

WHITNEY
KIDS

VIDA AMERICANA

ACTIVITY GUIDE

WELCOME!

Vida Americana explores how American artists were inspired and influenced by the work of the Mexican muralists. American artists learned that they could depict social and political subjects that were relevant to people's lives. In this exhibition you can see how both Mexican and American artists used their art to fight for social justice and make the world a better place.

This guide focuses on works that our Museum educators feel are suitable for kids. Parents and guardians should note that a number of works in the exhibition are not appropriate for children. Please use discretion as you go through the galleries.

Major support for Education Programs is provided by the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation, the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, GRow @ Annenberg, Krystyna Doerfler, The Paul & Karen Levy Family Foundation, Steven Tisch, and Laurie M. Tisch.

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The lead sponsor for *Vida Americana: Mexican Muralists Remake American Art, 1925–1945* is the Jerome L. Greene Foundation



This exhibition is also sponsored by Citi; Citibanamex, its Mexican affiliate; and Delta and Aeromexico.



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New York magazine is the exclusive media sponsor.

Diego Rivera, *Flower Festival: Feast of Santa Anita*, 1931. Encaustic on canvas, 78½ x 64 in. (199.3 x 162.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York; gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, 1936. © 2020 Banco de México–Rivera–Kahlo/Artists Rights Society (ARS). Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York

Frida Kahlo, *Me and My Parrots*, 1941. Oil on canvas, 32⅝ x 24¼ in. (82 x 62.8 cm). Private collection. © 2020 Banco de México–Rivera–Kahlo/ARS

José Clemente Orozco, *Zapatistas*, 1931. Oil on canvas, 45 x 55 in. (114.3 x 139.7 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York; given anonymously, 1937. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, New York. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City

Jacob Lawrence, Panel 3 from *The Migration Series, From every Southern town migrants left by the hundreds to travel north*, 1940–41. Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in. (30.5 x 45.7 cm). The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC; acquired 1942. © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Aaron Douglas, *Aspiration*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 in. (152.4 x 152.4 cm). Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; museum purchase, the estate of Thurlow E. Tibbs Jr., the Museum Society Auxiliary, American Art Trust Fund, Unrestricted Art Trust Fund, partial gift of Dr. Ernest A. Bates, Sharon Bell, Jo-Ann Beverly, Barbara Carleton, Dr. and Mrs. Arthur H. Coleman, Dr. and Mrs. Coyne Ennix, Jr., Nicole Y. Ennix, Mr. and Mrs. Gary Francois, Dennis L. Franklin, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell C. Gillette, Mr.

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Aaron Douglas, *Into Bondage*, 1936. Oil on canvas, 60¾ x 60½ in. (153.4 x 153.7 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Corcoran Collection, museum purchase and partial gift from Thurlow Evans Tibbs, Jr., The Evans-Tibbs Collection. © 2020 Heirs of Aaron Douglas / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Charles White, *Progress of the American Negro: Five Great American Negroes*, 1939–40. Oil on canvas, 60 x 155 in. (152.4 x 393.7 cm). Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Harold Lehman, *The Driller* (mural, Rikers Island, New York), 1937. Tempera on fiberboard, 92¾ x 57½ in. (233.9 x 145 cm). Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; transfer from the Newark Museum 1966.31.11. © Estate of Harold Lehman. Image: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC / Art Resource, NY

Grace Greenwood, *Mining* (detail), 1935–36. Fresco. Abelardo L. Rodríguez Market, Mexico City. Photograph by Bob Schalkwijk

Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe*, 1934. Fresco, 15 ft. 9 in. x 37 ft. 6 in. (4.8 x 11.4 m). Palacio de Bellas Artes, INBAL, Mexico City. © 2020 Banco de México–Rivera–Kahlo/ARS. Reproduction authorized by El Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2020

David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Our Present Image*, 1947. Pyroxylin on fiberglass, 87⅞ x 66⅞ in. (223 x 175 cm). Museo de Arte Moderno, INBAL, Mexico City. © 2020 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City. Reproduction authorized by Reproduction authorized by El Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2020

Visit the Museum on Saturdays and Sundays for Open Studio, our drop-in artmaking workshops for families with kids of all ages. Check out whitney.org/Families for a full list of our Family Programs.

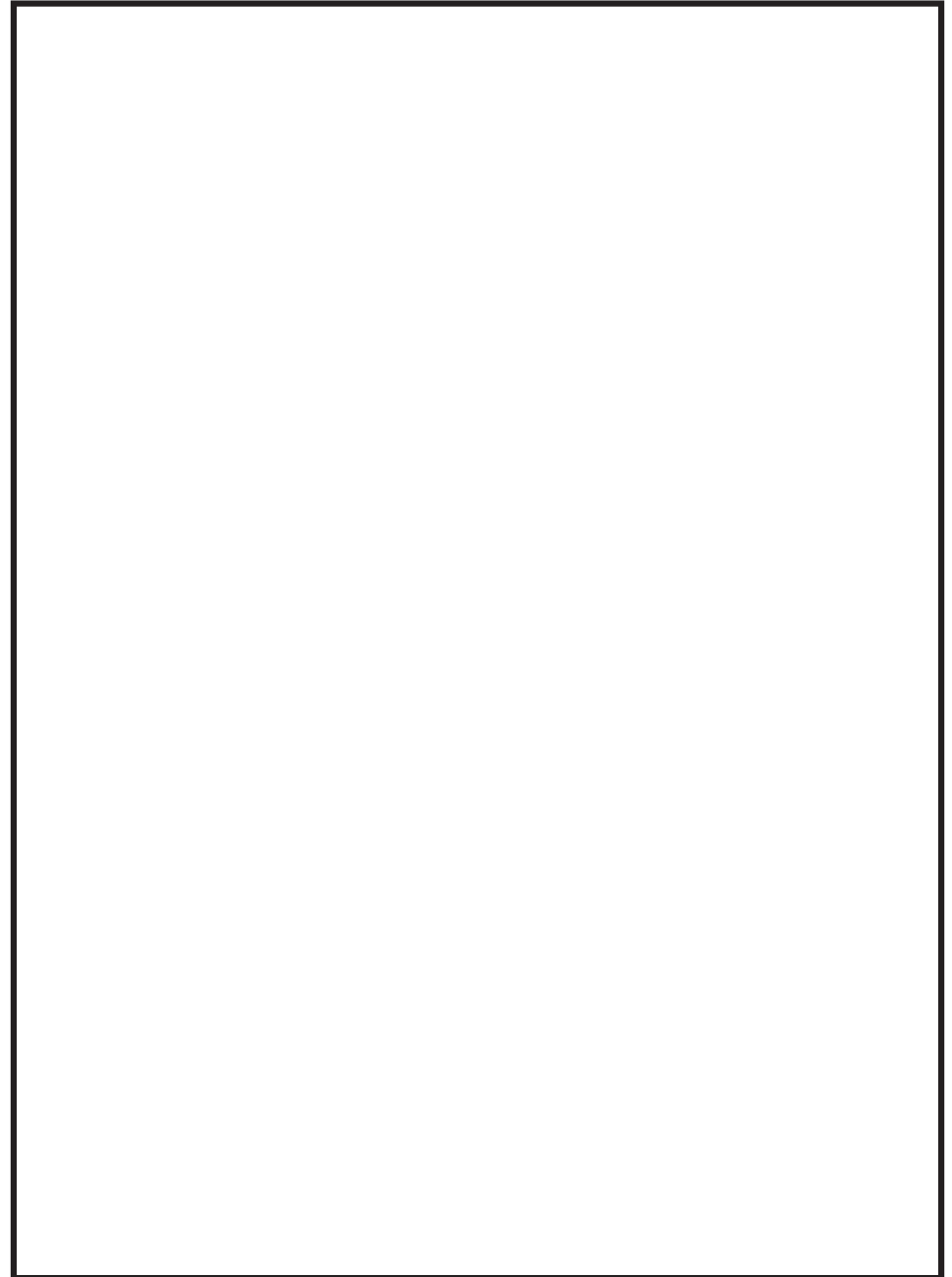
FLOWER POWER

Draw a celebration that you enjoy with your family every year. It can be a birthday, a holiday, or a special family event. Include everything you need for this celebration, such as food, decorations, and objects.

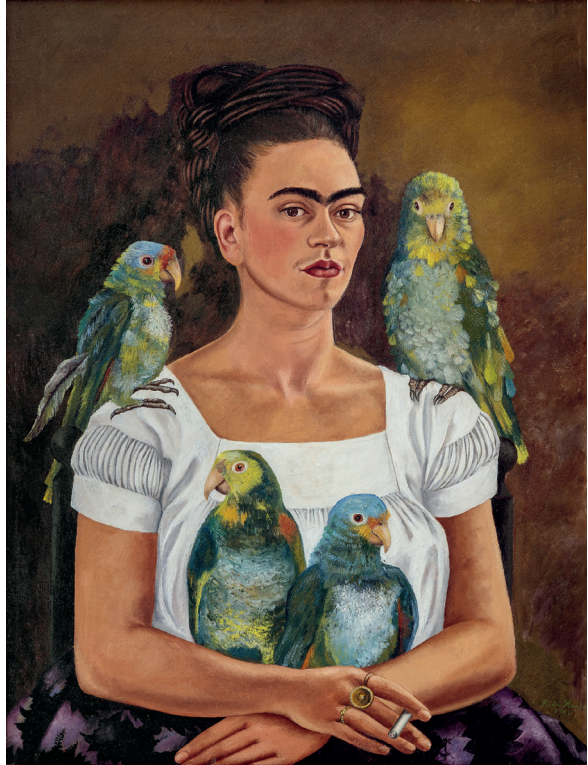


Diego Rivera, *Flower Festival: Feast of Santa Anita*, 1931

Diego Rivera used bold shapes and vivid colors to depict Indigenous peoples and honor Mexican identity, culture, and customs. He painted this scene of a flower festival in Mexico that takes place every year. The flowers represent the cycles of nature and of life. Look at the different ways that the people in this painting are holding and wearing flowers. What do you think they are doing?



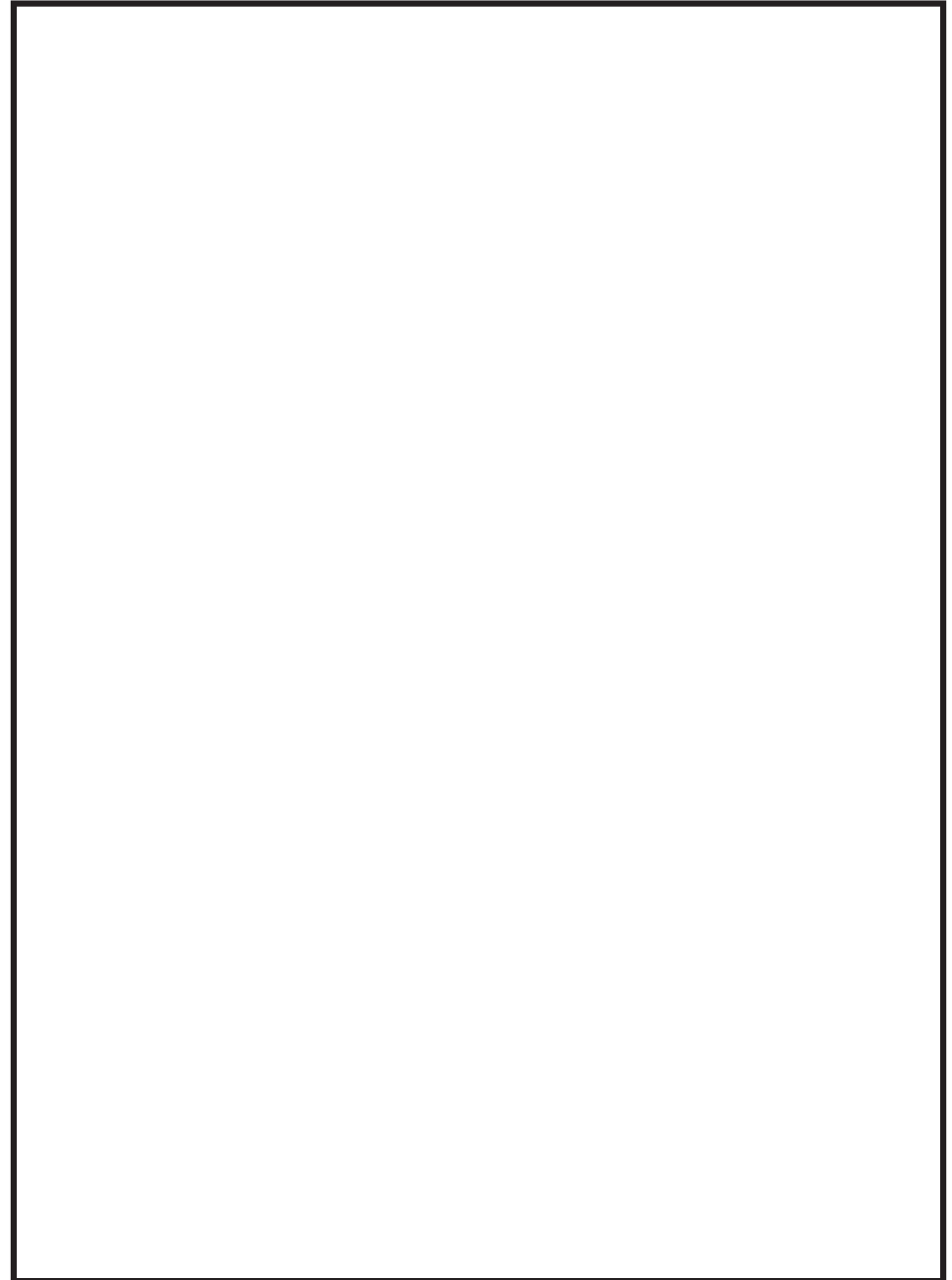
PARROT PORTRAIT



Frida Kahlo, *Me and My Parrots*, 1941

Frida Kahlo often made self-portraits. She painted herself wearing traditional clothes from different places in Mexico. Sometimes Kahlo posed with her pets, including monkeys, birds, a dog, or a cat. Here, she's sitting with four of her pet parrots. Notice where the parrots are perching. How do they relate to the artist and to us? If you made a self-portrait, what would you wear? Who or what would you surround yourself with?

Make a self-portrait surrounded by your favorite things. Think about what you would wear, how you would pose, and what else you might include in the picture.



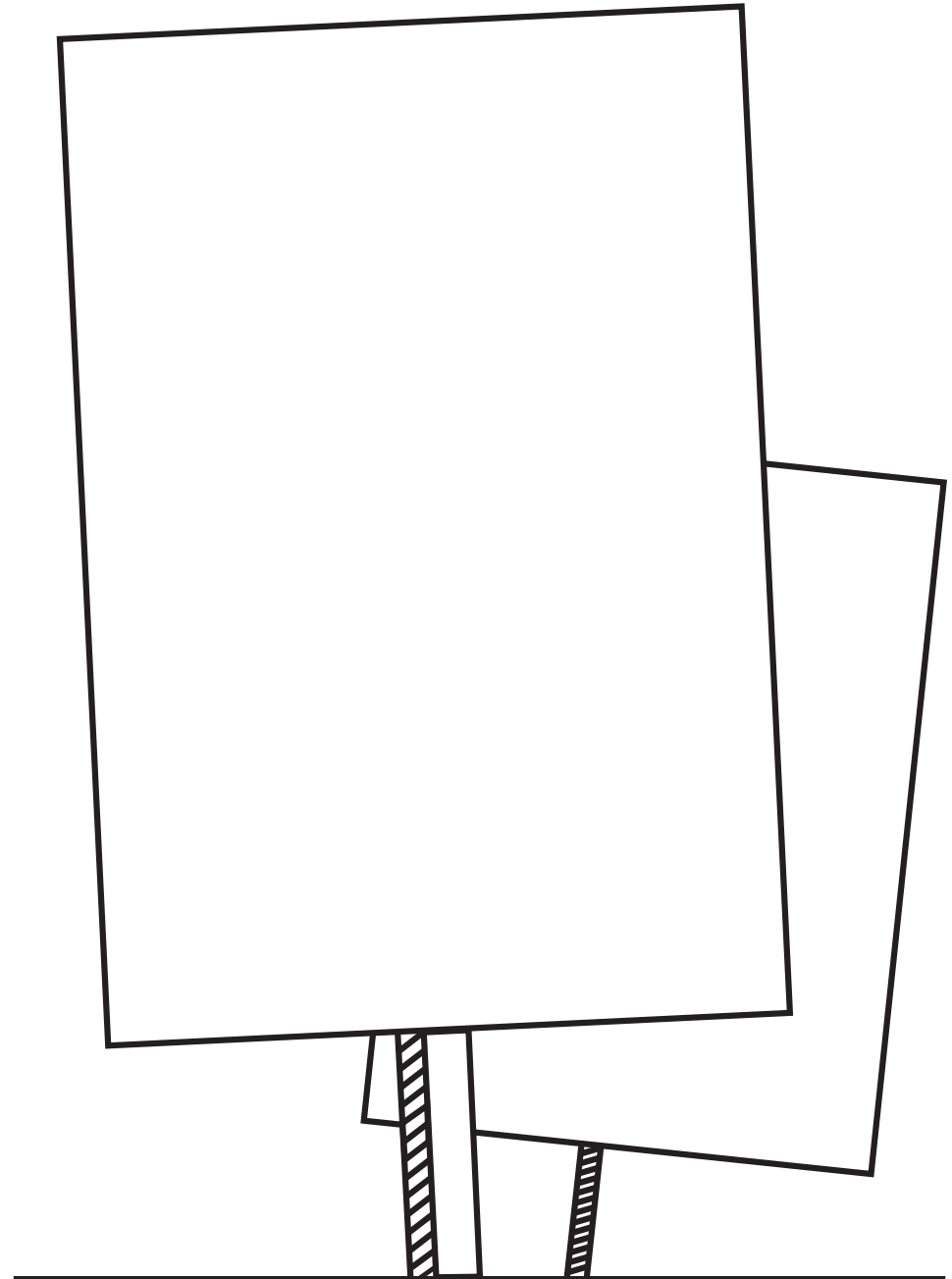
MARCHING ON

Think of something that you feel is important to communicate—it can be an issue from today or from the past. Use an image and words to communicate this issue.



José Clemente Orozco, *Zapatistas*, 1931

This painting shows a group of *Zapatistas*—farmers from southern Mexico who were led by Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919) in the Mexican Revolution during the early twentieth century. The men are marching to reclaim the land they worked on, which was taken from them by wealthy landowners. José Clemente Orozco used just a few colors to create the mood of this scene. Explore the composition of the figures. What rhythms and patterns can you see? Look closely at the men and what they are carrying. Can you spot any clues that tell us what might happen?



ON THE MOVE



Jacob Lawrence, Panel 3 from *The Migration Series*, *From every Southern town migrants left by the hundreds to travel north*, 1940–41

This painting is the third in a series of sixty panels that Jacob Lawrence made about the migration of African Americans from the southern United States to the North in the early twentieth century. Using a limited palette and silhouetted shapes, Lawrence painted a group of people traveling with their hats, bags, and boxes. What do you think they are carrying with them? What kinds of events or conditions might make people decide to migrate?

What would you take with you if you moved from one part of the country to another? Write a list of things you would bring.

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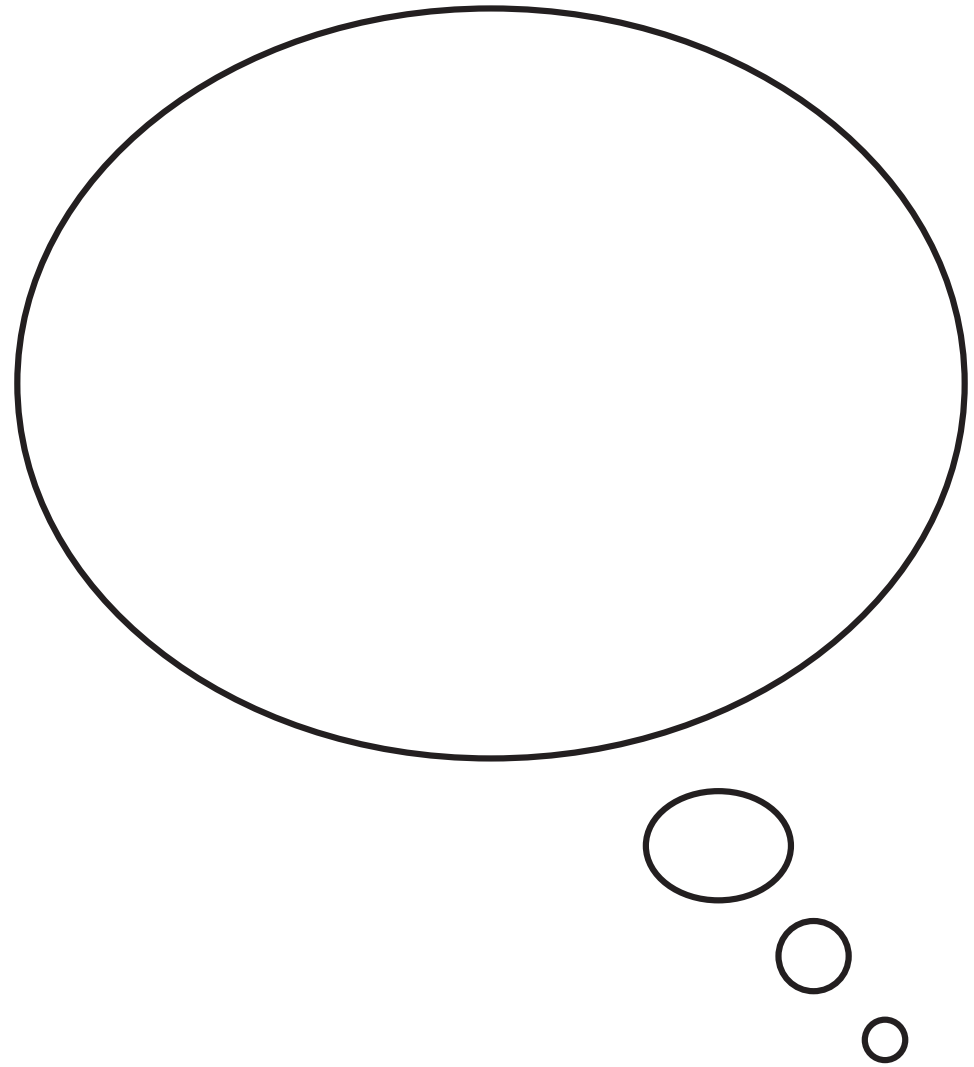
LAYERS OF HISTORY

What kind of world do you want to live in when you grow up? Make a sketch or write about your own hopes and dreams for the future.



Aaron Douglas, *Into Bondage and Aspiration*, 1936

These paintings are the two surviving mural panels of four that Aaron Douglas made to commemorate the history and achievements of African Americans. *Into Bondage* shows enslaved Africans bound for the Americas. *Aspiration* depicts the hopes that they might have for their future. Notice how Douglas used circles in both paintings to suggest sounds or songs. Compare the two panels. What other similarities and differences can you find?



HEROES & HEROINES

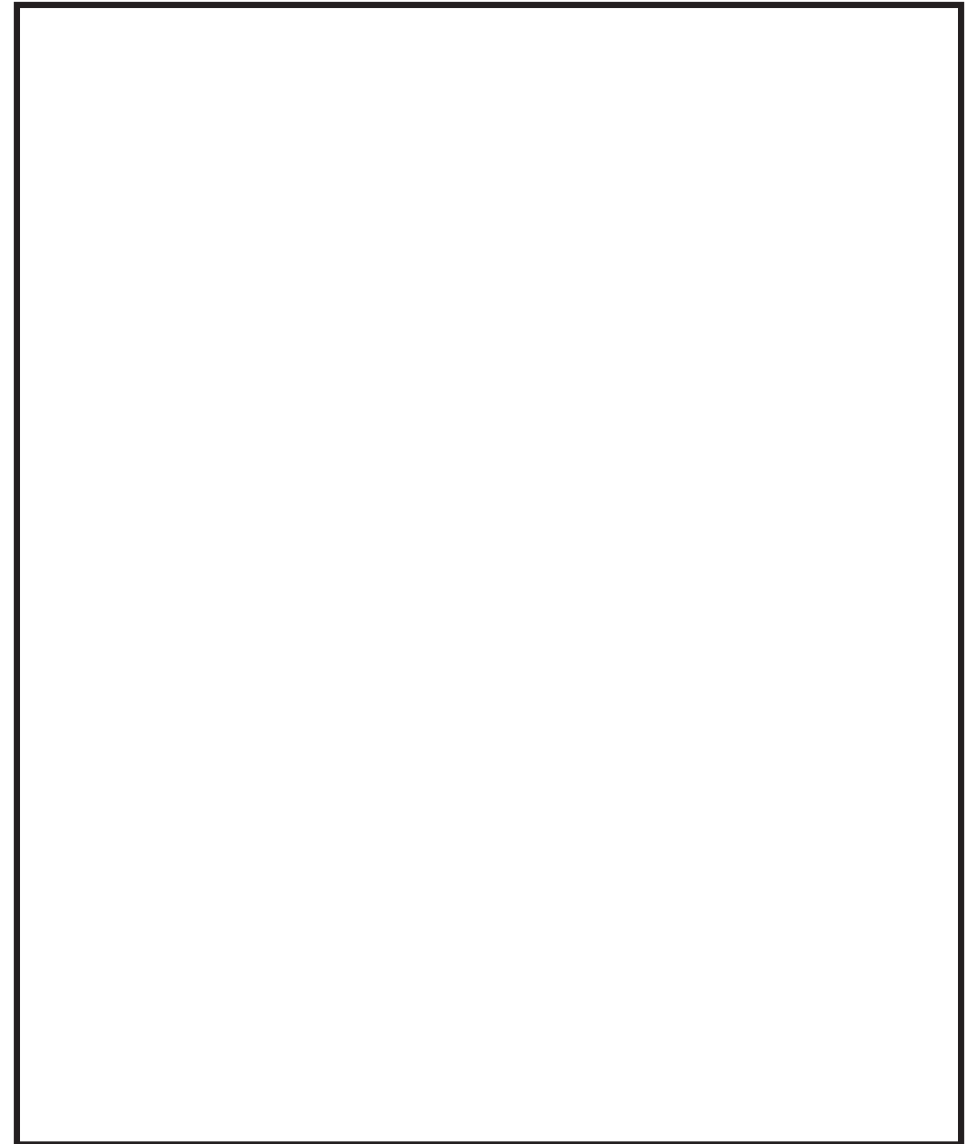
Draw a portrait of someone you think is heroic. It could be someone you know or a famous person. Include objects that provide clues to who they are and why you think they are awesome. Give your work a title.



Charles White, *Progress of the American Negro: Five Great American Negroes*, 1939–40

In this mural, Charles White depicted five great African Americans who were central to the history of the United States. They are the largest figures in the mural. Look at their body language and the objects close to them for clues that suggest who they might be. Can you find civil and women’s rights activist Sojourner Truth, educator Booker T. Washington, abolitionist Frederick Douglass who worked to end slavery, singer Marian Anderson, and scientist George Washington Carver?

When White chose the title for this mural in 1939–40, “negroes” was the term used to refer to African American people. Today, not only is this word not used, it is considered disrespectful.



Title: _____

DRILLING DOWN



Harold Lehman, *The Driller* (mural, Rikers Island, New York), 1937

In 1936, Harold Lehman joined the Federal Art Project, a program created by the United States government to help artists earn a living during the Great Depression. He also worked with Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros in New York and Los Angeles. Lehman painted *The Driller* as a study for a mural in the prisoners' dining hall at Rikers Island jail in New York City. In this painting, a man uses a powerful machine to drill into the red earth. What do you think this man is drilling for?

Use your imagination to draw what you might see beyond the edges of this painting, or even below the surface of the earth!



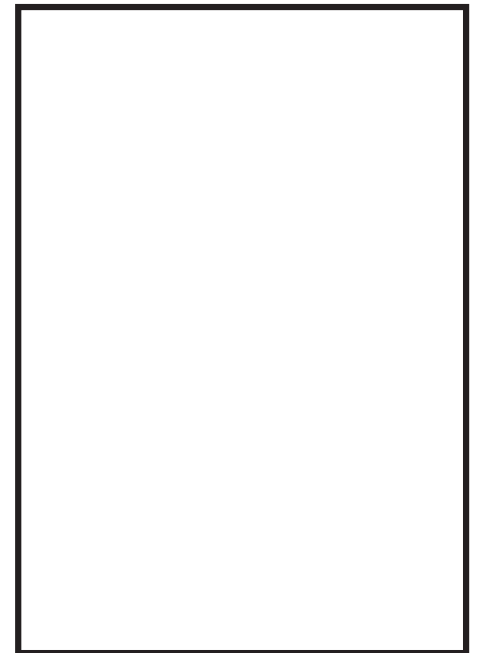
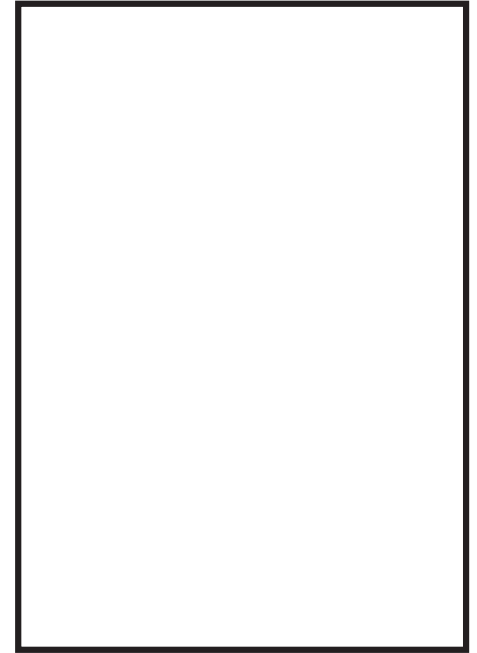
MARKET MURALS



Grace Greenwood, *Mining* (detail), 1935–36

This film installation is of a market in Mexico City that includes murals by ten artists, created when the building was constructed in the 1930s. Four of them were made by American artists. The subject of the murals was supposed to be how food is produced and the importance of health and cleanliness. The artists also wanted to draw attention to social and economic injustices. Take a moment to look at this film installation and imagine being surrounded by art while you shop for groceries!

Pick one thing that you buy at a grocery store, such as bread, cheese, eggs, fruit, or vegetables. Draw where it came from and how you think it got to the grocery store.



MURAL REVIVAL



Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe*,
1934, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City

This is a reproduction of a mural Diego Rivera first painted at Rockefeller Center in New York City. The artwork represents modern life and scientific achievements, and includes a portrait of Russian politician Vladimir Lenin. Businessman Nelson Rockefeller asked the artist to remove Lenin from the mural, but Rivera refused. Soon after, the mural was covered and eventually destroyed! Using black-and-white photographs taken before the destruction of the mural, Rivera repainted it in Mexico City. Which part of this mural catches your eye? Why?

Look for these objects in the mural:

- ☐ An old-fashioned microscope
- ☐ A pineapple
- ☐ An X-ray of a skull
- ☐ Cells
- ☐ War planes
- ☐ A star
- ☐ A tortoise
- ☐ A giant machine

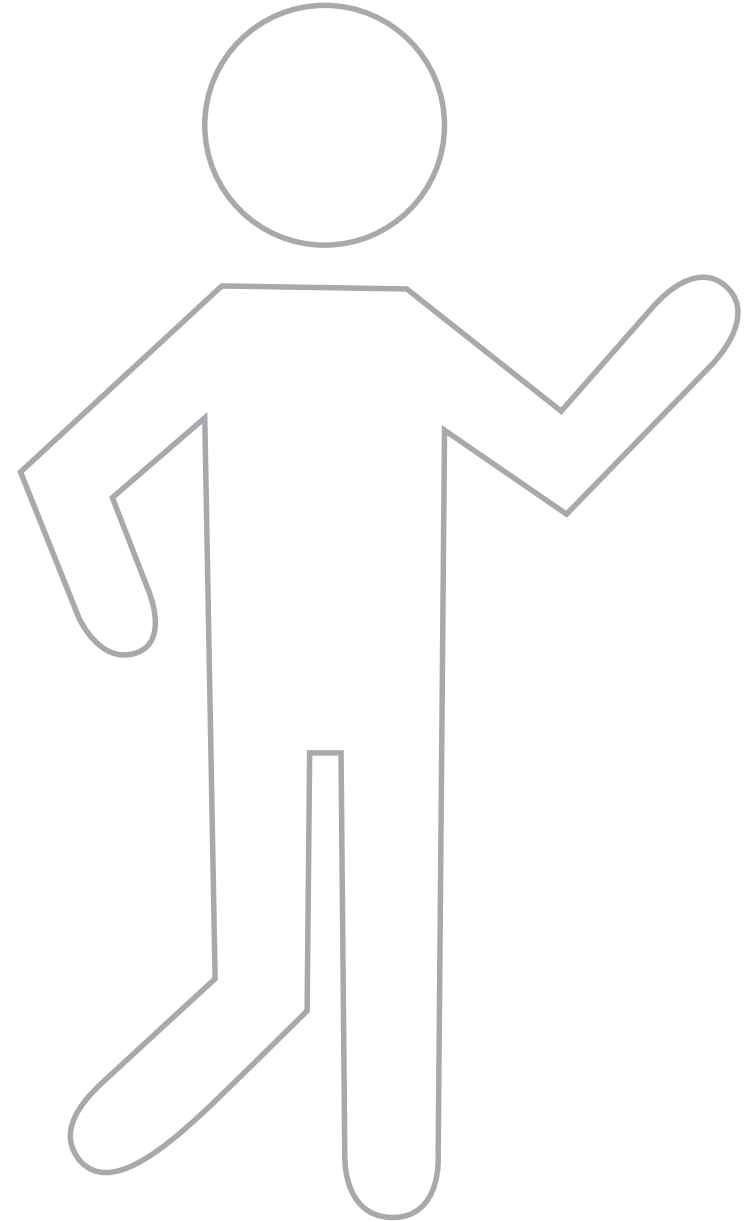
BIG HANDS



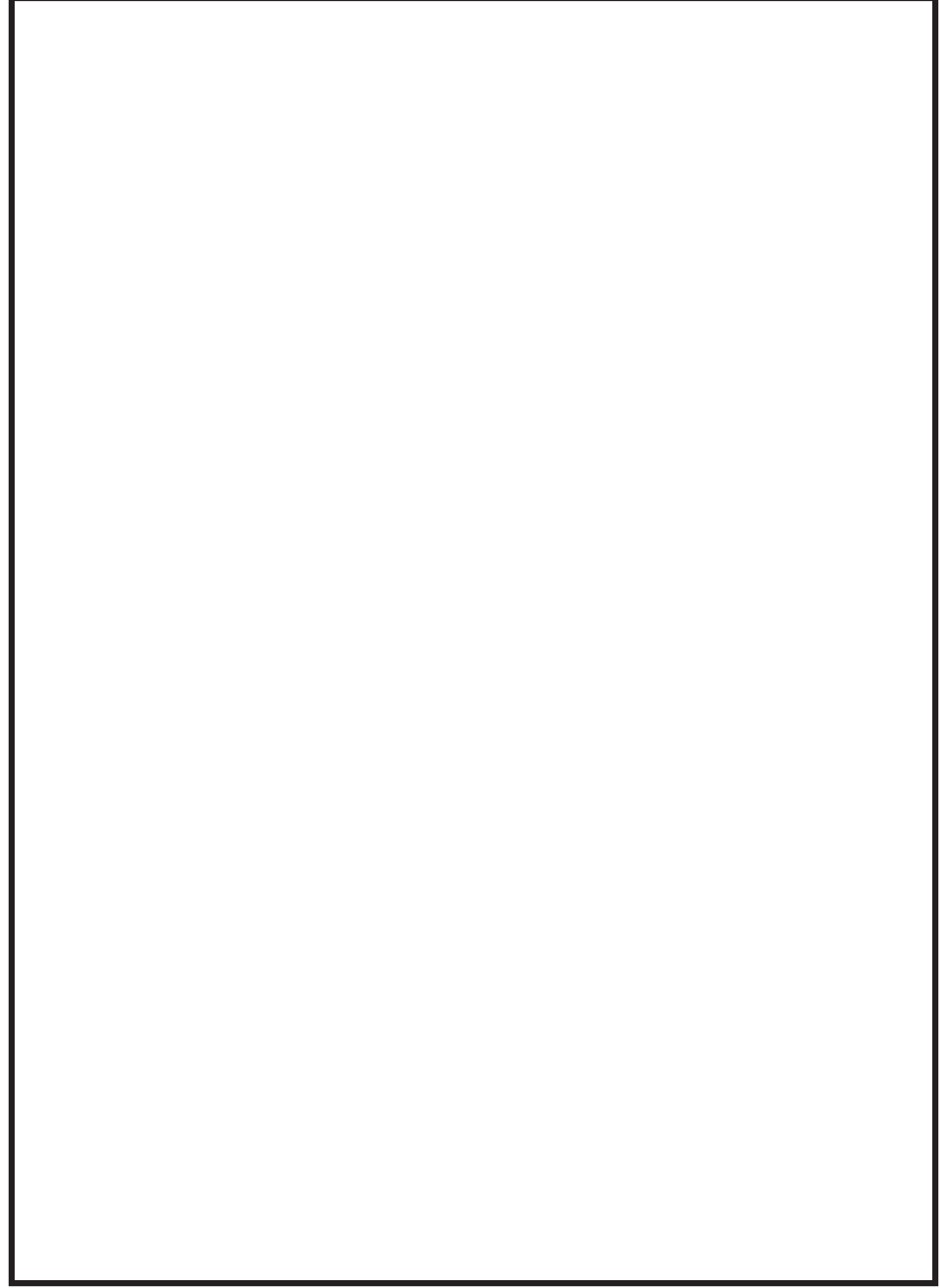
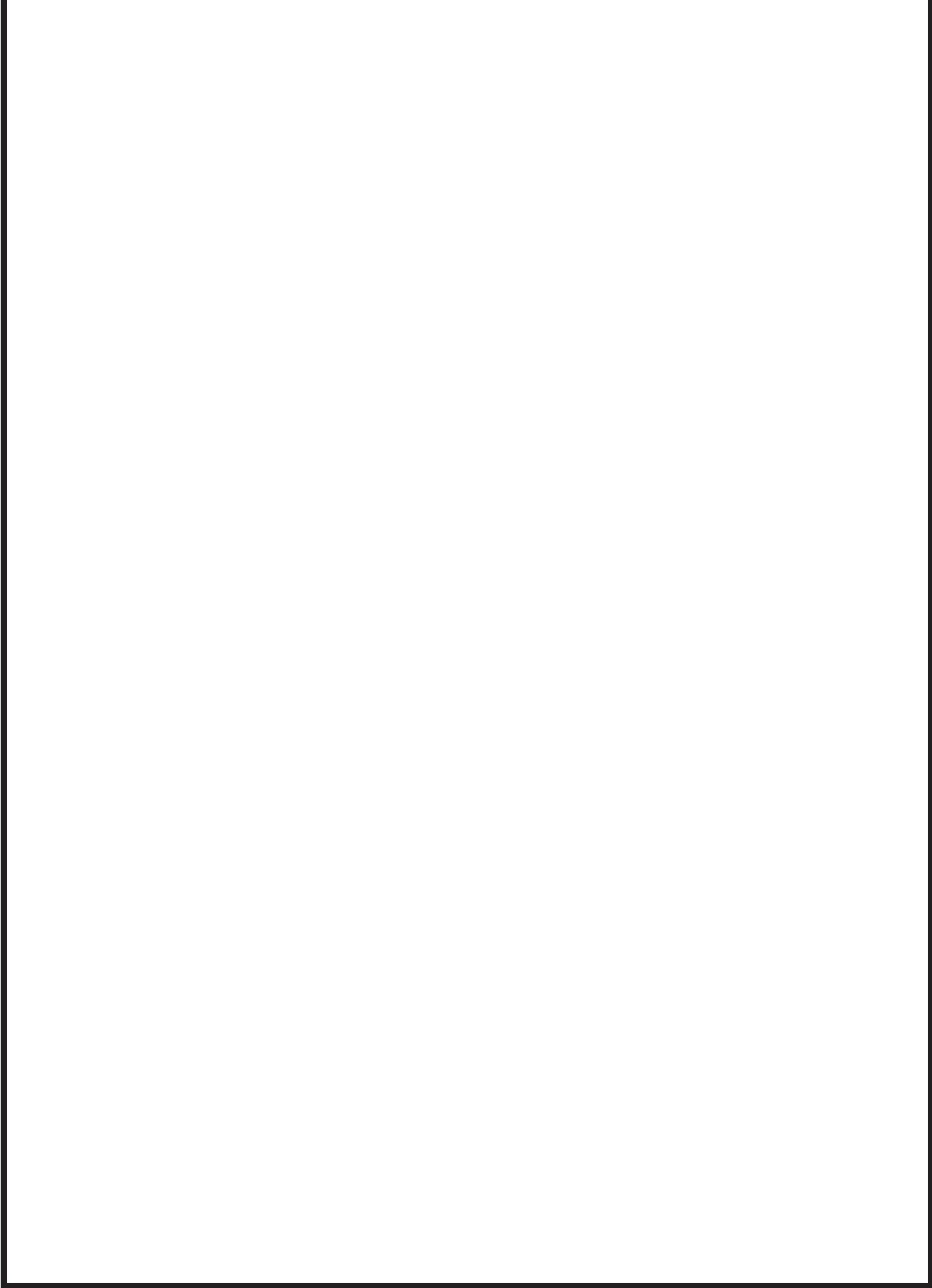
David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Our Present Image*, 1947

In *Our Present Image*, David Alfaro Siqueiros replaced the face of a worker with a stone to represent not just one race or nationality, but all humans. Look closely at this work from different angles—left, right, center, close up, and further away. How does the painting change as you move around it? To the artist, the figure's outstretched hands symbolized the worker's power and strength.

Siqueiros used a stone for this figure's head. Think of objects from nature that symbolize something meaningful to you: for example, a plant, fruit, tree branch, shell, star, or gemstone. Add them to this figure.



**KEEP
DRAWING**



**SIGUE
DIBUJANDO**