

**The Journey, c. 1990**  
hand-colored linoleum  
print on paper  
H. 24 x W. 35.5 inches  
Group I

**Selma Bortner**  
b. 1926



### Looking Questions

What do you see?

Who do you see? How many people? Animals? Which group is more important? Why do you think so?

Where is this scene?

Which parts of this picture are light? Dark?

Find the foreground, middle ground, and background. What textures and patterns do you see?

What story do you think the artist is telling? Why is she depicting this?

### Vocabulary

Batik  
Journey  
Line  
Movement  
Narrative art  
Nautical mile  
Negative/Positive space  
Parallel lines  
Relief print  
River Styx  
Symbol  
Value

### Art Activities

- **Styrofoam Prints.** As a class, read *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Discuss the story and illustrations and compare them to *The Journey*. Imagine yourself traveling to an imaginary, unfamiliar land and make a drawing of one part of your journey. Make your drawing the basis for a styrofoam print using only black ink. When the print is dry, add color to selected areas using watercolors and/or colored pencils.
- **Animal Drawings.** Study and discuss the animals in *The Journey*. What personalities do they have? Create an animal that symbolizes your personality using white pencil on black construction paper. Add color with oil pastels. Imagine an environment for this animal and add it to the background.
- **Paper Batiks.** Imagine what might happen next in *The Journey*. Make a pencil drawing of your ideas on oak tag. Next, trace over the lines with a fat marker and use oil pastels to add color. Coat the drawing with black tempera paint and then rinse off the excess paint.
- **Clay Relief Tiles.** Study the variety of textures and patterns in *The Journey*. Use a viewfinder to choose an interesting portion. With a variety of tools, glazes, and underglazes, create areas of foreground, middle ground, and background on clay tiles.

National Standards: NA-VA.K-4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6.

### Language Arts Activities

- **Character Webs.** Choose a figure (animal or human) from *The Journey* that interests you. Create a character web by making a drawing of the figure in the center and adding words, phrases, or sentences that describe the figure.
- **Creative Writing.** Imagine that you are one of the figures in the boat. Write a story with a beginning, middle, and end from that person's or animal's point of view. Relate how your journey began, what happened, and how it ended.
- **Illustrated Sentence Frames.** Artist Selma Bortner created *The Journey* to express her feelings of confusion and fear about her husband's heart disease. Read *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak. Discuss what Max did to express his feelings of confusion and anger and compare Max's journey to *The Journey*. Complete the following sentence frame: "When I feel \_\_\_\_\_, I \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." Add a drawing that illustrates the feelings and actions.
- **Memory Poems.** Think about a time when you, like artist Selma Bortner, had to deal with something scary or difficult (e.g., an illness, accident, death, etc.). Write a poem about your memories of this event in your life.

National Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.9, 12.12.

## Math Activities

- In *The Journey*, we see four figures traveling in a small boat. Solve these problems related to boat travel: 1. Imagine that you left Philadelphia at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday in a speedboat and traveled to Miami, 882 nautical miles away. If your boat traveled 63 miles per hour, when would you reach Miami? (*Answer: 10:00 am on Thursday;  $882m/63mph = 14$  hours.*); 2. On Saturday, your speedboat left Miami at 6:00 a.m. and motored to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3,602 nautical miles away. If your boat went 70 miles an hour, when would you arrive in Rio de Janeiro? (*Answer: 9:30 am on Monday;  $3,602m/70mph = 51.5$  hours, or 2 days, 3.5 hours.*) See the following website for nautical distances:  
[www.csgnetwork.com/ssmarinedistcalc.htm](http://www.csgnetwork.com/ssmarinedistcalc.htm).
- Find five pairs of lines in *The Journey*. Identify the pairs as parallel, perpendicular, or intersecting. Make examples of each type of line by arranging and gluing colored popsicle sticks onto a piece of tagboard. Color key: blue = parallel, green = perpendicular, red = intersecting.
- Find as many different kinds of shapes as you can in *The Journey*. Make a table that categorizes them.

National Standards: NM-NUM.PK-2.3; NM-NUM.3-5.1, 5.2, 5.3; NM-GEO.K-2.1, 2.2; NM-GEO.3-5.2, 5.3.

## Social Studies Activities

- Do you think that the dark waters depicted in *The Journey* are similar to the River Styx in Greek mythology? What is the River Styx? Read aloud stories about Thetis and Apollo, Hades, Orpheus, and Persephone (see *D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths*, by Ingri and Edgar P. D'Aulaire) and discuss them in relation to *The Journey*.
- Look carefully at the boat depicted in *The Journey*. What do you think it is made of? What makes it go? Learn about the coracle, a basketlike boat used in Wales, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, Vietnam, and Tibet (see [www.data-wales.co.uk/coracle1.htm](http://www.data-wales.co.uk/coracle1.htm) and [www.hampi.in/sites/Coracle\\_Crossings.htm](http://www.hampi.in/sites/Coracle_Crossings.htm)). Compare coracles with the boat in this artwork using a Venn diagram.
- The artist Selma Bortner says that the snake and wolf depicted in *The Journey* are her personal symbols for illness and death. What animals did ancient Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians use to symbolize death? As a class, create an illustrated chart comparing these animal symbols across cultures.

National Standards: NSS-WH5-12.3.

## Technology/Graphic Arts Activities

- Use computers to design posters promoting raffle tickets for a heart disease-prevention fundraiser that incorporates figures from *The Journey*.
- Make a video of students presenting their research on animal symbolism found in the art of Native Americans, ancient Greeks and Egyptians, and contemporary Americans. Play the video as a continuous loop at Parents' Night.

National Standards: NT.K-12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5.

## Compare and Contrast

Look at *The Lady of Shallot (on Boat)*, 1888, by John William Waterhouse (see [www.jwwaterhouse.com](http://www.jwwaterhouse.com)) with *The Journey*. Compare the figure of the Lady and the female figure in *The Journey*.

## Cultural Connections

Research centaurs in ancient Greek culture. Compare them to the half-man, half-zebra figure in *The Journey*.

## Contemporary Connections

Discuss the impact of major flooding in the American Midwest in 2008. Imagine that a flood destroyed your home and you were forced to escape in a small boat. Who would be in the boat with you and why? If you could include special, symbolic animals (not pets) in your boat, what would they be? What do they symbolize to you?

## At the Michener

Look at *Cicada*. Use your imagination to travel into and through this painting. Make a list of descriptive words that portray what you see and do there. Use them to write a cinquain poem about your journey.

