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**Tobacco in North Carolina**

**Writer:** Jill Taylor, NCMA Educator

**Grade Level:** 4

**Related Big Picture Concept:** Persuasion

**Subject Areas:** Visual Arts, English Language Arts, Social Studies

**Essential Question:** What role should tobacco have in the culture and economy of North Carolina?

**Abstract:** Students will examine the depiction of North Carolina tobacco farms in several photographs. They will then work in small groups to prepare a persuasive argument for a class debate and create promotional signs to advertise their point of view about whether farmers should or should not continue to produce tobacco.

**Duration:** 5 class periods

**Focus Works of Art:**

[](http://68.169.57.134/sites/default/files/Amberg,%20A%20Field%20of%20Cut%20Burley%20Tobacco,%202004_8_12.jpg)

Rob Amberg (American, born 1947)

***A field of cut burley tobacco* 1993; printed 2002**

Gelatin-silver print

Image: 12 1/4 x 18 1/4 in. (31.1 x 46.4 cm.)

[www.artnc.org/node/376](http://www.artnc.org/node/376)

[](http://68.169.57.134/sites/default/files/Amberg,%20Jim%20Smyre%20and%20Family%20Planting%20Tobacco,%20Iredell%20Coun.jpg)

Rob Amberg (American, born 1947)

***Jim Smyre and family planting tobacco, Iredell County, NC 1987*; printed 1992**

Gelatin-silver print

Image: 11 1/2 x 17 3/4 in. (29.2 x 45.1 cm.)

[www.artnc.org/node/375](http://www.artnc.org/node/375)

**North Carolina Standards Correlations:**

Visual Arts: 4.V.2.2, 4.CX.2.2

English Language Arts: 4.RI.7, 4.W.1, 4.SL.1, 4.SL.3, 4.SL. 5

Social Studies: 4.G.1.1, 4.G.1.2, 4.G.1.4, 4.E.1.1, 4.E.1.3

**Student Learning Objectives:**

* Students will examine several photographs of tobacco farms in North Carolina and discuss reasons for the artist's subject choice and how the subject relates to the history of North Carolina.
* Students will use cooperative learning skills to create a group visual and verbal persuasive argument in favor of or against tobacco farming as a major agricultural enterprise in our state, using opinion and research that supports the argument.
* Each student will research the political, economic, and social impacts of tobacco growth on North Carolina's citizens and reflect on his or her response to this information through journal writing.

**Activities:**

1. Share the two tobacco photographs with the class as overheads. Discuss the imagery of the pictures and brainstorm reasons why the artist might have focused on tobacco farms as his subject. *What do the tobacco sticks remind you of? Where do you think the family is heading? What makes you think that? Are they starting or ending their day? How do you know? Why would someone take pictures of a tobacco farm, such as the one portrayed here? What are the possible points of view that the artist might have about tobacco and agriculture? What are some common points of view about tobacco? How do groups for and against tobacco try to influence or persuade us to think of tobacco positively or negatively?*
2. Talk with the class about how important the growth of tobacco has been to the state through the years by sharing figures about annual income and number of tobacco-related jobs (visit <http://www.soc.duke.edu/NC_GlobalEconomy/tobacco/overview.shtml> for information and tables on both of these topics). Explain how North Carolina was affected by class-action lawsuits that led to the passage of a 1999 law that governed the use of tobacco settlement funds and adversely affected farmers in many rural areas. For a detailed explanation of the 1998 tobacco settlement in North Carolina, check out this http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/pdffiles/hwOverviewTobaccoSettlement.pdf.
3. Tell the students that they will be asked to adopt a positive or negative view of tobacco and must try to persuade their peers with reasoned arguments. Divide the class into six small groups (two "economic," two "political," two "social"). Assign each group to argue "for" or "against" tobacco production, based on its area of focus (that is, one group "for" tobacco production due to "economic" reasons, one "against" tobacco production for "social" reasons etc.). Provide students with copies of Internet articles or other documents to help explain the production of tobacco in North Carolina and its implications for the citizens of our state (helpful Web sites can be found at <http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/commodit/horticul/tobacco/index.htm>

and http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\_issues/toll\_us/north\_carolina).

1. Instruct each group to prepare an argument for its particular area of focus, based on the information provided. Encourage students to use the computer lab or library to locate additional resources to support their case, if necessary. Provide them with a graphic [organizer](http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/graphic-organizers/web-easier.pdf) to arrange their thoughts and provide main and supporting details that link opinion to reason.
2. Before the debate, ask each group to design at least one promotional sign to advertise its viewpoint. Each sign should include a catchy slogan and pictures/symbols that relate to the area of focus. Have students look at Rob Amberg’s photographs again. *How could these photographs be used to make a persuasive case for or against tobacco production? What are some other images or words that relate to tobacco that could be used in a persuasive image? What kind of emotional impact would these words and images have?* Have the students brainstorm images and phrases that could help persuade the audience to their point of view before creating their sign.Tell students that they should be prepared to discuss their images and question other groups’ images during the debate.
3. Combine all three "for" and all three "against" groups to allow them to prepare their argument strategies collectively. After both sides have had an opportunity to organize their cases, review the ground rules for class debate and tell the students how much time they will have to share their arguments.
4. Facilitate the debate about whether North Carolina's farmers should or should not continue production of tobacco in our state. Display the groups’ promotional signs during the debate, and allow discussion about the images during the debate.
5. As a concluding activity, ask students to reflect in writing on the political, economic, and social impacts of tobacco on North Carolinians. Have them fully explain their rationale for why we should or should not continue its production.

**Assessments:**

* Class discussion, student brainstorming on persuasive images and phrases, and the group’s image will be used to evaluate the students' understanding of the artist's rationale for subject choice and how to create a persuasive work of art.
* Observation will be used during small-group time to assess whether students are actively engaged in the research and brainstorming session and working cooperatively with their classmates.
* Review of each student's graphic organizer will be used to determine whether the student was able to find information to support the group's position regarding tobacco production in North Carolina and its impact on economics, politics, or social causes.
* The debate and reflective journals will provide insight into whether the students understand the political, economic, and social impacts of tobacco on the state's farming industry as well as the entire citizenry and, consequently, can make an informed personal judgment based on this information.
* The reflection journals will be assessed to learn more about each individual student's ability to make an informed personal judgment based on the group's research.

**Resources:**

Vocabulary:

class-action lawsuit

tobacco settlement

cash crop

Links:

Graphic Organizer  
<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/graphic-organizers/web-easier.pdf>

Field Crops: Tobacco  
<http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/commodit/horticul/tobacco/index.htm>

Tobacco in North Carolina  
<http://www.soc.duke.edu/NC_GlobalEconomy/tobacco/overview.shtml>

Toll of Tobacco in North Carolina  
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/north_carolina>

[1998](http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/pdffiles/hwOverviewTobaccoSettlement.pdf) Tobacco Settlement Information  
<http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/pdffiles/hwOverviewTobaccoSettlement.pdf>