Life Skills:  
Communication, Accepting Differences

What to Do:  
Determine what is art.

Measuring Success:  
Youths can determine what kind of art they like as individuals and as a group.

Audience:  
4th-12th grades

Time Involved:  
30-60 minutes

Group Size:  
5-12 is best

Preparation and Materials
- Ask youths to bring examples of art from other countries to the meeting. Don’t give them more details than to say that a photo or clipping from a magazine is OK. During the week, assemble diverse examples of art from different countries (i.e., a poster, plate or bowl, decorated towel, dance video, musical recording, poem, photo of architecture or flower arrangements, doll, postage stamp, wall hangings, wood carvings).
- Map of the world.

Introduction
Most cultures around the world have expressed themselves through art. The arts include painting, crafts, sculpture, architecture, theatre, dance, literature, and music. What is meant by “art” around the world? Do you have a favorite kind of art?

The Activity  
Part I
I’d like everyone to display his or her example of art. Go ahead and move around and view each other’s examples. You may comment on someone else’s art but you may not describe your own or answer any questions about it. (Allow enough time for everyone to see each example.)
Reflect/Discuss

Share What you Did

What did you observe when you viewed others’ examples?

Tell What’s Important

Which examples of art did you like? Which ones didn’t you like?
Do you question whether some examples are really art? What is art?
Can you determine country of origin for each example?

Part II

Now I’d like you to display your examples of art, tell what country they come from, and why you selected the item. You may ask questions and comment on the art if you like. Let’s locate the countries represented by the different art examples on a map.

Reflect/Discuss

Tell What’s Important

Are you more interested in some forms of art now that you know a little more about them?
What is art?

Generalize to Your Life

Do you like one medium (type of art) more than the others? Why?
List characteristics of art that you like and those that you dislike.

Apply

What are the desirable characteristics of art? *(Discuss until you can all agree on criteria for judging the art, i.e. it grabs our attention; it teaches us something; it uses color to send a message.)*

More Challenges

- Write a one-page essay starting with these words: “For me art is…” Find two definitions of art in different places that you can use in your essay. Read your essay to the group.
- Invite a local artist to speak to your group on “what is art”; explore books in the library for more information about international art; visit a local art gallery or crafts show; attend a concert or show; rent a foreign film video; ask a foreign student to discuss art with the group – have the guest bring examples of art, if possible; study a particular art form such as dance; pick a country and study all art forms.
- Select a country and explore the art forms that most represent that country. For example, if your group selects Mexico, you will want to discuss fine arts, music, dance, and literature. How does art reveal the values of a culture? How does it reflect the environment from which it came? Encourage members to compare and contrast the art from their selected country with that of the United States.
- As the grand finale of the activity, prepare an art show with works from around the world. The show should include examples of as many different art forms as possible. This could be a display at a local fair promoting international studies. Contact travel agents and embassies for posters. The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and UNICEF will send you reproductions of posters free of charge. In addition, your local library may have reproductions you can take out on loan. Foreign exchange students may be a local source, too.