

BUFFALO AKG ART MUSEUM

Lesson Plan: Understanding Latinx



Lilian Martinez (American, born 1986). *Garden Club*, 2024. Acrylic on canvas. Overall: 50 x 65 3/16 x 2 1/4 inches (127 x 165.6 x 5.7 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Gift of Pamela and David Hornik, 2025, (2025:9). © Lilian Martinez. Photo: Brenda Bieger, Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Artist's Website: <https://lilianmartinez.com/>

Artist: Lilian Martinez

Artwork: Garden Club

Grade Level: 6-12 (adaptable)

Duration: 1-2 class periods (45-90 minutes)

Subject: Visual Arts / Art History / Social Studies / Identity / Spanish Language

Note to Teachers:

This lesson is based on and inspired by the *Let Us Gather in a Flourishing Way* Exhibition at the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, which ran from March 6, 2026, through September 6, 2026. This exhibition was comprised of 58 living Latinx artists from the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Caribbean. It included 70 total works, some of which were on loan to the museum and a few which are a part of the AKG permanent collection. The artwork included in this lesson plan is part of the AKG permanent collection. For more information about the exhibition please visit this link: buffaloakg.org/letusgather.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain what the term **Latinx** means
2. Understand that identity terms can describe culture, heritage, and community
3. Recognize that people within the Latinx community are diverse and not all the same
4. Practice respectful language when talking about identity groups

ART OBJECTIVES

1. Analyze artwork by Latinx artists
2. Create artwork inspired by a Latinx artist's personal cultural identity that shows the students' own identities
3. Share created artwork with peers in a classroom "gallery"

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard or chart paper
- Markers
- Map of the Americas (optional)
- Short video or images representing Latin American cultures (optional)
- Exit ticket slips or notebook paper

ART MATERIALS

- Examples of Latinx artwork from the Buffalo AKG Art Museum's Fine Art Collection
- Paper/ other materials as a base for the artwork project
- Various art materials to choose from (markers, paint, crayons, small found/recycled objects, strips of paper, etc.)
- Index cards (for written reflection)

KEY VOCABULARY

- **Latinx** – a gender-inclusive term for people with cultural roots in Latin America and the Caribbean
- **Culture** – shared traditions, food, language, music, and customs
- **Identity** – how people describe who they are

1. WARM-UP (5–10 MINUTES)

Think–Pair–Share:

Ask students:

- “What are some ways people describe who they are?”
(Examples: hobbies, family traditions, language, where they’re from)

Write responses on the board and introduce the idea that **identity includes culture and heritage**.

2. INTRODUCTION TO LATINX (10 MINUTES)

Explain in student-friendly language:

Latinx is a word used to describe people who either themselves or their families come from Latin America and parts of the Caribbean. This includes Puerto Rico, which is a territory of United States. Latin America and the Caribbean include countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and many others. There are many people who live in the United States who identify as Latinx because they have cultural ties and family heritage to Latin American countries.

Not every person with cultural and familial ties to these geographical locations identifies as Latinx. Some may identify as Latino, Latina, Latin@, or identify based on a more specific location such as Puerto Rican, Venezuelan American, or Chicano. They may also use both Latinx and Chicano, or other identities, as these are not mutually exclusive terms.

Or use this short paragraph:

Latinx is a term used to describe people whose families have roots in **Latin America and parts of Caribbean**, a region that includes countries like Mexico, El Salvador, Venezuela, Peru, and many others. Latinx also includes people who live or have cultural ties to Puerto Rico. The history of Latinx people is shaped by Indigenous civilizations, European colonization, African heritage, and immigration, which together created rich and complex cultures over hundreds of years. Latinx culture is very diverse and includes many languages, traditions, foods, music, and celebrations, such as family gatherings, holidays, art, and dance. There is no single way to “look” or “be” Latinx—people in this group come from many backgrounds and have different experiences. What connects Latinx people is shared cultural heritage, not one specific race or lifestyle.

Not every person with cultural and familial ties to these geographical locations identifies as Latinx. Some may identify as Latino, Latina, Latin@, or identify based on a more specific location such as Puerto Rican, Venezuelan American, or Chicano. They may also use both Latinx and Chicano, or other identities, as these are not mutually exclusive terms.

Key points to emphasize:

- Latinx describes culture and heritage, not race
- People who are Latinx can look different in many ways and speak different languages
- Some people prefer other terms (Latino, Latina, or use a nationality like Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, etc. or ethnicity like Chicano), and it’s important to respect personal preferences. Always ask how someone identifies to show them respect and understanding.

3. DIVERSITY WITHIN THE LATINX COMMUNITY (10–15 MINUTES)

Create a class chart titled “Latinx Is Not Just One Thing”

Ask students:

- What foods, music, languages, or traditions might be part of Latinx cultures?”

Add or clarify:

- Languages: Spanish, Indigenous languages, like Nahuatl and Quechua, English, Spanglish
- Traditions: holidays, dances, art, family celebrations
- Foods: pupusas, pastelillos, empanadas, tacos
- Experiences: some people are immigrants, some are born in the U.S., some are both

Stress to students:

“No one person represents the entire Latinx community. Representation comes in many different forms.”

4. REFLECTION ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

Students complete one of the following on an index card:

Option A (WRITING):

- “One thing I learned about the Latinx identity is...”

Option B (DRAWING):

- Draw symbols that represent cultural diversity and label them

Option C (DISCUSSION):

- Small group share-out of one new idea they learned

5. ART PROJECT (20–30 MINUTES)

Option A — Dot Art on Paper (SIMPLE):

Step 1: Share with your students that some Latinx artists use their identity, culture, and heritage as inspiration for their own artwork.

Show examples of Latinx artwork from the Buffalo AKG Art Museum's collection on the board (see below). Share the names of the artists, and where they are from, along with any other interesting information you would like to add about it. Based on the grade-level and cross-curricular connections, you may want to highlight different aspects of the artists' lives.

Ask students to verbally share what they notice about the art and what aspects of culture the artist is trying to convey in their artwork. Afterwards, share more information about the artist.

For example, if using Patrick Martinez's *Promised Land*, guide your students to notice the archival family photographs, the use of lights and color in connection to Los Angeles, and banner tarp, which is connected to his mother who is from the Philippines. It is recommended to have students listen to the Bloomberg Connections Audio Guide to hear Patrick Martinez discuss his artwork and identity: <https://guides.bloombergconnects.org/en-US/guide/buffaloAkgArtMuseum/item/3a4ba1a9-0b7b-4f13-a6c3-3ba6ca291257>

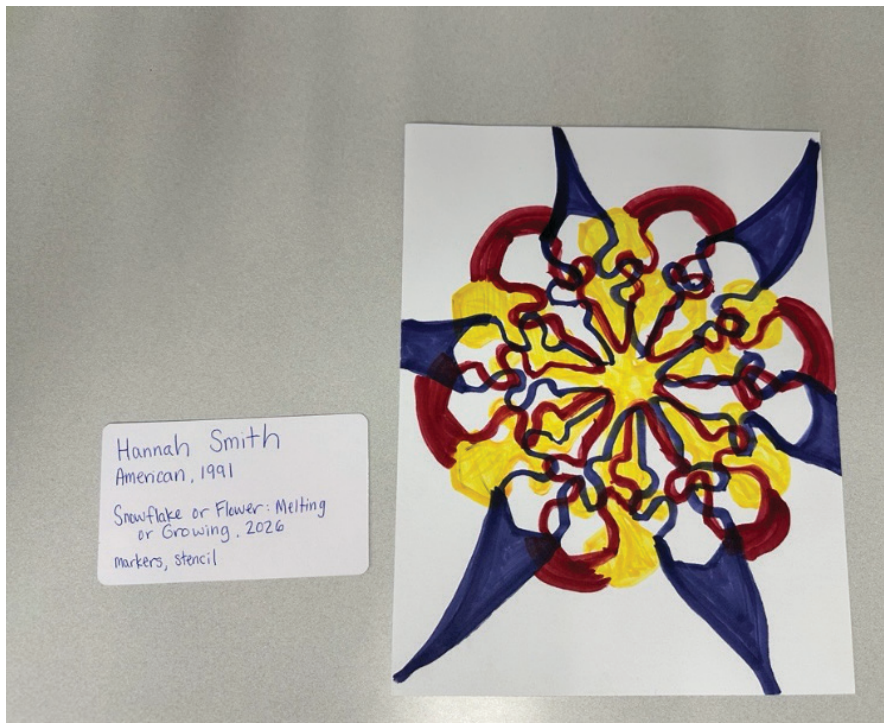
Step 2: Using a sheet of paper/other base, and various art materials of choice, have your students create their own artwork that represents their identity, culture, and heritage. This step is intentionally ambiguous to allow students to create art that speaks to themselves, not follow a given pattern or example.

- Suggested materials: paper, cardboard, recycled materials, paint, markers, stickers, stencils, fabric, yarn, glue, wire, clay, etc.
- If appropriate, allow students to look up images online to print and use them in their art.

Depending on the age-group and/or type of learners, provide an example of artwork that shows your own identity and walks them through the artmaking process and how it connects to yourself.



Note: This art example is inspired by a cultural identity of being from Buffalo, New York, and growing up loving both snow and flowers with a family background of spending lots of time outdoors. The colors are both inspired by The Buffalo Bills and Buffalo Sabres, but also by the colors used around holidays in December as someone who celebrates both Christmas and Hanukkah.



Step 3: After the artwork is completed, give the student a notecard to create a title for the artwork and write their name, like a wall label.

Step 4: Extension activity: During the following class period, create a gallery around the classroom like a museum and have students look at each other's works. If more than one class is working on this project, find time for students from different classes to view each other's' work as well.

ASSESSMENT

- Participation in discussion
- Exit ticket or reflection response
- Ability to explain Latinx respectfully in their own words

CROSS-CURRICULAR EXTENSIONS

- **Younger students:** Use more visuals and focus on food, music, and celebrations
- **Older students:** Discuss history, colonization, or how identity terms change over time, link to language classes
- **ENL students:** Use visuals, sentence starters, and partner support

TEACHER TIPS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Remind students that:

- Identity is personal, if students want to share, allow space for it, but if not, allow students to reflect and participate in other ways
- Not everyone uses the same labels, so encourage students to ask each other questions like: "How do you identify?" or "What cultures do you celebrate in your family?"
- Show respect for each other by asking questions for deeper understanding, but also respect each other if someone does not want to discuss their identity in front of classmates

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT (NEW YORK STATE P-12 VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS)

Standards are selected at an 8th Grade level but can be adapted and/or changed to meet standards for various other grade levels.

Creating:

- **VA:Cr1.2.8a/** Collaboratively shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life by using a contemporary practice of art and design.
- **VA:Cr2.1.8a/** Experiment, innovate, and take risks to pursue ideas, forms, and meanings that emerge in the process of artmaking or designing.

Responding:

- **VA:Re8.1.8a/** Analyze how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, artmaking approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

Connecting:

- **VA:Cn10.1.8a/** Make art collaboratively to reflect on and reinforce positive aspects of group identity.
- **VA:Cn11.1.8a/** Through observation, infer information about the time, place, and culture in which a work of art or design was created.

EXAMPLES OF LATINX ARTWORK FROM THE BUFFALO AKG FINE ART COLLECTION:



Patrick Martinez (American, born 1980). *Promised Land*, 2022. Acrylic, stucco, neon, mean streak, ceramic, spray paint, latex house paint, banner tarp, ceramic tile, tile adhesive, family archive photo collage, on panel. 100 x 76 x 22 inches (254 x 193 x 55.9 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. George B. and Jenny R. Mathews Fund, 2022, (2022:78). © 2022 Patrick Martinez. Photo: Brenda Bieger, Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

Artist's Website:

<https://www.cjamesgallery.com/artists/patrick-martinez>



Guadalupe Maravilla (El Salvadoran, born 1976). *Pupusa Retablo*, 2023. Oil on tin, cotton, and glue mixture on wood. Support: 84 1/16 x 192 x 6 1/4 inches (213.5 x 487.7 x 15.9 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Bequest of Arthur B. Michael, 2024, (2024:49). © Guadalupe Maravilla. Photo: Brenda Bieger, Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

Artist's Website:

<https://www.ppowgallery.com/artists/guadalupe-maravilla#tab:thumbnails>



Narsiso Martinez (Mexican American, born 1977). *Checker Leading the Crowd*, 2023. Charcoal, gouache, ink, collage, and simple leaf on produce cardboard, matte gel. 23 1/2 x 15 inches (59.7 x 38.1 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. George B. and Jenny R. Mathews Fund, 2024, (2024:3). © Narsiso Martinez. Photo: Brenda Bieger, Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

Artist's Website:

<https://www.narsisomartinezart.com/>