

# History and Memory

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## Theme 3: History and Memory

### Introduction

Art has been a medium through which people have not only documented, but also shaped history—both past and future. Periodically, individuals, groups, and societies have also drawn on or appropriated artistic forms of the past to make statements in and about the present. Art can commemorate existence, achievements, and failures, and it can be used to record and create communal as well as personal memories.

## Session

### Review:

1. Share your responses to the comparison questions for Dreams and Visions.
2. Share any other questions or ideas prompted by the previous assignment.

**Watch the History and Memory video (30 minutes).**

### Consider/discuss the following:

1. How does art have an effect on our ideas about historical events? What are the roles and responsibilities of artists in presenting historical depictions?
2. Societies use art to commemorate certain important individuals in their history or to memorialize significant events. What types of markers of historical memory do you encounter during your normal daily routine? Why do you pay attention or ignore those commemorations? What memorials have you traveled to view personally? Why was this monument meaningful enough for you to visit?
3. Some historical events and figures remain in the forefront of a culture's collective memory, while others, who may have been as influential, fade away. How has art assisted in the keeping events or people in the foreground of the collective memory?
4. Often art presents certain events that will prompt different responses, depending on who views it, and when and where it is viewed. What responsibility does the art viewer have in interpreting the accuracy of its message and legacy?
5. In some instances, objects originally used as mnemonic devices to prompt memories become objects of art. What shifts our perceptions of an object that elevates it in such a way?

### Between Sessions:

Go to the Web site at [www.learner.org/courses/globalart](http://www.learner.org/courses/globalart) and:

1. Explore featured artworks from this program, including the descriptive text and the expert perspective commentary.
2. Read the chapter about History and Memory in the downloadable text.
3. On the Web, compare selected artworks by considering the questions posed. Prepare to share your responses by taking notes. Bring your notes to the next session.