

## Characteristics of Early Appalachian Folk Art

- Most folk artists were self-trained
- The artwork could be both functional, decorative, and/or expressive
- Many Folk Art pieces fall outside the traditional definition of “art”, yet they are drawings, paintings, and sculptures when labeled (trade signs, weathervanes, toys, games, ceramics, figurines, as well as drawings, paintings, and sculptures).
- American Folk art represents many ethnicities and geographic locations. The states containing the Appalachian Mountains contain Appalachian folk artists, and the artwork is collected or “discovered” in under-represented areas.
- Many times, we focus on folk art as a form, a “primitive” one. We focus on the shape and elements that the artwork visually projects; yet, folk art is much more than just the visual form. Many times the form represents strong spiritual or religious values and beliefs about the world around the artist. Often those values and beliefs commonly fall outside our traditional and accepted beliefs in society today.
- The folk artist is not necessarily concerned with projecting the accepted values and beliefs of society. The folk artist is concerned with projecting his/her personal values and beliefs and expressions, whether they compliment or conflict the beliefs of society matters not.

Vocabulary: Appalachia, folk, functional, decorative, sculpture, portrait, curator

The Appalachian Mountains are within the following states: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi (as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission).

### Book References:

Rylant, C. (1982). *When I was young in the mountains*. New York, NY: E.P. Dutton.

Check, P. (1988) *Appalachian Scrapbook*. Tennessee: The Overmountain Press.

Eaton, E. (1988) *Appalachian Yesterdays*. Ohio: Appalachian Yesterdays Company.

Coleman, J. (ed.), (1971). *Kentucky: A pictorial history*. University Press of Kentucky.\*

Barton, K., Levstik, L. (2001). *Doing History: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey.

Johnston, R. (2002). *The making of America: The history of the United States from 1492 to the present*. National Geographic Society: Washington, D.C.\*

Milwaukee Art Museum, (1993). *Common ground/uncommon vision: The Michael and Julie Hall collection of American folk art*.

Wood, R. (2003). *Great Inventions*. Barnes and Noble Books: New York.\*

Web site references:

The Library of Congress

This vast amount of information on this web site can be quite over overwhelming. Start out in the *Family and Kids* section on the homepage, or type *The Learning Page* in the search box. Information on Appalachian studies, industrialization, and contemporary events in history are also within this site. It will be well worth your while to browse all the sections of this site when you get a chance. \*

<http://www.loc.gov>

The Smithsonian Institution

Access to all the Smithsonian museums and galleries can begin with this site. Typing in a key word or name into the search box will gather a varied collection of primary source documents, exhibits, and educational resources. \*

<http://www.ssi.org>

The National Gallery of Art

Within this site are art images, exhibits, as well as, educational and interactive educational resources.

<http://www.nga.gov>

The National Geographic Society

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com>

The Kentucky Environmental Timeline \*

<http://www.kyeqc.net/thirty/time/yeartime.html>

Kentuckiana Digital Library \*

<http://kdl.kyvl.org>

\*This resource was used to collect information for the timelines within this unit.