



# Superhighway Scholars



## Teacher Guide

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## Information at a Glance

**Essential Question(s):** What makes the place you live unique? What role has your state played in the history of the United States? What events or contributions make it stand out?

**Brief Introduction:** This program is designed for elementary-school students studying state history. It is perhaps most appropriate as a culminating task or assessment at the end of the unit. Students will learn about the artist Nam June Paik and his video installation *Electronic Superhighway*, which displays a series of videos or images related to each state. They will then use their knowledge of their state's history to choose the places or events that represent their state. Finally, students will complete a collage project drawing on Paik's work.

**Primary Subject and Grade Level:** U.S. History, Grades 3-4

**Secondary Subject and Grade Level:** Arts Education (Visual Arts), Grades 3-4

### **National Standards:**

National History Standard (K-4) Topic 2 – The History of the Students' Own State or Region  
Standard 3 – The people, events, problems, and ideas that created the history of their state

Visual Arts

Content Standard 1 – Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

Content Standard 5 – Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

### **State Standards:**

Each state created individual standards for core subjects by 2003. The majority of teachers use state standards to guide their instruction. The Smithsonian Institution does not currently maintain a database of all corresponding state standards. However, because our audience is a national one, and because most state standards closely mirror their national counterparts, we direct teachers to their own state standards by including the following statement:  
Connections to State Standards (Grades 5-12) - Using the preceding National Standards, reciprocal standards from your state's version can be found online at:  
<http://edstandards.org/standards.html>

**Components:** Student Activity, Assessment, Artist Biography, Art Historical Background, Accompanying Web Portal

**Keywords:** Nam June Paik, *Electronic Superhighway*, video, installation, state, nation, contemporary art, collage

## Background Information

### About Nam June Paik

Nam June Paik was born in Seoul, South Korea in 1932. He attended Kyunggi High School in Seoul while he took private piano lessons and learned to compose music. In 1949, with the Korean War brewing, Paik's family was forced to move and relocated to Hong Kong. The family moved again a year later; this time to Tokyo, Japan, where Nam June enrolled in the University of Tokyo. Paik studied music, art history, and aesthetics and after graduating in 1956, he began to travel again. After stops in Calcutta, India and Cairo, Egypt, Paik settled in Germany to continue studying twentieth-century music. While in Germany, he met and befriended American composer John Cage. Paik spent most his time in Germany experimenting with musical composition and performance art.

In 1959, Nam June Paik began to write to his friend, John Cage, about his interest in television as a possible form of artwork. In 1963 he had his first one-artist exhibition *Exposition of Music-Electronic Television* at the Galerie Parnass in Germany. After briefly returning to Japan, Paik flew to New York in 1964 to meet Cage. What Paik meant to be a six month trip to the United States became much longer. It was in the United States that Nam June continued his artistic experimentations with television art. His video sculptures were featured in galleries and museums and his television projects were broadcast around the world. Paik continued to work in other countries and was truly a citizen of the world, but he spent most of his time in New York studio and later in Miami Beach.

Nam June Paik died in his home in Miami Beach in 2006, but his art and revolutionary ideas live on.

### About *Electronic Superhighway*

When Nam June Paik came to the United States in 1964, the interstate highway system was only nine years old, and superhighways offered everyone the freedom to "see the U.S.A. in your Chevrolet." Walking along the entire length of this installation suggests the enormous scale of the nation that confronted the young Korean artist when he arrived. Neon outlines the monitors, recalling the multicolored maps and glowing enticements of motels and restaurants that beckoned Americans to the open road. The different colors remind us that individual states still have distinct identities and cultures, even in today's information age.

Paik augmented the flashing images "seen as though from a passing car" with audio clips from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Oklahoma*, and other screen gems, suggesting that our picture of America has been influenced by film and television. Today, the Internet and twenty-four-hour broadcasting tend to homogenize the customs and accents of what was once a more diverse nation. Paik was the first to use the phrase "electronic superhighway," and this installation proposes that electronic media provide us with the images and adventure we used to leave home to discover. But *Electronic Superhighway* is real. It is an enormous physical object that occupies a middle ground between the virtual reality of the media and the sprawling country beyond our doors.

## Classroom Activity Instructions

1. Introduce your students to Nam June Paik and *Electronic Superhighway* using the homepage of the “Superhighway Scholars” site:  
[www.Americanart.edu/education/rs.cfm](http://www.Americanart.edu/education/rs.cfm)
2. Review the information in the student activity section of “Superhighway Scholars” with your class. This is the page that will introduce them to the state history project.

### What your students will see

The artist Nam June Paik made his own choices about what to include in each state. He picked movies, pictures, music, and speeches to create a picture of our country.

Now it is your turn!

What makes where you live unlike any other place? If you had to represent your state and all that you have learned about it in a visual way, what images might you choose?

As a group, pick the important things you learned about your state’s history that you would like to show others from outside your state—important people, places, events, symbols or anything you think defines your state. You could combine things that happened a long time ago with something that happened last week! Then you will represent those important ideas visually in the form of a collage. With your artwork, viewers should understand what your group has found to be important about your state. After the collage is completed, you will write a description of it and all of the visual elements you have included.

Once you have selected topics that you think best represent your state, your teacher will give you more instructions and help you to complete the project. When all the groups in your class are finished, you will choose one group’s collage and description to submit to the Smithsonian American Art Museum online! There you can also see what other classes around the country have done.

3. Arrange the students in small groups of four or five.
4. Have groups select a between five and six ideas that they want to represent visually.
5. Instruct the groups to think of images to illustrate each idea, fact, person, or event. Each student should be in charge of finding a way to represent at least one idea visually. He or she should be able to include a written description of the image and give a reason that it was important enough to include in the collage.
6. Then instruct each group to create a collage as a visual representation of their state. In doing so, they will have to make decisions about how to include each group member’s image in the greater artwork. Remember, collages can be made from all kinds of materials and should include a variety of colors, textures, and ideas arranged in an aesthetically appealing composition. (If possible, collaborate with your art specialist for more guidance.) Students will then work in groups to write a three-sentence paragraph about each image they have chosen to use. In each paragraph, they should describe the image and how it relates to state history and explain their motivation for choosing it.

## **Student Writing Assignment**

- Decide exactly what you want a visitor to your state to know about where you live. Think about important events, places, people, products, or themes that are important to your state.
- Write a short three-sentence paragraph about each image that will be shown in the collage. Include a description of the image, the story behind it, and why you have chosen it.
- Each group member should be responsible for writing about the descriptions of the image that he or she chose to represent the state. As a group, find a way to bring those descriptions together in one description of the entire collage.

7. Assign each group to create a collage related to the journal entries. See below for specific guidelines.

## **Student Group Collage Assignment**

- As a group, discuss the ideas or facts that you would like to represent visually in your collage. Once you have agreed upon about as many ideas as there are people in your group, divide up the ideas so that each person is responsible for at least one.
- Individually select a one or two items that could visually represent the idea(s) you are assigned to illustrate. Be creative! There are many alternatives to a pixelated Google image to convey your idea. If your state is famous for its paperclip production, find a paper-clip! If a famous person lived there, use a silhouette of his or her face for the outline of your collage.
- Once you have found a way to visually represent your idea, lay out your materials and select which elements you would like to include in your collage. Each member of the group should contribute some visual element relating his or her idea. Consider how you want the individual elements to relate to tell your story. You may want to make a preparatory sketch of your collage at this point.
- Think about cutting or tearing your paper-based images. Interesting edges make your collage more visually appealing.
- Lay out your materials on your page for form a pleasing composition. When the group agrees on the layout, attach each item to your background carefully.
- Optional: add paint, ink, or colored pencil to your collage.
- Optional: add a protective coat to your collage such as a spray varnish.

8. When all of the collages and written descriptions are finished, have each group present its project to the rest of the class.

9. Vote as a class for the best project, using the Peer Critique Worksheet. See below for specific guidelines.

## **Critique Assignment**

- Print out copies of the Peer Critique rubric (which you can find at the end of this guide) for each student.
- Review the rubric as a class to ensure understanding.
- Practice constructive criticism.
- Present projects as groups.
- Discuss each group's work after each presentation.
- With the discussion in mind, rate each project using the worksheet's point system.

10. Submit the journal and collage of the winning group to the Education Office at SAAM by e-mailing them to SaamEdStaff@si.edu. Be sure to see the "How to Take a Web-Worthy Digital Picture" section of the Web-site.

## Peer Critique Worksheet

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>State History</b>	Contains wrong information or images and sentences that do not support the state's history.	Mostly accurate information is included. State history is present, but not clear or organized.	Facts are accurate, informative, and well-organized.	Facts are accurate, informative, and well-organized with lots of detail that shows insight into state history.	History is accurate, informative, and well-organized with lots of detail.  Students have been very creative with their choices and descriptions.
<b>Artistic Expression</b>	Collage has problems with neatness and organization. Images do not match descriptions or state history	Project is organized. Selected images may not all be clear or relate directly to the state history unit.	Collage is neat, organized clearly and logically, and connected to what students learned about state history.	Collage is attractive, organized with creative design, and has accurate representations of the state and its history.	Project is attractive, organized with design elements in mind (line, form, texture, etc.), and is an excellent representation of state.
<b>Writing Component</b>	Contains many errors in spelling and punctuation.  Writing component lacks complete thoughts in the form of sentences.	Has some misspellings and errors in punctuation.  Descriptions of visual representations are somewhat clear.	Contains few misspellings or punctuation errors.  Paragraphs are well formed and descriptions and reasons for choosing visuals are clear.	Uses correct spelling and punctuation.  Written descriptions show some insight into the choices students made.	Uses correct spelling and punctuation.  Written descriptions are creative and do a very good job explaining why images were important to choose.

**TOTAL POINTS =**