



Teaching Tatreez

Khaled Shawwash

Palestinian Tatreez refers to the traditional Palestinian embroidery that is intricately stitched onto fabrics, typically using brightly colored threads. This traditional form of embroidery has deep cultural and historical significance among the Palestinian people and is often used to adorn clothing, accessories, and household items.

Tatreez has been passed down through generations of Palestinian women, and each region or village may have its own distinct patterns and motifs. These designs often carry specific meanings, telling stories about the wearer's identity, social status, and personal history.

This lesson will not only teach students about the history and significance of Tatreez, but will also help students understand the importance of textile art/embroidery to different cultures across the world.

This lesson can be adapted to both the diverse needs of your class and to grades other than the ones listed below.

Curricular connections: arts education grades 4-7

Big ideas

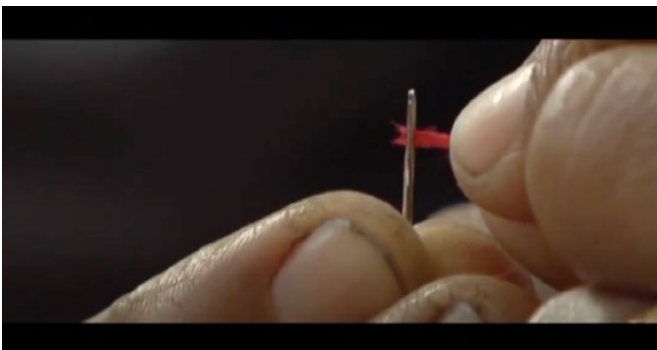
- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives.
- Experiencing art is a means to develop empathy for others' perspectives and experiences.
- Experiencing art challenges our point of view and expands our understanding of others.

Curricular competencies

- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts
- Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through the arts
- Examine relationships between the arts and the wider world

Content

- symbolism and metaphor create and represent meaning
- a variety of regional and national works of art and artistic traditions from



- visual arts: elements of design: line, shape, space, texture, colour, form (visual arts), value; principles of design: pattern, repetition, balance, contrast, emphasis, rhythm (visual arts), variety, unity, harmony diverse cultures, communities, times, and places

Key terms

Palestinian: Someone or something that is from the region of Palestine.

Tatreez: Palestinian embroidery using cross-stitch patterns.

Embroidery: The art or process of forming decorative designs with hand or machine needlework (Merriam-Webster)

Textile: Relating to fabric or weaving. (Oxford Languages)

Culture: The customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group. (Oxford Languages)

Symbol: A thing that represents or stands for something else. (Oxford Languages)

Symmetry: When two halves perfectly mirror each other.

Pattern: A repeated design.

Materials

- Laptop
- Projector
- Whiteboard markers
- 1 copy of Appendix A per student/2 students
- 1 copy of Appendix C per 2 students
- Copies of Appendix D
- Copies of Appendix E
- Copy of *Coloring Palestine* (optional)
- Watercolor paint
- Small, thin paintbrushes

Lesson

Part 1, 5-10 minutes

Go over the key terms (decide which ones work best for your age group) with the students and see if any already know what they mean. Explain to the class what the lesson

will be about. Have them discuss any of the following in groups of 2-3:

- How can art be important to culture and people?
- Why is art important to culture and people?
- What are some examples of art that are culturally significant?
- Why/How can art represent hardships that people from certain cultures face?

Have a member from each group go up to the board and write their response down. Discuss as a class.

Part 2, 40 minutes

Watch the following videos:

1. [The art of embroidery in Palestine, practices, skills, knowledge and rituals \(0:00–4:10\)](#)
2. [Tatreez Timelapse – Palestinian Embroidery by Lina Barkawi](#)
3. [Tatreez: How Palestinian women use their dresses as an act of resistance](#)

Either on laptops, on iPads, as a class, or with printouts (you will likely have to adjust the print settings), have the students read the article “[The Art of Tatreez – Palestinian Embroidery](#)” from Bayt al Fann.

Individually or in groups of two, have the students complete the assignment from **Appendix A**.

Once most are finished, compile their responses as a class on the board.

Part 3, 50-60 minutes

Using the same article from Bayt al Fann, project 2-3 examples of Tatreez on the board. Ask the students if they can identify any symbols or motifs. You can also use examples from **Appendix B**.

Once they are done, give each student a copy of **Appendix E (T11 & T12)**. As a class, go through those same examples again but this time using the legend—see what they can identify.

Set up the paint supplies and the printouts from **Appendix E (T1-T10)**. Have the students paint the Tatreez art. Emphasize the importance of symmetry (both halves should be exactly the same colour) and the importance of intricacy

(the symbols and shapes should be painted very carefully and not with large brushes of paint) to mimic the attention to detail that Tatreez requires.

Once finished, have the students share their art with the class. Ask students to discuss what messages or stories they are choosing to share through their art. Have them share their responses with the class. Specifically:

- What the story is about
- How the story is told through the art using symbols, patterns, and colours
- What theme or message is conveyed through the art

Part 4, 35-40 minutes

Whether from the Bayt al Fann article or the appendices, briefly show examples of Tatreez art.

Show the students examples of textile art/embroidery from other cultures from **Appendix D**. Discuss the importance and uniqueness of textile art/embroidery to their respective cultures. If you would like, have students share examples of textile art/embroidery from their own cultures.

Pick one example of textile art/embroidery from another culture. Review what students notice and identify, as a class, what similarities and differences they see between it and Tatreez.

Have the students get into groups of 2. Give each group a handout of the Venn Diagram sheet from **Appendix C** as well as a printout from **Appendix D**.

Have them complete the assignment, then discuss as a class what each groups' responses are. In addition, have them discuss and share any of the following points:

- How art can be used as a form of resistance or activism in the face of oppression
- Why do oppressors often attack/suppress the art of the people they are oppressing?
- How have Palestinians used art to fight oppression? ●

Khaled Shawwash is a Palestinian teacher that lives and works on the stolen lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. On top of the activism and union work he does, he loves to cook and read in his free time. He hopes to one day visit Nablus, the town in Palestine where his ancestors are from.

Appendix A

Tatreez Assignment

Name(s): _____

Date: _____

1. Give a detailed description of what Tatreez is.

2. Why is Tatreez important to Palestinians?

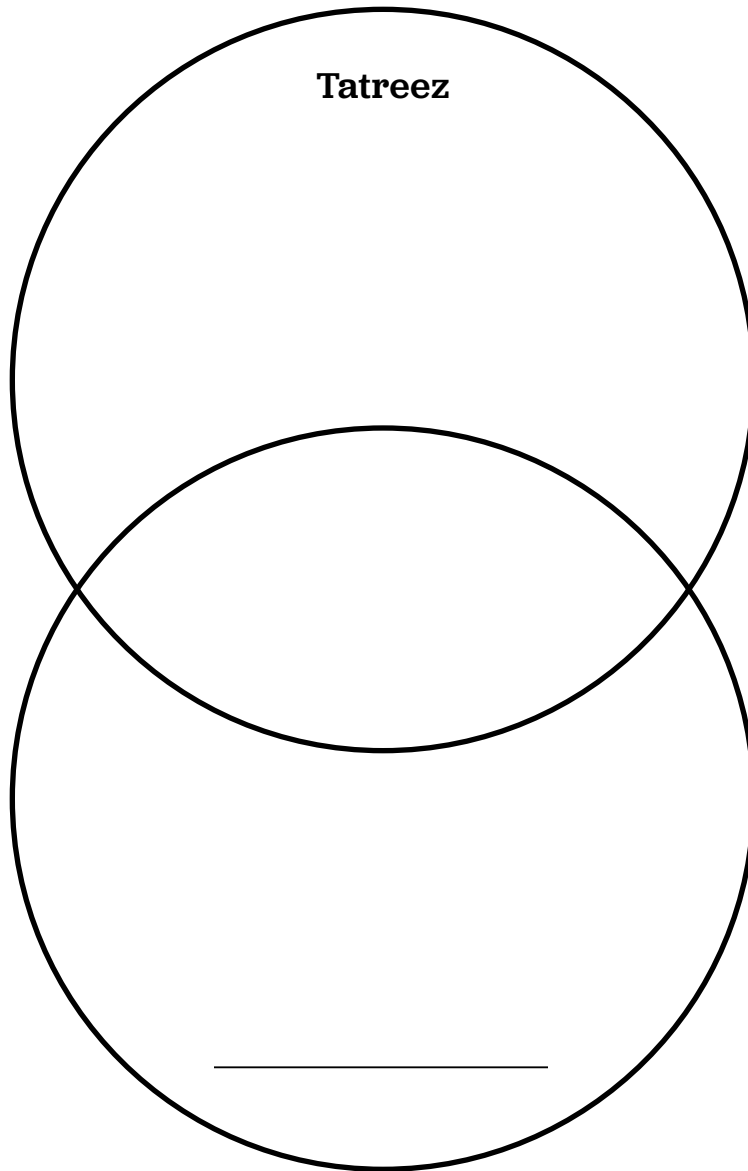
**3. What does it mean when they say Tatreez
“became a symbol of displacement and resistance”?**

4. How can art be a symbol of resistance and hardship?

Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D

Coast Salish Weaving

Salish Weaving Designs
Top to Bottom

- Water
- Cockle Shell
- Bear Tracks
- Unfolding Fern
(represents a continuation
of culture)
- Fire Weed
- Mountains
- Bear Tracks
- Water
- Fish Net
- Herring Bones



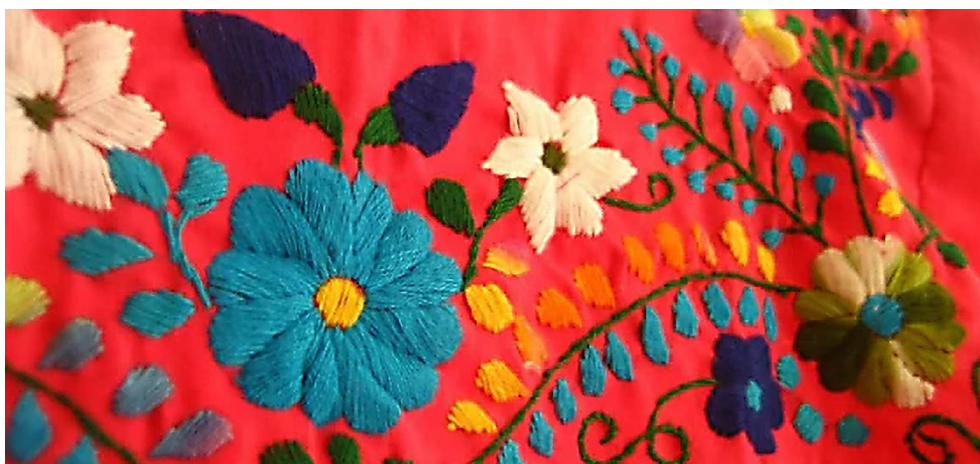
Kaross Embroidery (South Africa)



Chinese Embroidery and Weaving



Mexican Embroidery



Ukrainian Embroidery



Appendix E

Painting Sheets Link

Tatreez painting sheets
can be found [on-line](#).

