

# ANCHORAGE MUSEUM

## GRADE 11: ART AS PRACTICE

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**SIMON KOONOOK**  
***ATTUNGARUK THE 3RD'S WHALE, 1980***

Acrylic on canvas  
Anchorage Museum collection  
1980.25.1



## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

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Simon Koonook (1956 – 1996) was born in Point Hope, Alaska, and is known for his portrayal of life in the Arctic. He illustrated *Whaling: a Way of Life* (1980) and *Shadow of the Hunter: Stories of Eskimo Life* (1980).

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

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*Attungaruk the 3rd's Whale* was originally composed in watercolor and later repainted in acrylic. This finalized version won the juror's choice in the 15th annual all-Alaska Juries Art Exhibition in 1980. Koonook depicts his father, Attungaruk, and his crew as they work to process a whale after a successful hunt.

## KEY TERMS

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WHALING	The practice or industry of hunting and killing whales for their resources such as oil, meat, or whalebone
AĠVAŅNIAQ	North Slope Iñupiaq verb meaning to hunt bowhead whales
MAKTAK	North Slope Iñupiaq term for traditional meal of whale skin and blubber
FLENSING	The act of slicing the skin or fat from a carcass, especially that of a whale. From the Danish word “flensa”
AĠVIQ	North Slope Iñupiaq term for bowhead whale
COMMUNAL	Involving the sharing of work and property; relating to or done by a community

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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Whaling in Alaska has occurred for many generations. A 2005 archaeological excavation in Gambell, Alaska found an ice cellar with a section of whale dated to be around 1000 years old. An analysis of tissue samples found that the whale is related to the modern whale populations of the area and likely ate a similar diet.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has been important in guiding scientific studies on whales within the North Slope. By consulting communities with generations of lived experience, scientists have updated their methods of population counting, age estimation, as well as their knowledge of sea ice and the arctic environment.

Prior to the integration of TEK and western science, overhunting by western whaling vessels depleted whaling populations. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) placed quotas based on population measurements using conventional scientific methods of the time without consulting Indigenous communities who participated in whaling. Low population estimates led to a ban on whaling in 1977. The establishment of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission soon after sought to preserve Iñupiaq and Siberian Yupik whaling rights and continues to work with the IWC and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to better develop scientific understanding of whales, their



environment, as well as develop responsible quotas that respect community requirements while maintaining healthy whale populations.

## INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

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Begin this art lesson by looking and discussing about the artwork together for 10 to 15 minutes.

**CLOSE-LOOKING** Invite students to look closely, quietly at the artwork.

**OBSERVE** Invite students to share observations about the artwork.

**ASK**

- *What is going on in this artwork?*
- *Describe the parts of the image that stand out to you.*
- *What looks familiar to you, what is new to you?*
- *How does the title affect your understanding of the artwork?*
- *What does it remind you of?*
- *What more do you see?*
- *What more can you find?*

**DISCUSS** USE [20 Questions Deck](#) for more group discussion questions about the artwork.

**LEARN MORE**

- About whaling in Alaska:  
<https://iwc.int/alaska>
- Iñupiaq values:  
<http://ankn.uaf.edu/ANCR/Values/Inupiaq.html>
- Artwork from Whaling: A Way Of Life:  
<http://www.alaskool.org/projects/traditionallife/WhalingAWOL/Graphicindx.htm#>
- English Translation of Whaling: A Way Of Life:  
<http://www.alaskool.org/projects/traditionallife/WhalingAWOL/WHALING-English.html>
- Traditional Ecological Knowledge of bowhead whales in the North Slope:  
<http://www.north-slope.org/departments/wildlife-management/studies-and-research-projects/bowhead-whales/traditional-ecological-knowledge-of-bowhead-whales>
- About Harry Brower Sr. and use of TEK to change scientific approaches to counting whale populations:  
<http://www.north-slope.org/assets/images/uploads/The%20Influence%20of%20Harry%20Brower,%20Sr..pdf>
- About the AEWC:  
<http://www.aewc-alaska.org/about-us.html>
- 2018 Whaling quota decision:  
[http://www.thearticsouder.com/article/1933joint\\_celebration\\_honors\\_2018\\_whaling\\_quota](http://www.thearticsouder.com/article/1933joint_celebration_honors_2018_whaling_quota)



- Anchorage Museum Bowhead whale resource:  
<https://www.anchoragemuseum.org/programs/for-educators/resources/bow-head-whale/>

## PART I: EN PLEIN AIR

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<b>TIME FRAME</b>	2 class periods
<b>MATERIALS</b>	<p>Pencil to sketch</p> <p>Line paper for drafting ideas</p> <p>8.5" x 11" paper</p> <p>11" x 17" paper</p> <p>Tempera, watercolor, or acrylic paint</p> <p>Color pencils</p> <p>Markers</p> <p>Crayons</p>
<b>DIRECTIONS</b>	<p>Day one:</p> <p><b>1.</b> [15 mins] Return to the artwork. Invite students to consider the different roles and level of cooperation needed for a successful whale harvest. <i>Attungruk the 3rd's Whale</i> was initially composed in watercolor, then painted anew in acrylic. The painting depicts a communal harvest, full of life and detail. Invite students to discuss with each other communal activities. Prompt students to consider:</p> <p><i>What types of communal activities do they participate in? Sports? Extracurriculars? Classes?</i></p> <p><i>What makes the activity communal?</i></p> <p><i>Who is involved?</i></p> <p><i>How do participants work in various roles to accomplish a communal task?</i></p> <p><b>2.</b> [10 mins] Assign students groups of three to four. Invite groups to list common communal activities and then share their ideas with the class. Create a class list of communal activities.</p> <p><b>3.</b> [15 mins] Invite students to select one of these activities and collaborate on a preliminary sketch of their activity on one standard 8.5" x 11" paper. Prompt students to engage and discuss their individual placements within the sketch and take turns drawing their portion.</p> <p>Day two:</p> <p><b>4.</b> [30 mins] After the preliminary sketch, hand each student an 11" x 17" sheet of paper. Invite students to use a variety of mediums other than pencil to re-create their group's sketch individually. Encourage students to recreate the sketch in a different medium than the other members of their group.</p>



5. [10 mins] After finishing their artworks, invite students sign and title them and to present what mediums they used with the class and how it differed with working in pencil. Prompt students to discuss how creating collaboratively differs from working independently.

## ASSESSMENT

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Students will be assessed based on their participation in the discussion, completion of the two projects, and art presentation to class.

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For more teaching resources, visit [anchoragemuseum.org/teachingresources](https://anchoragemuseum.org/teachingresources)

Educational resources at the Anchorage Museum are made possible with the support of the Hearst Foundation.

