ENGAGING GRADES 3-5 WITH {SANCTUARY}
Students visiting Sanctuary with their teachers are invited to learn about the artworks of Sanctuary, and through interactions with those works, use the exhibition’s themes to explore other disciplines.

These field trip notes intentionally integrate themes and topics from across the humanities (science, social studies, geography, history, and ethics) and address Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA), encouraging critical thinking, speaking, and listening skills; collaboration; and an appreciation for diverse perspectives.
In this lesson students will look at the work of Shirazeh Houshiary. They will be invited to consider her interests in the natural migration of species, and plants finding sanctuary in new environments.

Students will then make a comparative study of the works of Diana Al-Hadid and Ranu Mukherjee to cement their understanding and reflect on the migration of people and migration’s impact on society.
Engaging with the Work

For Sanctuary, Shirazeh Houshiary revisits a suite of layered etchings she made at STPI Singapore in 2016, titled Migrants. The subject of the works is the ubiquitous Singaporean rain tree, whose broad, balletic canopies dominate the landscape and serve as symbols of lush, natural beauty in the tropical island nation. The tree is not native to Singapore, or Asia, however; it is a transplant from the Americas whose alien status is all but forgotten. “To walk on the carpet is as if moving through the canopies of the trees. The overlapped multiple images . . . generate different perspectives where [the trees] can be viewed from above and below simultaneously,” the artist says. “This carpet . . . is a statement about migration as a continuum in the process of evolution on our planet. Trees and animals have migrated across the planet long before humankind, and to stop migration is to stop life itself.”

Shirazeh Houshiary
b. 1955, Iran
About Non-native Plants in the Bay Area

The San Francisco Bay Area has been home to many people, plants, and animals over the years. Its residents have ranged from the Native American Coast Miwok, and tribes within what is referred to as Ohlone territory, to Spanish and other European settlers, missionaries, ranchers, loggers, and the US military.

Throughout these shifts, many new plants have been introduced (intentionally and not) to this geographically diverse area. Such plants are called non-native. Some of these non-native plants have thrived. With no natural barriers to prevent them from rapidly growing and spreading, they can overwhelm and displace native vegetation. These plants are called invasive species.

Within the nearby Presidio and Golden Gate parks, there are many non-native plants that have been brought into the area for a variety of reasons, including Monterey pine, blue gum eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, and black acacia. Some of these invasive species also have unique benefits and stories attached to their arrival.

Today the National Park Service and other groups are working hard to create sanctuaries in which they can protect and reintroduce native species to the areas where the non-native plants have dominated.

Content adapted from the National Park Service: https://www.nps.gov/goga/index.htm

Discussion Points

- How does this artwork make you feel?
- Consider the artist’s use of color and pattern to tell her story.
- Make an argument for what there is to learn about nature from looking at this work of art.
Investigate a Non-native Species

Migration

Introduce students to the idea of migration.

Migration is a mysteriously powerful compulsion for animals, people, and even plants to move to new environments. The migratory journey can present both challenges and rewards.

Discussion Points

● What drives life to move around in search of different environments at different moments? What are the internal and external cues for this movement?

● What is the difference between emigration and immigration? Can you think of any factors that might influence or impact either of these movements?

Ask students to consider:

Where does your family come from? Can you trace your family history back to another city or country? Where? Have you been there? Share a story about it with the class.
For *Sanctuary*, Ranu Mukherjee weaves together the plight of modern-day refugees seeking safe harbor in the West, the complexities of intercontinental travel, and traditional symbols of prosperity and peace in her rug design, titled *begin*. Her ornate patterned background is like the jacquard fabrics woven and worn in the cultures of many migrants, and the overlaid lines remind us of the patterns of human migration. The outline of an olive tree, Mukherjee says, serves as “a kind of wish, to carry them to safety and peace.”
Diana Al-Hadid
b. 1981, Syria

Diana Al-Hadid’s rug design, titled *An Evolution*, is based on her 2016 wall sculpture *The Extinction*, which references the oldest known hand-knotted rug: the Pazyryk Rug, woven in the fifth century BC, most likely in Persia. This rug traveled across many continents with the people who made, bought, and sold it. Al-Hadid’s sculpture explored the patterns and texture of the ancient rug. By returning the design to the form of a new rug, she revisits the story of the rug and how it traveled and the different ways it may have been used and seen by those who came into contact with it.
Discussion Points

- Compare the patterns and colors of these rugs. How are they similar? How are they different?

- What do you see in these rugs? Do you think everyone sees what you see?

- Does knowing the title of Al-Hadid’s rug change your understanding or appreciation of it as a work of art? If so, how?

- If these rugs could tell a story, what would that story be about?

- Imagine one of these works as a magic carpet. Create a story of how the rug arrived here, and who designed and made it, then share the story with your class.

- Can you think of any objects that you have brought back from another place? What memories do these object hold for you? Do you think these objects will mean the same thing to other people?
Review and Extension Materials

Assessment

Are students building on one another’s explorations and conversation points?

Can they assimilate their own and the group learnings about symbols and narrative when looking at or making art?

Do they have an understanding of invasive and native plants?

Are they able to think about the causes and effects of migration?

Have they taken on another’s perspective and shown empathy?

Read

The Magic Weaver of Rugs: A Tale of the Navajo
by Jerrie Oughton and Lisa Desimini

Final Assessment and Take-Away Extension

Can students articulate what a wildlife sanctuary means to them?

Can they incorporate a symbol of an idea, thought, or feeling in any way?