

Grade/Unit #	6th Grade Unit 3: Expressing Yourself: Women in the Arts
Lesson #	1
Objective:	- Students will use evidence from the article to support inferences about the Guerrilla Girls' goals and message. - Students will compare information from the article and video to explain the strategies the Guerrilla Girls use to challenge inequality in the art world. <u>Grammar Focus:</u> Concrete Nouns Throughout this unit, students are investigating the lives and artistic contributions of women artists of color and how their experiences shape their art and identity in order to understand how self-expression through art can reflect identity, overcome barriers, and empower individuals and communities.
Standards:	RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.4, RI.6.5, RI.6.7, W.6.1, W.6.4, G.11.a-i
Materials:	 6th Unit 3 Knowledge Tracker- Women in the Arts  6.3.1 student packet  6.3.1 - No Target Task- See Teacher Note Below "The Guerrilla Girls: 'We upend the art world's notion of what's good and what's right'"- Print 1 per student "Guerrilla Girls – 'You Have to Question What You See': Artist Interview"- Video
Lesson Summary:	- Unit Launch - Inference Review - Read "The Guerrilla Girls" Article and Watch Video - Discussion - Writing - Teacher Choice: - Review Strong Inference Making in Writing - Review Concrete Nouns - HW
Lesson Flow and Big Idea	This lesson launches the unit by introducing students to the power of artistic expression and the important contributions of women, especially women of color, in the arts. Students begin by exploring a range of influential female artists and discussing how art can reflect identity, empowerment, and social change. They then review the unit's essential questions, writing expectations, and vocabulary before transitioning into a study of the Guerrilla Girls, a feminist art collective that uses art, humor, and activism to expose inequality in the art world. Through reading, discussion, inference work, and a video analysis, students examine how the Guerrilla Girls communicate their message and challenge audiences to think critically about representation and fairness in museums and galleries. The lesson builds foundational understanding for the unit's central idea: art is a powerful tool for self-expression, advocacy, and creating change. Students conclude by reflecting on the Guerrilla Girls' message and reviewing concrete nouns as part of the unit's grammar focus.

Summative Writing Prompts and Projects For This Unit	<u>Essay Response (6.3.8-6.3.10)</u> - Explain how the legal conflict between Misty’s mother and the Bradleys shaped Misty. What did she learn from this experience, and how did it influence her perspective and who she became?– Essay (intro, 2 body paragraphs, conclusion) <u>Essay Response (6.3.19-6.3.20)</u> - How do female artists, especially female artists of color, use art to express their identities, overcome challenges, and empower themselves and others? Use examples from the unit to explain their impact and hopes for the future of the art world.– Essay (Intro, 3 body, Conclusion) Teacher Note: Optional to make the essay 2 body paragraphs <u>Artist Presentation (6.3.22-6.3.26)</u> - In this project, you will work in small groups to research and create a slideshow presentation about a contemporary woman artist. Your presentation will educate your classmates about this artist's background, their unique artistic style, and the response to and impact of their work. Each group member will also select one artwork and present a brief analysis of it independently. Your slideshow presentation should include: - At least one photograph of the artist - One slide including biographical/background information on this person - One slide describing their artistic style - One slide describing the response to their work and the impact it has had - Slides featuring different artworks for each group member to present on (three group members = three different artworks, each analyzed by a different person) - Speaker notes that will be helpful for a successful presentation  6th Unit 3 Presentations Materials
Homework :	Read pages 1-8 of <i>Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina</i> and answer comprehension and grammar questions

Teacher Note:

The list below outlines the key writing and grammar focuses for this unit. Use these as a guide during individual student conferences, and look for opportunities throughout the unit to highlight when these skills appear in the text or in students’ work.

- Writing Focuses:
 - Argumentative/Informational:
 - Synthesizes notes from multiple book parts to write an informative piece.
 - Uses transitions to organize and strengthen a persuasive argument.
- Grammar Focuses:
 - G.11.a-i Identify nouns, including abstract nouns, and capitalize them correctly
 - G.11a-ii -Define pronouns as words that take the place of nouns, and identify and correctly use pronouns.
 - G.11a-iii Identify the antecedent for a pronoun and ensure pronoun-antecedent agreement.

Note: The Women in the Arts unit has been updated based on feedback from the 2025–26 school year. For writing prompts that remain unchanged, student writing samples from the 2025–26 school year and a teacher example will be included. These samples will be attached at the end of each lesson to show the expected level of writing and provide guidance for instruction and responding to prompts. For writing prompts that have changed, a teacher example will be provided.

Teacher Note: Students should keep every article they read throughout this unit, as they will need them for the end-of-unit essay.

Teacher Note- No Target Task

There is no target task for this lesson in order to allow sufficient time for discussion and to ensure students fully understand the Guerrilla Girls' message. The issue of women and women of color being underrepresented in the art world is a central idea that drives this unit and connects directly to the unit's broader theme: *Art is a powerful tool for self-expression, and despite ongoing barriers of prejudice and discrimination, women and minority artists use their voices and mentorship to empower communities and celebrate diverse identities.*

Instead of completing a longer paragraph response, students will respond to an exit ticket in which they briefly explain the Guerrilla Girls' message and why it is important. This provides teachers with an opportunity to check for understanding while keeping the focus on discussion and critical thinking.

Unit Launch (15 minutes)

- **(5 minutes) Ask:** Go through slides 1–6 and see if you recognize any of the artists featured. If you do, share what you know about them! If you don't, that's perfectly fine. The purpose of this unit is to broaden our understanding of the impact of women in the arts and to introduce you to a variety of female artists of color whose work has made a difference in the art world.
 - **Slide 2:** Frida Kahlo- known for her symbolic self-portraits that explore pain, identity, and the human body. She became a pioneering female artist and a symbol of Mexican culture, blending realism, fantasy, and folk art in vibrant, expressive works.
 - **Slide 3:** Beyoncé is a singer, songwriter, and actress known for her powerful vocals, groundbreaking music, and iconic performances. She rose to fame with Destiny's Child and as a solo artist, becoming the most-awarded artist in Grammy history and a global cultural icon.
 - **Slide 4:** BLACKPINK is a world-famous South Korean girl group known for their empowering music, catchy songs, and bold performances. They are popular worldwide, break records on YouTube and Spotify, and are cultural icons. The members are Jisoo, Jennie, Rosé, and Lisa
 - **Slide 5:** The artist is Silvia López Chavez, and her mural, *Rise*, is located at the Boston Harbor Shipyard and Marina in East Boston. Chavez is a Dominican-American visual artist who works in painting, printmaking, and murals. Her community-centered work creates connections across disciplines and cultural boundaries, and much of it is informed by her experience as an Afro-Caribbean woman living and working in Boston.
 - **Teacher Note:** Students will likely be unfamiliar with this artist, but it is worth asking students if they recognize this mural in East Boston. The purpose of including Chavez is to highlight a local female artist who has a mural on display in Boston.
- **(2 minutes) Say:** Our next unit is going to focus on studying the transformative power of artistic expression and how artists, especially women of color, use their work to overcome barriers, express identity, and inspire change. In this next unit, we are going to focus on reading informational texts, analyzing authors' choices, and evaluating how information from nonfiction texts can benefit the reader. All of the texts in this unit will center on the topic of "women in the arts."
- **(3 minutes) Ask:** Look at page 2 of the knowledge tracker. Review the Essential Questions and share your insights on what you think these questions might help students explore and understand about artists, self-expression, and identity.
 - What can individuals achieve through self-expression?
 - How does creating art both reflect and deepen an individual's sense of identity?
 - How do female artists—and specifically female artists of color—use art as a medium for empowerment?

- **Note:** Point out the important note for students that is under the essential questions, but explain that we will dig into that more later in the unit when we learn more about Copeland and other artists, but for now it's important to know that it is there.
- **(3 minutes)** Use this time to review the “Demonstration of Mastery” for this unit on pages 2–3. Also, direct students’ attention to the vocabulary chart on pages 4–7, the transition chart on page 15 (one of the writing focuses for this unit is using transitions to organize and strengthen a persuasive argument) and the new character trait words on page 14 as a helpful resource.
 - **Note:** As the unit progresses, students will begin tracking key events and ideas from the various articles we read. They do not need to focus on that during this lesson.
- **(2 minutes) Ask:** What are you excited about for this unit?

Inference Review (7 minutes)

- **(2 minutes) Say:** Women have historically been underrepresented and barred from the art world, especially women of color. Today, we are going to read about a specific group of women who decided to do something about it. In today’s lesson, we are going to look at the work of the Guerrilla Girls, an arts collective that focuses on members of society whose art is often not celebrated. As we read, some details will be explicit and clearly stated, but other ideas you’ll need to figure out by making inferences about the Guerrilla Girls based on evidence from the text.
- **(3 minutes) Ask:** What is an inference?
 - **Teacher Note:** Students did inference work in Unit 2 in which they had to infer Byron’s reaction to going to Birmingham as well as how Kenny and his parents might feel about different events in the text. The definition is also in the knowledge tracker for students to use
 - Inference: an educated guess based on details in the story and prior knowledge to make meaning
- **(2 minutes) Say:** When analyzing a text, we often need to make inferences, which means figuring out ideas that aren’t stated directly. To do this, readers examine the details in the text and use them to draw reasonable conclusions. Today and throughout this unit, we’ll practice making thoughtful inferences and supporting them with evidence from the texts. This skill will help you build a strong foundation for your end-of-unit essay, where you’ll explain how female artists use art to express their identities, overcome challenges, and empower others.

Read “The Guerrilla Girls” Article (30 minutes)

Teacher Note: Throughout this part of the lesson, if students ask whether there are more male artists than female artists, explain that while it is a complicated question to answer (in large part because it is hard to be a working artist if people do not buy your work, and it is clearly hard to get people to buy your work if you are female), we do know that the majority of people who get degrees in studio art are actually women. So, this does not explain why museums are not buying the work of female artists.

Teacher Note: Consider sharing what the following terms are before reading the article to support students' understanding of the topic:

- The Museum of Modern Art: Located in New York City, MOMA is one of the largest and most important collections of modern art in the world.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art: The largest art museum in the United States, with work from many different time periods and places in the world (also located in New York)

- **Note:** Definitions are on slide 7
- **(2 minutes) Say:** Today, we are going to read about a group called the Guerrilla Girls. As we read, we will make inferences about who they are as people (not their actual identities!), the problems they are trying to expose in the art world, and how they communicate their message and persuade audiences.
- **(3 minutes)** Before students start reading, show slide 6 and review the differences between the words “Guerrilla” and “Gorilla” so that students understand that although the words sound similar, they have very different meanings and spellings. Explain that “guerrilla” refers to a fighter who uses surprise tactics in conflict, while “gorilla” is a large ape.
- **(8 minutes)** Students read “The Guerrilla Girls: We upend the art world’s notion of what’s good and what’s right” independently. Students should annotate important notes explaining who the Guerrilla Girls are, what their message is, and how they convey it.
- **(5 minutes) Ask:** Who are the Guerrilla Girls? What do they do?
 - The Guerrilla Girls are a group of feminist artists who have been active since 1985. They speak out against sexism and unfair treatment in the art world.
 - They make posters, billboards, books, and other art to show inequality and point out that women and artists of color are often left out of museums and galleries.
 - They wear masks to hide their identities so people focus on the message, not the individuals.
 - **Teacher Note:** According to [“The Telegraph” article written in 2019](#), the Guerrilla Girls chose gorilla masks both to stay anonymous and because the idea came from accidentally misspelling “guerrilla” as “gorilla.” They liked that the masks were unexpected, memorable, and symbolized strength.
- **(5 minutes)** Explain the following to help students deepen their understanding of what the Guerrilla Girls are trying to address:
 - It is important for students to understand that while art is about self-expression and communicating ideas, it is also a business. Artists make a living by selling their work; making art takes time and money (to pay for supplies, studio space, etc.). If museums are not buying and/or showing women’s art, and collectors—who pay close attention to what museums buy and show when deciding what to purchase—are not buying women’s art, female artists are not able to support themselves.
 - Explain that a “democratic educational institution” (Sayej, para. 23) refers to an organization that is supposed to be run fairly and designed with the purpose of educating the public about a topic. Museums are meant to be spaces for everyone to appreciate art as opposed to businesses controlled by powerful people.
 - Explain that feminism is the belief that all people are equal regardless of their sex or gender and should be treated as such. Feminists generally focus on forwarding the cause of women’s rights (as well as nonbinary people’s rights) because historically—and currently—women have not had access to the same rights, protections, and opportunities as men.
- **(7 minutes) Say:** The Guerrilla Girls do not just share facts and statistics; they also use humor, sarcasm, and eye-catching visuals to make people pay attention to serious problems in the art world. To really understand how the Guerrilla Girls communicate their message, and think about why they communicate it this way, let’s think through the following questions. **Ask:**
 - What details or statistics stand out to you?
 - Students share their reflections.
 - **Note:** Ensure students identify this point: They use shocking statistics like “Less than 5% of the artists in the modern art section are women, but 85% of the nudes are female.”

- Optional Extension: Which Guerrilla Girls poster or example from the article do you think is the most effective? Why?
- How do they use humor or sarcasm to make their point stronger?
 - The “report card” is humorous because they pretend to grade museums and galleries like teachers grading students.
 - The gorilla masks and funny headlines grab attention while still communicating a serious message.
 - Optional Extension: Show slide 8 and explain to students that the poster on page 5 of the article is playing off of the famous painting, “Grande Odalisque” by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres from 1814. The painting is best known for its deliberate anatomical inaccuracies→ The artist made her back extra long (3 to 5 extra vertebrae) to make the female subject more “attractive”. It has also become important in feminist legacy because of its hyper-sexualized yet unattainable female form (females literally can’t elongate their spines to look like hers...); the painting has become a major touchstone in art history. [\[Source\]](#)
- Why might humor help people pay attention to difficult topics?
 - Humor makes the audience more interested and helps the message stick in people’s minds.
- Follow-up: Ask: Do you think humor is a powerful way to persuade people? Explain.

- **Note:** By the end of this part of the lesson, students should understand that the Guerrilla Girls use art, facts, humor, and strong visuals to expose inequality in the art world, and that their message is designed to make people notice, question, and think more deeply about fairness in museums and the treatment of artists.

Watch Video and Discuss (18 minutes)

Teacher Note: The purpose of watching the video is to strengthen students’ understanding of the Guerrilla Girls by reinforcing key ideas from the article and showing real examples of their work in action, including their visuals, messaging, and activism.

- **(2 minutes) Say:** We are going to watch a video clip to learn more about who the Guerrilla Girls are and help to solidify our understanding. As you watch, take notes that will help you better understand who the Guerrilla Girls are and what they are trying to achieve.
- **(8 minutes) Watch:** “Guerrilla Girls- ‘You Have to Question What You See’”
 -  [Guerrilla Girls – ‘You Have to Question What You See’ | Artist Interview | TateShots](#)
 - Clip length is 6:44, extra time is built in to allow students to finish taking notes at the end of watching the video
 - **Note:** The clip is embedded on slide 9
- **(4 minutes) Students discuss as a class the notes they took from watching the video.**
 - **Note:** As students share, push them to share new ideas and not repeat ideas that they have already discussed in the article
 - **Teacher Note:** The purpose of doing this is to ensure that students understand what the Guerrilla Girls are and their purpose

- **(4 minutes) Ask:** Based on what you know from the article and the video, why did the Guerrilla Girls form their collective, and what message do they want to convey to the art world? ("We Upend the Art World's Notion of What's Good and What's Right")
 - The Guerrilla Girls formed to protest inequality in the art world for women and artists of color. After their initial protest was ignored, they began creating art to raise awareness, encourage critical thinking about museum and gallery exhibits, and show both the public and those in power that the underrepresentation of diverse artists matters.
 - Potential Scaffolds:
 - What happened in 1984 that sparked a protest?
 - What problem did the Guerrilla Girls identify after attending the protest?
 - What do the Guerrilla Girls hope that people learn from looking at their art? What injustice do the Guerrilla Girls want to draw attention to?
 - How do the Guerrilla Girls aim to impact people with power in the art world (art collectors, galleries, and museums)?
 - What do the Guerrilla Girls mean when they say to "question what [you see]" (Tate Museum, 5:27)?
 - Optional Extension:
 - Teachers can consider reading these articles and sharing some of these statistics with students.
 - There are many interesting (and shocking) statistics about gender and racial disparities in the art world. Read more:
 - **"Female Artists Made Little Progress"** (New York Times)
 - **"Artists in 18 Major US Museums are 85% White and 87% Male"** (Hyper Allergic)
 - **"Most Artists Who Make a Living From Their Work are White"** (HuffPost)

Discussion (14 minutes)

- **(10 minutes) Ask:** Based on how people respond to the Guerrilla Girls' work, what can be inferred about how the Guerrilla Girls are viewed? Think about both texts:
 - At first, many people ignored the Guerrilla Girls when they protested. They realized protests alone weren't effective, so they started using bold posters and art instead. This helped them get more attention, but some people in the art world were still upset or saw them as troublemakers. Over time, their work became more accepted, and even museums now show their art. Their message has also encouraged women and artists of color who felt overlooked.
- **Follow-Up- Ask:** What evidence supports these inferences?
 - "We realized it didn't work, nobody cared about what we were saying..." (Sayej, para. 3)
 - "Another poster the same year, took a stab at commercial art galleries, listing those that show no more than 10% female artists (or none at all). 'All hell broke loose,' said Kollwitz. 'From the time our first posters went up in 1985, it was a breath of fresh air for artists who were struggling and not getting any appreciation. We keep making trouble, keep upending the art world's notions of what is good and what is right.'" (Sayej, para. 12)
 - "'It's always two steps forward one step back,' says Kollwitz. 'The changes aren't great, but we are in a moment where museums are playing catch-up and collecting work by artists of color. That's a change, but will they stick with it? Many of their collections don't have people of color or women at all.'" (Sayej, para. 13)

- "We would go after every cross-section of the art world. Everyone was passing the buck to someone else. The white male artist said 'I can't tell my gallery what to show' and the gallery said 'I can't show women because their work doesn't sell' and then collectors would say 'well, I can't buy women or artists of color because I don't see them.'" (Tate Museum, 2:27)
- "A lot of people ask us, you know, like, 'oh you're criticizing the museums but then we can see your work at institutions,' and actually it makes total sense to us because we love to criticize an institution right on its own walls." (Tate Museum, 5:01)
- **(4 minutes)** Students complete the exit ticket on page 1 of their student packet independently. If time permits, share 1-2 strong examples as a class
- **Note:** Teachers should utilize the "SP" symbol for spelling errors as students write, especially ensuring they are spelling "Guerrilla" correctly.
 - Example response:
 - Explain what the Guerrilla Girls' message is and why it is important. Use "because" in your response:
 - The Guerrilla Girls' message is that the art world is unfair to women and artists of color because they are often not shown or valued in museums. This is important because it helps people notice inequality and pushes the art world to become fairer and more equal.
 - **Note:** The Guerrilla Girls' message is the central idea of this unit and connects to much of the learning ahead. Make sure students clearly understand this.

Review Concrete Nouns (6 minutes)

Teacher Note: Here is a helpful teacher resource for explaining the types of nouns: [The Five Types of Nouns](#). This resource is meant for teacher use, not student use. Students also have grammar notes listed in their knowledge tracker to reference.

- **(2 minutes) Ask:** What is a noun?
 - Person, place, thing, or idea
- **(2 minutes) Say:** One of our grammar focuses this unit is on identifying nouns and pronouns. Before we dig into the complexities of nouns, we need to review what a concrete noun is. A concrete noun is a word that names a general person, place, thing, or idea, rather than a specific one. For example, "teacher" is a concrete noun, but "Ms. Smith" would be a proper noun because that is a specific person. Concrete nouns are general.
- **(2 minutes)** As a class, underline the concrete nouns in the sentences shown in slide 10
 - No one knows the real identities of the Guerrilla Girls.
 - They put posters all over New York City.
 - You can see their work in the MET.

Homework

Teacher Note: Students need a copy of *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina* for homework

Directions: Read pages 1-8 of *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina* and answer comprehension and grammar questions

- 1) Morning in NYC, in Misty's apartment

- 2) She is about to become the first Black woman to star in Igor Stravinsky's iconic role for American Ballet Theatre- very prestigious
- 3) Students should describe their normal routine/ practice routine
- 4) Part 1: A, Part 2: example- The sentence says the American Ballet Theatre is "one of the most prestigious dance companies in the world." This tells us it is well-known and highly respected, which helps us understand the meaning of prestigious.

Grammar Review:

- 1) The **dancer** practiced in the **studio** for hours.
- 2) A famous **ballet** company performed a new **show** at the **theater**.
- 3) The **choreographer** created a beautiful **routine** for the **group**.
- 4) Students watched the **performance** and clapped for the **artists**.
- 5) **Music** from the **orchestra** filled the **room**, inspiring everyone to dance.