discussion about the artworks that received the most tokens for each category. Ask them why they think this was the case. Some students might want to move their tokens and should be encouraged to explain why.

NOTE: Before carrying out this activity, be sure to get approval from the gallery attendant or museum staff. Please remind your students to be careful and not touch any of the artworks.

Enhanced Viewing

Students will study one of the artworks listed for two minutes and document their first impressions. Once they have completed this, the next step encourages them to delve deeper by dividing the work of art into four quadrants (in their minds) and studying each quadrant for details they may have missed the first time. After students have completed this second step they should use their observations to infer what is going on in each artwork and identify questions they would like to ask the artist.

Teachers should refer to the following artists' statements to guide a discussion, in which students can share their answers with classmates.

Lateefa bint Maktoum

Observers of Change I, 2011

Lateefa bint Maktoum combines many of her images to create digital photomontages depicting ethereal scenes that examine transformations in the UAE's landscape and culture. Using her personal experiences from living in Dubai, bint Maktoum portrays faceless observers of change to convey Emiratis' ability to embrace the future while maintaining their identity and remembering the past. *The Last Look* presents a female figure, standing on a shallow sea shelf and looking towards the horizon where a sandy outcropping emerges. The latter reveals the construction of Palm Jebel Ali, an artificial archipelago situated off the coast of Dubai. The woman's suitcase symbolizes Emirati heritage and

represents her perseverance to keep traditions alive despite the changes happening before her.

Hamdan Buti Al Shamsi
Harmony, 2014

Hamdan Buti Al Shamsi combines vintage photographs and newspaper clippings with abstract geometric forms inspired by modern architecture for his digital works. For *Harmony*, he employs a technique known as photo transfer to manipulate images of his ancestral home, Al Ain, the second largest city in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Al Ain, which means “the spring,” was once an oasis that served as a vital water source for travelers following a caravan route from Oman to the territory of the UAE. *Harmony* features the city’s prominent landmarks, such as the Al Jahili Fort – a structure erected in the late nineteenth century to defend Al Ain and its prized palm groves. The artist also alludes to the popular Emirati pastime, falconry, with the inclusion of the bird on the right.

Critical Thinking

A portrait does not only represent a person, but can also represent a past, present and a future – it can portray generations that have shared a history. – Maitha Demithan, 2010

The statement above represents the spirit with which many Emirati artists approach their work. Ask students to consider why the curators decided to call the exhibition *Past Forward*, and have them select one artwork other than Maitha Demithan’s that best represents her thoughts. Students should then write several sentences explaining why they chose a particular work, and how it relates to the quote above. When the writing activity is complete, ask several students to share which artwork they chose and why.

Scavenger Hunt

Students should find the artworks that correspond to each of the clues below. Information on each work of art can be found in the gallery labels. Once they have located the correct work of art, students should write its title, the artist’s name, and the year the work was created.

1. UAE currency

Title: *Pearl Tale / 20, 100, 200, and 500*
Artist: *Zeinab Al Hashemi*
Year: *2010 / 2012*

2. Jalabiya fabric

Title: *2012*
Artist: *Khalid Al Banna*
Year: *2014*

3. Circuit board

Title: *107*
Artist: *Shaikha Al Mazrou*
Year: *2009*

4. Abstract landscape

Title: *Untitled*
Artist: *Najat Makki*
Year: *2013*

5. Flamingos

Title: *Observers of Change I*
Artist: *Lateefa bint Maktoum*
Year: *2011*

6. Camel milk containers

Title: *Aluminum Life series*
Artist: *Mohammed Al Qassab*
Year: *2010/2011*

7. A genie (*jinni*) who destroys ships

Title: *Bu Daryah*

Artist: *Salama Nasib*

Year: 2014

8. *Barjeel*

Title: *Wind Towers*

Artist: *Khalid Mezaina*

Year: 2010

9. The tallest building in the world

Title: *Burj / What I See*

Artist: *Shamma Al Amri / Alia Lootah*

Year: 2010 / 2011

10. A place to buy fish

Title: *Fish Market Auction I & II*

Artist: *Ammar Al Attar*

Year: 2014

11. Equipment for a traditional sport

Title: *Falcon Masks*

Artist: *Maitha Demithan*

Year: 2012

12. Al Jahili Fort

Title: *Moments of the Oasis*

Artist: *Hamdan Buti Al Shamsi*

Year: 2014

Where in the World?

Using a map, globe, or the internet, have students answer the following questions about the geography of the UAE:



1. Label the surrounding countries and color each of them a different color. **Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Iran**
2. Label the major bodies of water and color them blue. **Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Strait of Hormuz**
3. Mark and label the highest point in the country. **Jebel Jais (5,700 ft/ approximately 1,900 m)**
4. Label the capital and mark it with a star. Identify three other major cities and mark them with triangles. **Abu Dhabi; any of the cities marked in the above map**
5. Identify other important features (for example: mountain ranges, islands, deserts, salt marshes, etc.) **Al Liwa Oasis, Al Hajar al Gharbi Mountains, Al Khatim Desert, Al Buraimi Oasis, Sabkha Matti Salt Marsh**
6. What continent is this country located in? **Asia**
7. What are the people from this country called? **Emiratis**
8. What is the country's official language? **Arabic**
9. What is the approximate population of the country? **Approximately 8 million**
10. What is the approximate area, or size, of the country? **32, 700 sq mi (83,600 km)**
11. What are its major natural resources? **Petroleum and natural gas**
12. What are three other principal industries? **Tourism, real estate, and retail sales**

Traditional Emirati Cuisine

Have students compare Emirati cuisine with their own diet by circling the items (below) that they eat on a regular basis.

Emirati Food Staples

Cucumbers	Nuts
Pumpkin	Spices
Onions	Raisins
Lemons	Vegetables
Pomegranates	Honey
Melons	Chicken
Wheat	Lamb
Dates	Beef
Milk (camel, goat, sheep, cow)	Quail
Truffles	Rabbit
Rice	Fish
Eggs	Prawns
Bread	

Once students have reviewed the list they should consider the following questions:

- How is your diet similar or different to the Emirati diet? Why do you think this is the case?
- What does the food in your diet say about where you live, your family, and/or your cultural heritage?

Have the class discuss some of the responses to the questions above. As students react to differences, discuss the tendency to judge what is unfamiliar. This is a good opportunity to encourage students to

think about why certain things grow in different parts of the world, why some animals only flourish in specific areas, and how this affects what people eat.

Everyday Items Diptych

“The images depict a subject as she discovers herself by recalling intimate memories and belongings from daily objects around the house; these are in turn shared with the viewer in a portrayal of peace and tranquility. Time is frozen in the image; the subject is captured reminiscing and holding on to the past and whatever is left.” – Afra Bin Dhafer

In her work, Afra Bin Dhafer poses with a prayer rug – a household item used by Muslims for kneeling on when praying. As described in the quote above, the scene in *Prayer Rugs* depicts an intimate memory as she rediscovers an everyday object and reminisces about her past in the UAE.

Read the above quote to students. On the handout provided in the Education Guide, students should draw a self-portrait that includes an everyday object with special meaning to them. Have students explain their object, why they chose it, its significance to them, and what memories it evokes, if any.

Bedouin Life

Refer to the information on Bedouins provided at the beginning of this guide.

Have students view the images of Bedouin camps and tents in the Education Guide and ask them to write down what they observe in each picture. Students should consider what is going on in the photograph and how it represents Bedouin life. For example, in the top photo, students might discuss nomadic life, traveling with tents, living in the desert, and being far from many modern-day conveniences. In the middle image, they might consider how Bedouin families live in close quarters, how they sleep in the same place, and that daily life is a bit like camping out. The bottom picture depicts how Bedouin life centers on the family and close kinship connections. This is an opportunity to ask students how this lifestyle differs from their own or if there are similarities.

What to Bring

Have students imagine that they live a nomadic life with their families. They must carry all their essential items when they move to a new place. Have students draw the tent they would live in, complete with all of the objects they would need.

Once the drawings are finished, ask students to discuss the most important items they have included in their tent and why. Afterwards, students should share their tent drawings with classmates.

Social Norms

Ebtisam AbdulAziz's *Women Circles I* and *II* explore her personal experience as a woman, artist, and family member. The white circle represents social norms, or rules. The artist's movements are her attempt to express herself within the confines of these norms.

Discuss the meaning of social norms with students. On the form provided, ask them to list some norms or rules they encounter on a daily basis. Students should also write a few sentences explaining why these norms exist and how they affect their behavior. Have the class share the social norms they chose. If several students identify the same social norm, the teacher might use this to encourage discussion about the role of rules in our society.

Arts & Crafts Activities: All Ages

Create Your Own Henna Designs

Henna is a plant that is used in the UAE to dye hair and create intricate designs on hands and feet for special occasions like weddings and religious holidays.

Henna paste – made from crushed dried henna berries and leaves mixed with medicinal herbs – is used to make such designs.

Have students create their own henna design by doing the following:

- Tracing their hand onto a blank sheet of paper
- Dividing their design into three sections: the fingers, the palm, and the wrist
- Drawing designs and patterns in their traced hands that are meaningful to them

(Tip: you may wish to have students create your design in pencil first and then trace over it with a marker or colored pencil).

Encourage students to be creative. They should choose images and designs that have special significance to them and think of the henna design as a self-portrait project.

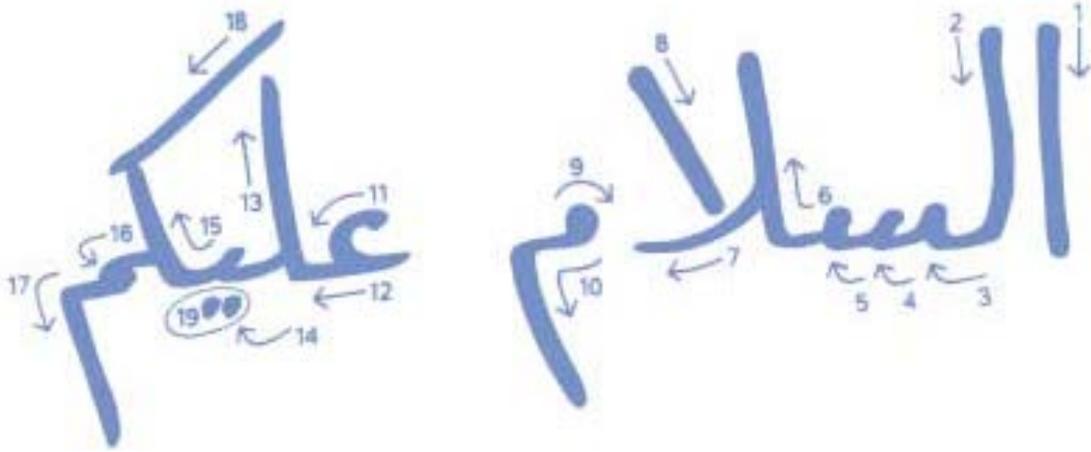
Calligraphy

Calligraphy literally means “beautiful writing.” In the UAE, these remarkable word designs appear on everything from Islamic religious texts to ceramic vessels.

There are a few important differences between writing in Arabic script and writing in English that should be observed:

1. Arabic letters and words are written from right to left.
2. Traditional calligraphers use a special reed pen cut from a dry bamboo stalk and dipped in ink (students can use markers).

Have students practice writing the Arabic greeting *Asalaam-Alaikum* (“Peace be with you”) by following the numbers and arrows in the illustration above.



Next, have students practice writing the following quote from Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, founder of the UAE.

إن الثروة الحقيقية لأي أمة متقدمة هي
شعبها، خاصة المتعلمين منهم . وإن
المعيار الذي يقاس به نجاح ورفاهية
شعبها هو مستوى تعليمهم.

The real asset of any advanced nation is its people, especially the educated ones, and the prosperity and success of the people are measured by the standard of their education – Sheikh Zayed

Pack a Suitcase!

The images from Maitha Al Mehairbi's video blend actual Emirati tradition with her own imagination, as she recreates her Bedouin grandmother's world through a suitcase of family heirlooms.

Have students "pack" their own imaginary suitcase with objects that tell the story of their family history. Ask them to identify the contents of this suitcase and explain why each item was chosen.

Optional: Ask students to bring photos from home or pictures from magazines. Using these or their own drawings, have students create a visual representation of their suitcase and present it to the class.

Photo Diary

"I photograph people in their own places carrying out day-to-day routines. I record the dynamic changes happening in the UAE and how they are reflected in people's actions – especially in my hometown of Ajman. There are still a few special places that I go to, where traditions are maintained. For me, capturing these elements is as important as capturing new ones. Recording both the old and the new is the only honest way to document our life and the times we live in." – Ammar Al Attar

Have students read the quote above. Then ask them to think about their own day-to-day routines. Using photos from home or pictures from magazines, ask students to create a photo diary or a collage that illustrates their daily life. Once the assignment is complete, ask students to consider how their artwork represents their own life experience.

Pinhole Scope

In her work, the artist Shamma Al Amri uses a pinhole camera to take pictures. A typical pinhole camera has no lens, but instead has a single small aperture, or pinhole. To create an image, light passes through this pinhole and projects an upside-down image on the opposite side of the camera apparatus. Al Amri uses this technique to create a vintage look to her images, providing audiences with a unique perspective that chronicles the impact of rapid progress and development in the Emirates.

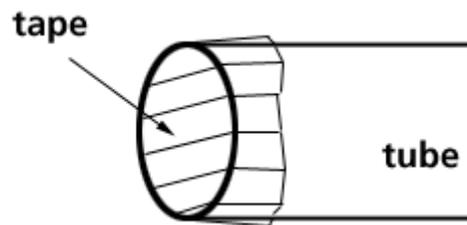
Ask students to discuss why they think Shamma Al Amri uses pinhole photography in her work.

Next, have students create their own pinhole camera scope. They will each need the following items to complete this activity:

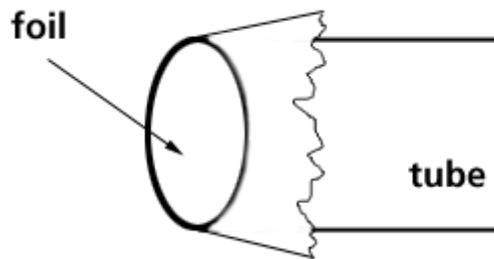
- 2 cardboard tubes with different diameters (one from a roll of paper towels, the other from a roll of aluminum foil or plastic wrap)
- 2"x 2" piece of aluminum foil
- Clear tape (the type that is semi-transparent, but not glossy)
- rubber band
- small pin, needle, or thumbtack

Steps for creating a pinhole camera scope:

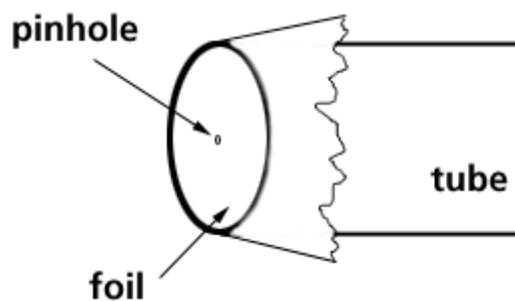
1. Make sure one of the cardboard tubes has a smaller diameter than the other
2. On one end of the **smaller** tube place several strips of tape across the hole so it is **completely covered**, but with some overlap between the strips.



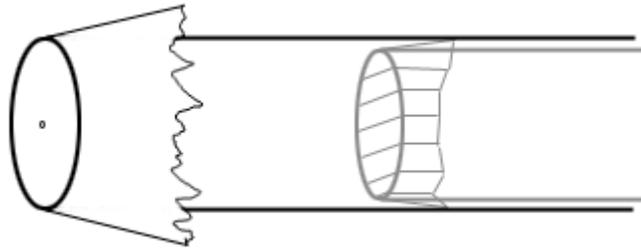
3. On one end of the **larger** tube, wrap the aluminum foil over the hole so that it is **completely covered**. Use the rubber band to hold the foil in place.



4. With the pin or needle, poke a small hole in the center of the aluminum foil.



5. Slide the two tubes together so that the tape and aluminum foil are on the same side. If you place the smaller tube inside the larger one, the tape should rest against the foil.



6. Find a bright light source that you can view with your new scope. Note: fluorescent lights do not work that well.
7. Standing 5-10 feet away, look at the light source through the viewer. Slide the tubes back and forth until an image of the light is seen in focus before your eyes.
8. To see multiple images of the light, poke several holes into the aluminum foil and point the viewer at the light source.
9. Rotate the scope while looking at the light. What do you notice about the images? Do they rotate with the scope?

FREEJ Book of Riddles Answer Key

Episode 1

It protects boxes and treasures, removing all doubt
Scratching it doesn't help, but picking it might
Though only one thing can open it, when it's closed up tight

- A.Lock and Key**
- B.Pot and Spoon
- C.Chain and Key
- D.Eyes and Mouth

Episode 2

It once was yours, but no more
Without it, life is never as before
It can neither be sold nor bought
And won't return, no matter how much it's sought

- A.Flowers**
- B.Youth
- C.Money
- D.Time

Episode 3

I speak of a laborer of the desert night
Working in the depth of the firelight
It directs an army of coffee beans
Showing no fear of pressure or steams

- A.The Moon
- B.The Policeman
- C.Coffee Spoon**
- D.The Knight

Episode 4

How many coffee cups were hanging from the ceiling in this episode?

- A.5**
- B.4
- C. 3
- D.6

Episode 5

I speak of a bow without arrows
Up all night...never sleeping a wink
Above the highest stars, counting them
At the beginning and end of every month

- A. Comet

- B.Full Moon
- C. Sun

D.Crescent Moon

Episode 6

How many sun levers appeared in this episode?

- A.1
- B. 4
- C.3
- D.2**

Episode 7

Green on the leaves of trees
Red on the palm of love
My love for it will never fade
On every occasion and every Eid

- A.The Lover
- B. Henna**
- C.Tree Leaf
- D.Silk

Episode 8

What was the big tree made of in this episode?

- A.Eyes
- B. Legs
- C. Hands**
- D.Iron

Episode 9

It was found on the leaves of trees
Stamped and airborne with pigeons
Ink on it is like magic
Traveling great distances
Its voice never sleeps

- A.Butterfly
- B.Feather
- C. Flower
- D.Letter**

Episode 10

What connected the two mountains in this episode?

- A.Bridge
- B. Rope**
- C. River
- D. Tree

Episode 11

I speak of a girl in the sea
 Her lover is in grave danger
 Hanging on the rope of love
 He broke even the hardest rock

- A. Mermaid
- B. Island
- C. Pearl
- D. Ship

Episode 12

How many paintings were in this episode?

- A. 3
- B. 2
- C. 4
- D. 5

Episode 13

How many gates were in this episode?

- A. 7
- B. 5
- C. 4
- D. 3

Episode 14

In the sea it dances
 Its eerie glow entrances
 Green beings see it as a tasty snack
 Protected by lances when under attack

- A. Ghosts
- B. Tortoise
- C. Shark
- D. Jelly Fish

Episode 15

What creature was drawn on the cave wall in this episode?

- A. Gazelle
- B. Tortoise
- C. Horse
- D. Bear

Episode 16

How many buttons did Um Saloom see in this episode?

- A. 5
- B. 3
- C. 4

- D. 2

Episode 17

A glow, its soul on fire
 Burning, its eye will never tire
 If friends pay a visit or come near
 Clouds from within quickly appear

- A. Mountain
- B. Volcano
- C. Incense Holder
- D. Pot

Episode 18

What material was the room that Um Saeed was in made of in this episode?

- A. Stone
- B. Ceramic
- C. Marble
- D. Oud

Episode 19

I speak of a city steeped in culture and history
 The power to charm, with its traditions and mystery

A shining pearl to delight the eye
 It's the historical name of old Dubai

- A. Al Wasl
- B. Dubai
- C. The Emirates
- D. Al-Ain

Episode 20

What means of transportation did Um Khammas use in this episode?

- A. Yacht
- B. Submarine
- C. Dhow
- D. Camel

Episode 21

For the fortunate, it comes not early but late
 The inevitable moment that we meet our fate
 But when the clock runs down to zero
 Only the brave will face it like a hero

- A. Death
- B. Exam
- C. Operation
- D. Marriage

Episode 22

What formed under Um Allawi's feet in this episode?

- A. Door
- B. Bridge**
- C. Ashes
- D. Fire

Episode 23

What color was the pathway taken by Um Saeed in this episode?

- A. Yellow
- B. Blue
- C. Green
- D. Red**

Episode 24

It flows with the grace of a silken stream
Worn on special days, just like a dream
Golden threads woven with extreme care
A glowing groom looking like a billionaire

- A. Veil
- B. Dress
- C. Wedding Cloak**
- D. Fabric

Episode 25

I speak of a creature, patient and slow
At home on land, not in the waters below
Carrying its humble abode on its back
It retreats within at the first sign of attack

- A. Tortoise
- B. Spinsters
- C. Bride
- D. Snail**

Episode 26

A lethal predator, when soaring in flight
Adeptly chasing prey with its keen eyesight
Over rivers and dunes, they hide with fear
For its hunting skills have no peer

- A. Rain
- B. Eagle**
- C. Lightning
- D. Sun

Episode 27

A house built of ideas, where letters reside
A piece of a whole, its meaning often implied
Crafted by the hands of thinkers since days of old

- Though it can never be rented, bought nor sold
- A. Library
 - B. Book
 - C. Novel
 - D. Poem's Verse**