

Teaching with *Dr. Angie Debo* by Charles Banks Wilson



This printer-friendly document is designed to help teachers present, discuss, and teach about Oklahoma history and art literacy through the use of this work of art. The information and exercises here will aid in understanding and learning from this artwork.

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First Analysis and Criticism

The steps below may be used for group discussion or individual written work.

Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

Describe:

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

Analyze:

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

Interpretation:

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

Evaluate:

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

Overview of the Artwork

Dr. Angie Debo was a leading scholar of Indian and Oklahoma history. Her works highlighted the fact that the five civilized Indian tribes of Oklahoma were the victims of a complex swindle. Major political figures had robbed and even murdered Indians who held oil-rich land. Banned from publication, Debo was shunned as a troublemaker until Princeton University published her books in 1950. Her nine books serve as a cornerstone of American Indian scholarship, and her research is frequently cited as evidence in present-day federal court cases involving tribal land rights. Debo also published many articles in different journals, including *Harper's Magazine*, and contributed chapters and forewords to books. Her last book, *Geronimo*, was finished when she was 85 years old. The state of Oklahoma did not recognize Debo's lifelong achievements until she was in her 90s and she was inaugurated into the Oklahoma Historians Hall of Fame.

Debo graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Oklahoma in 1918, taught history at Enid High School, and then enrolled in the University of Chicago to work on a master's degree. Because women were not allowed to enter the history field at this time, Debo served on the faculty of the history department in West Texas State Teachers College and served as curator of the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. She received her Ph.D. at the University of Oklahoma in 1933. Debo taught in rural Oklahoma schools, and during World War II she served as pastor at her local Methodist church. Later she was hired full-time as Maps Librarian at Oklahoma State University. Debo died in 1988.

About the Artist

Charles Banks Wilson was born in 1918 in Arkansas and grew up in Miami, Oklahoma. Educated at the Art Institute of Chicago from 1936-1940, he was given an award from the Chicago Society of Lithographers and Etchers, and his work was added to the Art Institute collection. While at the Art Institute, he also began a project whereupon he sketched portraits of numerous members of Oklahoma's American Indian tribes – a project that would soon become a lifelong artistic journey.

Wilson completed his education in Chicago and later returned to Oklahoma in 1943, where he established a permanent studio in Miami. Two years later, he began teaching night classes in drawing at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College. Eventually he became head of the art department, a position he held until 1960. During this period he continued to illustrate books and produce lithographs from his own press.

In 1957, he completed his first portrait commission for Tulsa oilman and collector Thomas Gilcrease. Perhaps one of Wilson's greatest achievements came when the U.S. Senate selected four of his paintings to be shown in 20 world capitals. In 2001, he was named an Oklahoma Cultural Treasure and is a member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

Details



1. The silver hair and lined skin are representative of both Debo's age and experience. She was 95 years old when she modeled for Wilson. During her life, she faced challenges brought on by her gender as well as the controversial content of her books.
2. Debo's first book, *The Rise and Fall of the Choctaw Republic*, examined the impact of the American Civil War on the Choctaw tribe. It told the story from the perspective of the tribe rather than the white man. The book received the John H. Dunning Prize of the American Historical Association.
3. *And Still the Waters Run*, completed in 1936, detailed how Oklahoma's Five Civilized Tribes were systematically deprived of the lands and resources granted to them by treaty after their forced removal from the southeastern United States. Publishers in Oklahoma refused to publish the book because of the controversial charges made against many leaders who were still living. Princeton University Press finally published the book in 1940 and it is now described as a classic and influence for writers of Native American history.
4. *Prairie City, the Story of an American Community* was Debo's only fictional work. It was based on the history of Marshall, Oklahoma, Debo's hometown.
5. Debo completed her final book, *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place*, at the age of 85.
6. Debo told Wilson that he captured her drive in the portrait.

Further Resources

The Kennedy Center's ARTSEdge resources offer a helpful unit on gender issues here:

Tolerance: Gender Issues

Breaking Professional Barriers

http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/lessons/grade-6-8/Tolerance_Gender_Issues.aspx

The **Feminist Art Project** offers a comprehensive reading list about feminism and the advances of women here:

<http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/resources/book-lists/>

Final Analysis

After completing the readings and activities, go back and look at the artwork again. Now that the students are more familiar with the subject matter, ask them to write a few paragraphs about their interpretation of the artwork. In their own words, the writing should address the following:

- Description of the artwork and who/what is in it
- How the elements of art and principles of design are used within the artwork
- What feelings, emotions, or information the artwork depicts
- Their opinion of the artwork

Pass Objectives

Grade 4- Social Studies

Standard 5. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the unique features which contributed to the settlement of the state of Oklahoma.

1. Identify major historical individuals, entrepreneurs, and groups, and describe their major contributions (e.g., Sequoyah, the Boomers and the Sooners, and Frank Phillips).

Grade 4- The Arts

Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

1. Describe and place a variety of specific significant art objects by artist, style and historical and cultural context.
2. Identify themes and purposes of works of art and artifacts in history and culture.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.
4. Identify how visual art is used in today's world including the popular media of advertising, television, and film.

High School- Oklahoma History

Standard 1. The student will demonstrate process skills in social studies.

1. Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, letters, art, music, literature, photographs, documents, newspapers, and contemporary media).

Standard 8. The student will examine factors that contributed to the political, economic, and social history of Oklahoma during the twentieth century.

1. Identify significant individuals and their contributions (e.g., Jerome Tiger, Frank Phillips, Kate Barnard, Angie Debo, Ada Lois Sipuel, Clara Luper, George Lynn Cross, Ralph Ellison, Robert S. Kerr, Henry Bellmon, and Reba McEntire).

High School- The Arts

Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)

3. Describe exhibitions of original works of art seen in the school or community.
4. Differentiate between art criticism and art reviews, recognizing that criticism is positive as well as negative in its evaluation of a work of art.

Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.

5. PROFICIENT: Identify major regional, national, and international collections of art.

Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.

2. Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.