



The Museum of Appalachia

Lessons for Living History

Tour Guide for High School

Folk Art

In the Hall of Fame and Display Barn you will see many examples of what is known as “folk art.” Folk art is created by everyday people. They are not trained artists, but the work that they create still tells a story or communicates a feeling about the people who made and used them. Think about the following items as you explore our folk art collections.

While historians usually look at written records like court documents or shipping records, they also look at artwork and architecture to learn more about the people they are studying. After looking at some of the Museum’s folk art, do you think you better understand the people who made it? Discuss some of the insights you gain into the lives of folk artists by looking at their artwork.

Sometimes folk art also serves a useful purpose. As you explore the Museum, look for items that have both a function and a decorative element. Does a decoration on a functional item tell you anything about the person who made it? Does looking at the item make you feel like you know that person a little better?

Upstairs in the Hall of Fame you will find old pottery made by the LeFever family. The LeFever family was well known for its pottery, and the Museum is fortunate to have a large collection of their work. Look at the different sizes of storage containers and the remarkable jugs with faces. But not all pottery is necessarily utilitarian (having a job or a use). Some pottery is just for fun or just to look at. The LeFevers also made sculptures and toys, many of which are in the glass display case. Think about the types of sculptures they created—are they of things you would see in the city where you live? Or are the sculptures of things you would be more likely to see in the country? Is it surprising that the LeFevers sculpted the things with which they were most familiar?

Ask yourself what “art” really means. Does it have to be found in a frame on a wall? Does the art have to be realistic? Does it have to be beautiful? Or can it be any effort to express the artist’s mind and heart? Why do you think the pottery you see in the Museum is called folk “art”?

Some of the furnishings from Cabin Creek Charlie’s home can be found upstairs in the Display Barn. You can see from the artifacts, and from the picture of his house that accompanies the display, that Charlie covered just about everything he owned with daubs of color. What do you think his friends, neighbors, and visitors thought about his decorative technique? Would you consider his polka dots “art”? Think again about what makes something a work of art. Was Charlie expressing anything of his inner self in his polka dots? Do you get a sense of what he was like when you look at his display?

Some other examples of Folk Art: Quilt in cradle, punched tins in the pie safe, design on the corner cupboard in the *Mark Twain Cabin* and fancy beds with carvings in the *McClung House*. Also be sure to look for the Thomas Dagley secretary and Shinliver School quilt. Are these items visual arts, decorative arts, or folk art? Can they be more than one thing?

Other Kinds of Art to Look for at the Museum

There is lots of overlap within categories of art. Performing arts would include music or dance, whereas **visual art** is art you look at, rather than perform. **Found art** is artwork made from modified but undisguised items, like a banjo made from a tin can. **Decorative arts** are usually defined as decorative elements added to a functional item. There’s even some **prisoner art** upstairs in the Hall of Fame. Try to find some examples of each while you are here.

Modern and Pioneer Needs

The following list includes some of the needs of human society. List some ways in which these needs are met in modern Appalachia. Then list ways in which they were met in early Appalachia.

	Modern Appalachia	Early Appalachia
Transportation	_____	_____
Entertainment	_____	_____
Defense	_____	_____
Food	_____	_____
Clothing	_____	_____
Building Materials	_____	_____
Refrigeration	_____	_____

Which lifestyle consumes more energy?

Which lifestyle demands more creativity from its individual members?

Which lifestyle is more dependent upon intricate technologies, transportation, and social organization?

Find Alex Stewart's exhibit in the Hall of Fame. Alex was a man of many talents and abilities, and he probably could do many things that you cannot. But how well do you think he would adapt to your modern world? Who would learn faster in the other person's world: you or Alex?

As you explore the Museum of Appalachia, ask yourself what characteristics you share with pioneers and rural mountain folk. Are you creative? Hardworking? A problem-solver?



The Many Steps in Production

You can go to the store to buy almost anything you desire. But what if you had to spend days and weeks laboriously manufacturing nearly everything you owned? Select one of these four items and tell how it was made, making notes on the back of your Tour Guide. Start from when the plant was picked, the animal killed or shorn, or the tree cut. Include as many steps as you can, based on the exhibits here at the Museum. Name the tools one would need at every step of the manufacturing process. How long do you think it would take to make your item?

(1) Barrel

(2) Shirt

(3) Boots

(4) Basket

The following is a survey of things you see at the Museum. Fill in the blanks, based on observations you make as you tour, then consider the issues raised in the follow-up questions. Discuss these issues with your classmates.

1. The Arnwines used a _____ for defense. From what or whom would they have needed to defend themselves?
2. The heat source in the Arnwine Cabin was the _____. How much work went into sustaining this heat source?
3. What large item occupies the north corner of the Arnwine Cabin? _____ Did this item make efficient use of the cabin's limited space?
4. The Bunch House has a colorful _____ on the bed. Why would busy farm wives take the time to add decorative elements to a functional item?
5. In the Bunch House, fruits and vegetables are preserved by _____. What are some of the health hazards of this preservation method, and what extra precautions would pioneer wives have had to make?
6. The _____ was used to preserve and store meat. Why don't we use this method of preservation and storage anymore?
7. The _____ in the McClung House was used to make butter. You can still make butter today, with heavy cream and a food mixer. Do you ever wonder if you'd be willing to go to so much trouble for such a minor thing as butter?
8. Name three things in the McClung House which are improvements over similar items in the Arnwine Cabin and in the Dan'l Boone Cabin. How rustic a lifestyle would you be willing to have? What if you had no choice?
9. Primitive shoes were made on _____ seen in the Display Barn. Most pioneers and mountain folk couldn't afford shoes; and, even when they could get them, the shoes rarely fit very well. How comfortable do you think the shoes were? Compare pioneer shoes to your sneakers, in terms of comfort, style, and price.
10. Name the item hanging on the bedpost in the Dan'l Boone Cabin which was used by a crippled person, but which is not a cane or a crutch. _____ Have you ever seen or known someone with a prosthetic limb? Compare that to what you see on the bedpost.
11. A source of family entertainment found in the downstairs bedroom of the Homestead House is a _____. Why do you think music was so important to pioneers?
12. Butter, cheese, and many other perishables were kept fresh by storing them in a protected underground building called a _____. Why would a building that was partly underground be useful in preserving foodstuffs?
13. In the loft of the Loom House is a _____. How important was this item to pioneers?
14. The chicken house is slatted and faces east to make use of _____ heat. Discuss the importance of the egg in pioneer diets.

Remember that preserving the past for future generations is a responsibility we ALL share.

Answer Key for Page 3 of High School Guide

1. rifle
2. fireplace
3. corner cupboard
4. coverlet
5. canning
6. smokehouse
7. churn
8. *optional*
9. shoe forms or "lasts"
10. pegleg
11. fiddle
12. dairy
13. spinning wheel
14. solar