

# Teaching with *As Long As the Waters Flow* by Allan Houser (Haozous)



This document is designed to help teachers present, discuss, and teach about Oklahoma history and art literacy through the use of this work of art. The information and exercises here will aid in understanding and learning from this artwork.

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# First Analysis and Criticism

The steps below may be used for group discussion or individual written work.

Before beginning the steps, take two minutes to study the artwork. Look at all the details and subject matter. After studying the artwork in silence, follow these steps:

## **Describe:**

Be specific and descriptive. List only the facts about the objects in the painting or sculpture.

- What things are in the artwork?
- What is happening?
- List what you see (people, animals, clothing, environment, objects, etc.).

## **Analyze:**

- How are the elements of art – line, shape, form, texture, space, and value used?
- How are the principles of design – unity, pattern, rhythm, variety, balance, emphasis, and proportion used?

## **Interpretation:**

Make initial, reasonable inferences.

- What do you think is happening in the artwork?
- Who is doing what?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say to the viewer?

## **Evaluate:**

Express your opinion.

- What do you think about the artwork?
- Is it important?
- How does it help you understand the past?
- Do you like it? Why or why not?

# Overview of the Artwork

Allan Houser's monumental tribute to Native Americans, *As Long as the Waters Flow*, was dedicated on June 4, 1989. Among those in attendance was legendary Comanche medicine man George Woogee Watchetaker, traditional Indian flute players Doc Tate Nevaquaya and Woodrow Haney, as well as Governor Henry Bellmon. Watchetaker led a prayer of dedication and conducted a native ritual by use of smoke from burning cedar chips and sage.

The traditional elements of the dedication held true to the powerful meaning of legacy within the statue. *As Long as the Waters Flow* refers to President Andrew Jackson's vow to Native Americans that they shall possess their land "as long as the grass grows and the rivers run." The 13-foot, 6-inch bronze statue exudes Houser's artistic style. Lacking intricate representative detailing, the large solid planes among the surface denote strength within an everlasting presence. Her traditional attire is complete with an eagle feather fan, which is considered a sacred symbol among Native American cultures.

## About the Artist

Allan Houser (Haozous) Born on June 30, 1914, Allan C. Haozous was to become known as Allan Houser, one of the 20th century's most important artists. Allan's parents, Sam and Blossom Haozous were members of the Chiricahua Apache tribe who were held as prisoners of war for 27 years. Allan's father was with the small band of Warm Springs Chiricahuas when their leader, Geronimo, surrendered to the U.S. Army in 1886 in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua. In retribution for the Warm Springs Bands' refusal to leave their lands in New Mexico and relocate to a reservation in Arizona, 1200 Chiricahuas were sent by cattle-car train to prisons in Florida.

Allan's father was among the women and children jailed at the Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, Florida, and Allan's mother was born in the prison camp at the Mount Vernon Barracks, Alabama, where surviving members of the tribe were sent in 1887. As a final solution, the last of the Chiricahuas were sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where they remained captives for 23 years. Freed at last in 1914, a majority of the tribe returned to New Mexico to join with the Mescalero Apaches for whom a reservation had been created. Allan's parents, however, were with a small group of families who chose to stay in Oklahoma and create farms in the Apache and Lawton communities. Allan was born just months after their release, the first child born out of captivity.

Growing up on the farm, Allan labored with crops of cotton and alfalfa and helped support the family growing vegetables and raising livestock and horses. At an early age he became interested in the images he saw in magazines and books.

He soon began making his own drawings and carvings. In 1934 a notice for an art school in Santa Fe attracted his attention, and he enrolled in the Painting School at the Santa Fe Indian School. Commonly known as the Dorothy Dunn School after its prominent teacher, Allan became its most famous student and by 1939 his work was exhibited in San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and Chicago. In the same year he received a commission to paint a mural in the Department of Interior building in Washington, and its success led to a second mural commission there in 1940.

Allan married Anna Marie Gallegos in 1939, and together with three young sons they moved to Los Angeles in 1941 where Allan sought employment during the war effort. It was here that Allan would have the opportunity to visit museum exhibitions of European modernists such as Brancusi, Arp, Lipschitz, and Henry Moore, whose work would have a lasting influence on Allan as his own style evolved in the succeeding decades.

In 1947 Allan was commissioned by the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, to do a memorial sculpture honoring the Native American students from Haskell who had died in World War II. Completed in 1948, this work entitled “Comrade in Mourning” was his first major marble carving. In 1951 Allan moved to Brigham City, Utah, where he taught art at the Inter-Mountain Indian School for the next eleven years. He continued to paint and produce small wooden sculptures, and in 1954 he was honored by the French government with the Palmes d’Academique for his outstanding achievement as a teacher and artist.

In 1962 Allan was asked to join the faculty of the newly created Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe. There he created the sculpture department and began focusing his own artistic output on three-dimensional work. As he taught and created sculpture he began integrating the aesthetics of the modernists with his narrative ideas. By the late 1960’s he began exhibiting this sculpture and recognition of his unique style grew. Museums and private collectors sought out examples, and his influence became apparent on hundreds of students and other artists. In 1975 Allan retired from teaching to devote himself full-time to his own work. In the two following decades he would produce close to 1,000 sculptures in stone, wood, and bronze, and emerged as a major figure on an international scale. He had nearly 50 solo exhibitions in museums and galleries in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and he continued working tirelessly until his death on August 22, 1994.

# Details



1. The sculpture is a tribute to Native Americans and references their plight during Indian Removal.
2. The sculpture is 15 feet tall and made of bronze.
3. In many of Houser's sculptures, there was little intent to define or articulate representative details. The sculpture is made up of large surface planes which suggest the shape of the object, such as the woman's blanket, skirt, and boots.
4. The vertical line of the eagle feather fan complements the vertical stance of the female figure.
5. The face captures the essence of a Native American female and could represent any American Indian woman.
6. The title of the sculpture is based on a promise that administrators for President Andrew Jackson made to Native Americans. They said the Native Americans would own their land "as long as the grass grows and the rivers run." This promise ended up not being fulfilled.

# Suggested Reading

**Oklahoma Adventure**, Centennial Edition 2006 by Oklahoma History Press  
Unit Two: Removals, **pages 42-77**

**Oklahoma: Land of Contrasts** by Clairmont Press  
Chapter 6: A Clash of Cultures, **pages 136-163**

**The Story of Oklahoma**, Second Edition by Baird and Goble  
Chapter 8: Indian Removals, **pages 108-129**

# Final Analysis

After completing the readings and activities, go back and look at the artwork again. Now that the students are more familiar with the subject matter, ask them to write a few paragraphs about their interpretation of the artwork. In their own words, the writing should address the following:

- Description of the artwork and who/what is in it
- How the elements of art and principles of design are used within the artwork
- What feelings, emotions, or information the artwork depicts
- Their opinion of the artwork

# Pass Objectives

## Grade 4- Social Studies

**Standard 5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the unique features which contributed to the settlement of the state of Oklahoma.**

2. Describe major events of Oklahoma's past, such as settlements by Native Americans, cattle drives, land runs, statehood, and the discovery of oil.

## Grade 4- The Arts

**Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.**

1. Describe and place a variety of specific significant art objects by artist, style and historical and cultural context.
2. Identify themes and purposes of works of art and artifacts in history and culture.
3. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of several fields of art such as painting, sculpture, drawing, computer graphics, printmaking, architecture, and fiber arts.
4. Identify how visual art is used in today's world including the popular media of advertising, television, and film.

## High School- Oklahoma History

**Standard 1. The student will demonstrate process skills in social studies.**

1. Identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary sources (e.g., artifacts, diaries, letters, art, music, literature, photographs, documents, newspapers, and contemporary media).

**Standard 3. The student will evaluate the social, economic, and political development and contributions of Native Americans from prehistoric settlement through modern times.**

2. Trace the movement of other North American peoples into present-day Oklahoma, including the Five Tribes, Plains Tribes, and Eastern Tribes.
3. Compare and contrast cultural perspectives (e.g., land ownership and use, agricultural methods, production and distribution of commodities, and trading practices) of Native Americans and European Americans.

**Standard 5. The student will describe the development of constitutional government in Oklahoma.**

1. Examine the work of the Dawes Commission and the distribution of lands to non-Native American settlers.

**Standard 8. The student will examine factors that contributed to the political, economic, and social history of Oklahoma during the twentieth century.**

1. Identify significant individuals and their contributions (e.g., Jerome Tiger, Frank Phillips, Kate Barnard, Angie Debo, Ada Lois Sipuel, Clara Luper, George Lynn Cross, Ralph Ellison, Robert S. Kerr, Henry Bellmon, and Reba McEntire).

## High School- The Arts

**Standard 1: Language of Visual Art - The student will identify visual art terms (e.g., content, engraving, foreshortening, mosaic, perspective)**

3. Describe exhibitions of original works of art seen in the school or community.

4. Differentiate between art criticism and art reviews, recognizing that criticism is positive as well as negative in its evaluation of a work of art.

**Standard 2: Visual Art History and Culture - The student will recognize the development of visual art from an historical and cultural perspective.**

5. PROFICIENT: Identify major regional, national, and international collections of art.

**Standard 4: Visual Art Appreciation - The student will appreciate visual art as a vehicle of human expression.**

2. Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.