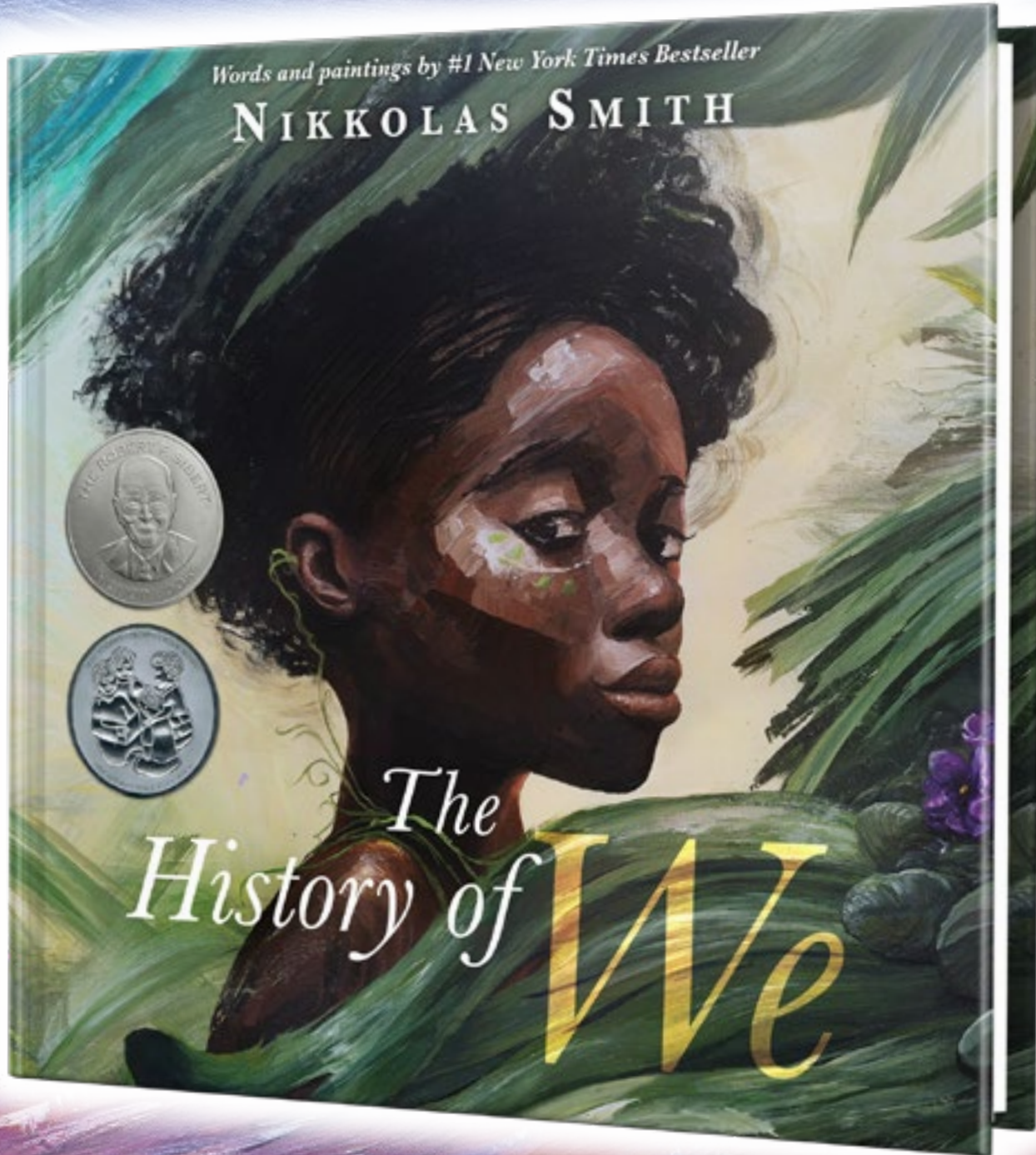


An Educator's Guide to

A Robert F. Sibert Informational Honor Book



Praise for *The History Of We*

★ “A LOVELY BOOK TO INTRODUCE WORLD HISTORY.”

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

- 📖 A Robert F. Sibert Informational Honor Book
- 📖 A Jane Addams Children’s Book Award Winner
- 📖 A recipient of FIVE STARRED REVIEWS
- 📖 An ILA Notable Books for a Global Society Award Winner
- 📖 An NEA Read Across America Embrace Evolution Selection
- 📖 An NCTE Notable Children’s Poetry Book

★ “Remind[s] readers of the connections running through all humanity.”

—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*, starred review

About the Book

Fossil records show that the first humans were born in Africa. Meaning, every person on Earth can trace their ancestry back to that continent. *The History of We* celebrates our shared ancestors’ ingenuity and achievements and imagines what these firsts would have looked and felt like.

What was it like for the first person to paint, to make music, to dance, to discover medicine, to travel to unknown lands? It required courage, curiosity, and skill.



About Nikkolas Smith

Nikkolas Smith is an Artist, picture book author, and Hollywood film illustrator. He is the author-illustrator of the *USA TODAY* bestselling picture book *The Artist*, *The Golden Girls of Rio*, and *My Hair Is Poofy & That’s Okay*. He also illustrated the picture books *A Change Is Gonna Come*, *Captain America: Brave New World: A Hero Looks Like You*, *I Am Ruby Bridges*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever: The Courage to Dream*, *That Flag*, and the #1 *New York Times* bestselling *The 1619 Project: Born on the Water*. Many of Nikkolas’s viral and globally published sketches that have sparked important conversations and inspired meaningful change are included in his book *Sunday Sketch: The Art of Nikkolas*. He speaks on his Artivism and leads digital painting workshops at conferences, workplaces, and schools around the world. Nikkolas was born in Houston, Texas, and now lives in Los Angeles, California. Find out more at www.NIKKOLAS.art and follow Nikkolas on @nikkolas_smith.

Intro to Guide

The History of We is a brilliant and beautiful work of nonfiction about where you come from, where I come from, where we ALL come from. Author and illustrator Nikkolas Smith gives readers a closer look into their past—into everyone’s past, because we are all connected—and it’s inspiring. With heavily researched history based on scientific facts and lyrical text, this award-winning picture book celebrates our students’ ancestry and history and connects the beauty and strength from their past so they can confidently and collectively shine in their future.

This interdisciplinary educator guide offers intentional and engaging discussion questions and activities that enhance the experience of using *The History of We* in the classroom. It acts as a bridge connecting such concepts as ancient civilizations, human history, archeology, art, and more! Students will develop a love of learning and essential literacy skills while also expanding their understanding of the world that they live in and how they fit into it. The activities and discussion questions are designed for a variety of grade levels and can easily be adapted to fit your students’ needs. This guide supports the building of a genuine classroom community and can seamlessly fit into and work in tandem with existing curriculum. Using *The History of We* in the classroom can help build and celebrate community by showing students how we are all connected.

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Sections of this educator guide were created in collaboration with Room 228 LLC with Shanika Parker as lead educator and Tracei Willis and Morgan Cuffie as senior editors. We at Room 228 believe our similarities and differences are beautiful and worth celebrating. To learn more, visit rm228.com.

Essential Questions

1. Author-illustrator Nikkolas Smith starts *The History of We* with a question: “What does ‘the beginning’ look like?” Close your eyes. Think about his question. What do you see? What pictures come to mind? What colors do you see in the environment? What are people doing? What are some things that have changed since then? What are some things that have stayed the same?
2. In the sentence, “In this fertile African cradle, the birthplace of civilization is found,” what words stand out to you? What images do you see? What is a “cradle”? Why might the author use that word to start his book? What do you notice about the illustrations? What feelings do you feel when you see them? Look closely at the illustrations. What do you notice about the colors the illustrator chose? Why might he have chosen the bright colors on some pages and darker colors on others? Is he trying to send us a message? What might these messages be? Can you see his brushstrokes? How are they different on some pages? Why might he have chosen to create different brushstrokes on certain pages?
3. What does the author mean when he says “we”? Who is included in “we”? What does “we” mean to you in your own life?
4. How does having the author and the illustrator be the same person influence the book?
5. The author shows people’s accomplishments, handiwork, creativity, and curiosity throughout the book. Explore various pages. Why does Mr. Smith paint so many close-ups of hands? What might hands represent in this book? What tools are people using? What skills did we possess?
6. What different jobs did we have? How are the jobs similar and different from the ones we have today? Why are those different jobs important? In these pages, what struggles can you see or imagine? What successes did people have?
7. Mr. Smith paints exquisite scenes of nature. How does nature influence the way we behave and live and feel? Think about a time when you stood on the sidewalk and looked up at the stars or were in your yard breathing in the smell of freshly mowed summer grass or dipped your feet at the edge of the ocean. How did you feel in those moments? What other emotions does nature evoke in us? How has nature helped us heal? Can nature encourage us to make certain choices in our lives? Explain.
8. Why might it be helpful for us to understand where we come from? How might understanding this impact our past, present, and future?
9. What is your favorite song? What happens to your body when you hear it? How does it make you feel? Music has been around since the beginning of human life. What kinds of musical instruments do you see in this book? Why do you think people played music way back then? What does music bring to our lives? What is your favorite instrument? Why?
10. The book jacket states that Nikkolas Smith’s story “highlights a history not always told and celebrates where we come from.” Why is history something that may not always be fully told or accurately told? How might this book change the way we learn history?
11. Look at the last page of the book with all the beautiful faces and ages—the “family” of we. Think of something that makes you unique. What makes you the same and/or different from your friends, classmates, and family members? What can we learn from one another’s differences?

Dig Deeper

The History of We is a deeply researched, anthropological look at the origins and advancement of humans. Fossil records show that the earliest known humans existed 233,000 years ago in Ethiopia. Meaning, every person on Earth can trace their ancestry back to the continent of Africa. Whether you're using *The History of We* for ELA, Social Studies, or units on Ancient Civilizations, this is a great picture book to introduce readers to the fields of paleontology, anthropology, the Paleolithic era, and our shared beginnings as humans.

In sharing nonfiction, a writer must dig deep in research. Learn more about Nikkolas's research journey and how famed paleoanthropologist Mary Leakey's work influenced the research on this book in [this National Geographic article](#), and you can find an interactive bibliography of Nikkolas's research [here](#). Share the bibliography with students to show them how much research goes into creating nonfiction material.

The activities below will help you and your students dig deeper into the book and human history. These activities can be adapted for any grade level. Additionally, educational resources are provided to help educators introduce the book and/or these activities.

Vocabulary: Review the following vocabulary terms before conducting the activities to create context and enhance comprehension.

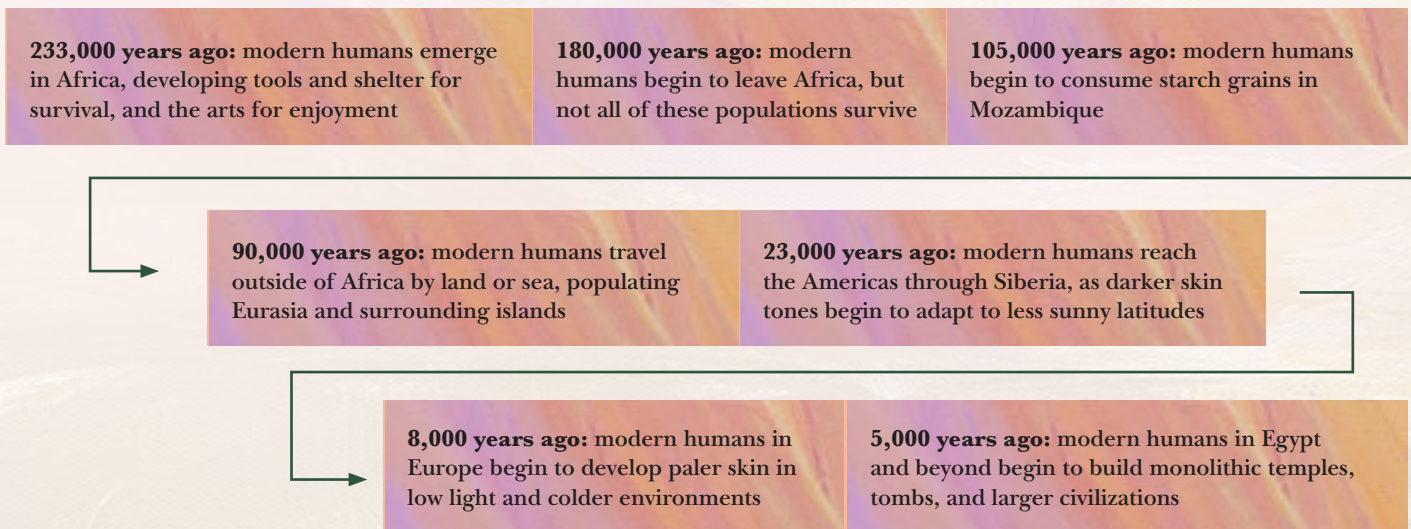
Middle Paleolithic Era	Migration	BCE (Before the Common Era)
Paleontology	Anthropology	Paleoanthropology

Time

As an introductory activity to give your readers a sense of how long modern humans have been around, ask students:

- How many years ago do you think modern humans existed?
- How long ago did modern humans in Egypt and other ancient civilizations begin to build monolithic temples, tombs, and larger civilizations?

After discussion, review the timeline and dates at the back of the book. Have students share how their guesses compare with these newly learned facts.



Dig Deeper

The History of We Book Cover

Before reading with students, consider discussing the cover as an opener to the book. The figure on the cover is known as Omo I. Dated at 233,000 BCE, Omo I's modern human fossil remains were discovered in Omo Kibish, Ethiopia. They are some of the oldest fossils ever unearthed and prove that anatomically **modern humans originated in Africa**. Ask students:

- What do you notice about the cover?
- Why do you think Nikkolas Smith chose Omi I to be on the cover?
- Notice that the subject of the painting is looking directly at you. What effect does that have on you, the reader?
- After discussion, share the [behind the scenes video](#) from Nikkolas Smith. Ask students: What stands out to you? What new information have you learned? Did anything surprise you? Explain.

Inventions and Discoveries

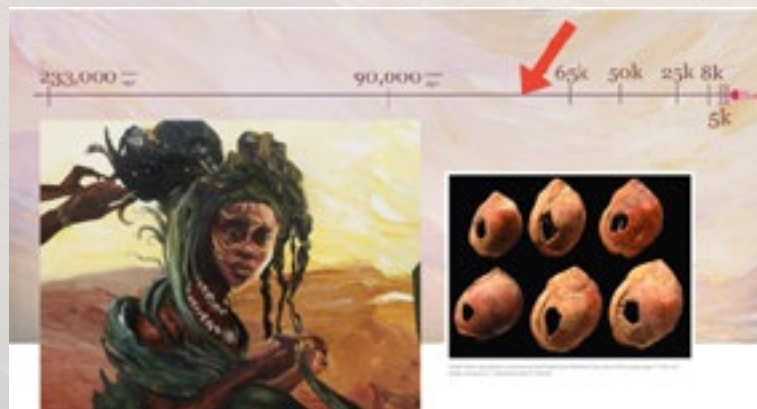
The History of We expands on existing research surrounding the first discoveries of humanity and what it might have been like to be the first person to paint, to make music, to dance, to develop math tools, to discover medicine, to create fashion, and more. Review the inventions and discoveries in the book with your students. Use the discussion prompts and activities below to lead broader discussions about how the first known humans engaged with the world, and how their discoveries and creations impact us even today!

Art: The **earliest known human drawings** ever uncovered are from the Middle Paleolithic Era, in the Blombos cave in South Africa. Artifacts found there are 73,000 years old. Ask students:

- What stories might they be telling?
- What would you draw if you lived back then?
- See the below "Let Us Be Artists" section for more art related activities.

Fashion: Nassarius Kraussianus sea snail shells, dated 77,000 BCE were discovered chiseled and well-worn, suggesting that modern humans like the Stillbay people of South Africa used double-braided grass through perforated holes to string shells together into decorative necklaces. These expressive design choices are also believed to have been used in other fashion. Ask students:

- What elements found in nature could these artists use to make jewelry?
- *Activity Prompt:* Gather sticks, leaves, pebbles, and other natural resources found outside. Have students make their own jewelry and present their artistic choices to the class! Discuss why they chose the particular materials and how they constructed their jewelry.

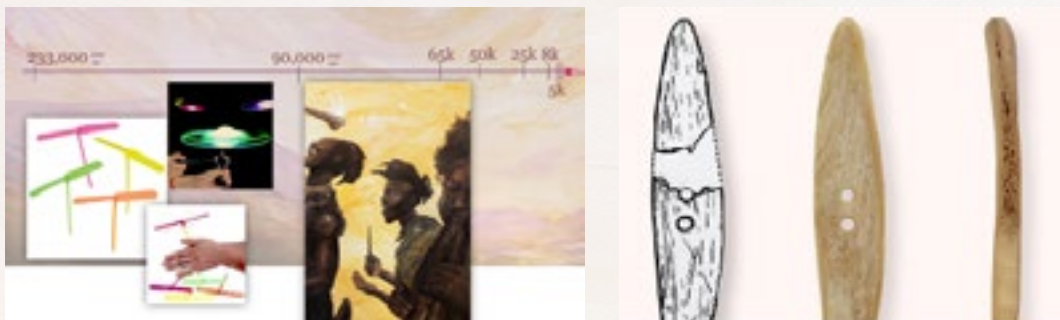


Dig Deeper

Inventions and Discoveries

Musical Instruments and Toys: In *The History of We*, we learn musical instruments played an essential role in people’s lives. Percussive objects such as bone and tightly stretched animal skin over logs were most likely used as the first sound-creating instruments over 90,000 years ago. . . . Evidence of these early instruments including the bullroarer artifacts were recovered in South Africa’s southern Cape region, at the Klasies River. Ask students:

- What other elements from the natural world could be used to make music?
- What do you think the goal of making music was back then?
- The woer woer (see images) is a toy that is very similar to modern day toys. What kinds of games do you think they would play with these?



Tools: Stone chiseled tools and plant resin glue are two examples in the book of how humans first used the world around them to make tools. The Ishango Bone is possibly the world’s oldest math tool, dating back to 40,000 BC. This was used as a way to tally. The Inshango Bone may have also been used in early Astronomy as a lunar phase counter. Ask students:

- What do you think early humans may have been tallying with this tool?
- Besides this tool, what might early humans have used to measure or to solve other math problems since they didn’t have digital technology like we have today?



Wild Grains: Hungry? Food was not guaranteed back in early human history and not everything humans ate could be digested, but as the human body evolved more options became sources of food. The Middle Paleolithic period marked a time when the human body adapted to properly digest starchy plant foods and rely on cereals/grains. Starch residue found on stone tools in Mozambican caves from 105,000 years ago suggests that early humans used these grains as a source of food.. Ask students:

- How did humans benefit from our bodies adapting to be able to digest more foods?
- What other foods might they have eaten before being able to digest plant foods and cereals?

Dig Deeper

Inventions and Discoveries Continued

Medicine: Doctors and pharmacies as we know them did not exist in early human history. Modern humans had to rely on their own ingenuity and discoveries for medicine. Researchers have studied the Taforalt Cave of Pigeons in Morocco, which exhibits evidence of occupation around 85,000 years ago. Inhabitants of the cave utilized a variety of antifungal and anti-inflammatory properties from the plant *Juniperus phoenicea*. Ask students:

- What other medicine that we use today comes from plants?

Migration: Modern humans traversed the Nile and other African waters for hunting and other purposes well before leaving the continent 90,000 years ago. When they exited during a time of low sea levels at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait of the Red Sea, long-distance swimming and simple rafts, which they also created, were necessary to cross into the Eurasian landmass. Migration patterns in Out of Africa research show how we inhabited the Arabian Peninsula, coastal Southeast Asia, and [Australia](#) between 90,000 and 65,000 years ago. Branching routes show movement into Europe 50,000 years ago and a winding Siberian route down into the Americas from 23,000 to 15,000 years ago. Watch this video of [migration patterns from National Geographic](#) to illustrate the above and ask students:

- What are some reasons why humans may have migrated back then?
- Are any of the reasons that humans may have migrated back then still relevant today?



Dig Deeper

Research and Paleontology

In writing a heavily researched nonfiction picture book, Nikkolas Smith did an incredible amount of research and reading, and he also had to have the book vetted (or reviewed) by professionals who work in fields that examine the past. Let's explore some of these fields:

Paleontology is the scientific study of the past, including ancient life through fossils, but also through biology, geology, and other sciences.

Anthropology is the scientific study of biological and societal behaviors of humans.

Paleoanthropologist is a scientist who studies the early development of modern human beings.

These scientists not only have to prove their work through science, they also must show facts, research, and other ways to show how their work is true.

Famed paleoanthropologist **Mary Leakey** comes from a long line of scholars dedicated to this work, and she dedicated her life to studying this particular area of modern human development highlighted in *The History of We*. Mary's work influenced Nikkolas Smith on the making of this book, and **the Leakey family reviewed and approved this book.**

- Review the numbered images below in the interactive bibliography for *The History of We*. Click on each one to explore what fascinated Nikkolas Smith. Why might he have included some of what he learned here in his book? What bits of information fascinated you too?
- Now that you've learned what paleontologists, anthropologists, and paleoanthropologists study, which pieces of information here might interest them? Why?
- Ask students:
 - How have these scientific fields of study helped humans understand our world better?
 - What might the past tell us about today?
 - Looking at the timeline in the back of the book, ask students what time period they would want to study in one of these fields of study? Explain.
 - Follow up with students to ask what types of institutions or resources may help with this research (i.e., libraries, books, etc). NOTE: this is not an activity to prompt them to research, but to think about how they might research a topic.



Creating Art for Purpose

Let Us Be Writers and Artists

Nikkolas Smith is not just a writer, he identifies as an “Artist.” An artist is someone who uses their art to raise awareness and instill critical thinking for social change for all. Share [this article](#) to learn more about how Nikkolas uses his art to inspire change. In addition to writing this book, Nikkolas also painted 24 paintings for it and now it’s time for you to create. Let us be artists! As discussed in the DIG DEEPER section, different forms of art were discovered in Africa by the earliest modern humans. From jewelry, to fashion, to the earliest known human drawings, art was a vibrant part of their lives and it’s shown through *The History of We*.

Let Us Be Painters!

- As highlighted in the Blombos cave page, early humans used materials from nature to draw and paint. Nikkolas Smith explains in [this creative process video](#) that he painted some of the paintings in the books with sticks, leaves, and with his own hands.
- *Activity Prompt:* Have students go outside and collect things from nature they may be able to use to draw or paint something.
 - Have students do a show and tell, or consider putting on your own art show, and explain what they made and what they used to make it.

Let Us Be Fashion Designers!

- As shown with the Nassarius Kraussianus sea snail shells in the book, objects from nature were used as decorative elements like necklaces and to adorn hair.
- *Activity Prompt:* Take students outside (or collect materials on your own and share with students) and have them gather objects from nature to construct something they can wear or use to enhance their clothing.
 - Have students do a show and tell and explain what they made, what they used to make it, and what it is used for.



Creating Art for Purpose

Let Us Be Writers and Artists Continued

When Nikkolas Smith created this book, he set out to “draw back to that moment that our history books completely looked over.” Through scientific facts and historical research, he sets out to show what it was like for these first people to create, heal, and explore. Together, [watch the video](#) “*The History of We*’ by Nikkolas Smith: From Idea to Creative Process.” He shares that he learned from his parents that every human on Earth can trace their ancestry back to Africa. But he wasn’t taught this same truth in school. It was skipped over, and Smith wanted to know why. This book was born out of that yearning to understand and to recognize those who were left out of our history books.

To create this book, Nikkolas Smith had to do many things: he was a writer, an artist, and a researcher—blending scientific and historical facts with poetic language to share the story of the first modern humans and our ancestors.

Let Us Be Writers!

- Now it’s time to figure out what history, story, or topic you want to write about. Mr. Smith showed us that our early ancestors were artists, architects, healers, and so much more. Let us be writers! What is something that you are passionate about? How would you like it to be improved or changed? How can you, like Mr. Smith, use your voice to educate others and create a better tomorrow?
- Brainstorm | Identify a topic that you care about.
- Prewriting | Answer these questions:
 - What do I care about?
 - How/why do I think it can be improved?
- Final Draft | This is where we get creative!
 - You can share your point of view and your purpose through different writing styles!
 - Will I need to research any of this? How will I go about doing that?



Creating Art for Purpose

Let Us Be Writers and Artists Continued

Writing for Change | Start Here!

My Topic (What do I care about?):

My Purpose for Writing (Why do I think it should be improved?):

My Goal for Those Reading It (How do I think it can be improved?):

Writing for Change | Options:

- Poem (acrostic, concrete shape, autobiography poem, alliteration poem, free verse, ode, limerick, cinquain, palindrome)
- Cartoon
- Letter
- Journal entry
- Song/rap
- Short play/dialogue
- Essay
- My other idea: _____

Share your writing with each other. Maybe try to share with someone who can help support your purpose and make real change in the world! Yay to you!

Creating Art for Purpose

Plant Your Roots | Classroom Garden

After reading *The History of We* and understanding how we are all interconnected and rooted in Africa, students may wonder where they individually fit into all of this. Like all humans, students crave a sense of belonging. In this activity, they get to establish their own roots by literally planting them!

Gather a variety of flower seeds and allow students to choose their own seed packet. Before planting the flowers, have students mix all of the seeds together in a bowl or container. This represents all of the different cultures in the classroom coming together to create a classroom garden—*The History of We* in garden form!

Extend this activity to support students' understanding of **anthropology**—"the study of what makes us human" (American Anthropological Association). Throughout the planting of the garden, have students:

- Choose one early world period listed in the back of *The History of We* (between ~300,000 and 40,000 years ago). See the DIG DEEPER section to find more information and resources on these periods and the tools and methods used.
- Research how people during this period gardened or managed their land.
 - How did people eat? Did they grow food or hunt or both?
 - How did they prepare land for their needs?
 - How did they use plants in their everyday lives?
 - How do you think the land helped them feel part of their community?
- Write a **Cultural Conversation!** Imagine you, in the present day, are having a conversation with someone from the time period you chose to research. Think about your classroom garden and how this person interacted with their own land in their own community. Discuss how each of you was affected by the growing of the garden/managing of the land and how the actual process of growing influenced how you felt about belonging to a part of a community.
- Share your letters aloud.



Webbed Family Tree of We

Nikkolas Smith says that we are all “a one global community of extended family.” Think of our classrooms. Our classes are communities of learners—an extended family in itself where we are connected in various ways. In this activity, your students are going to create their own family tree, but with a twist! Instead of a traditional family tree, we want to make a tree of WE!

Explain to students that we are going to make a family tree, but not just any family tree—a family tree of we! How are we connected? What unites us? Using these questions as a guide, we will weave a web of connection between everyone in the class.

- Using colored string or yarn, the teacher will stand in the middle of the room while students circle around.
- The teacher begins the activity by sharing something about themselves. For example, “My favorite color is blue.”
- If students’ favorite color is blue, they raise their hand.
- The teacher holds one end of the yarn while passing the other end to a student whose hand is raised. And the yarn continues to be passed along if there are multiple students whose favorite color is blue. A webbed family tree is starting to connect us!
- Then the student who ends up with the yarn shares something different about themselves.
- Continue to weave your web and build your family tree. Our goal is to connect everyone.
- Fun tip! Use multiple colors of yarn for each new “I/My” statement (see suggestions below).
- Once the yarn has been passed around and all students are connected (maybe even more than once!), take a picture of your web and celebrate the beautiful connections of “we.”

Extension Discussion Questions:

- What does this visual, colorful, webbed family tree show about us as individuals?
- What does it show about us as a classroom community?
- How can we connect this to our world outside our classroom? If we spoke more about how we are united and connected, how might that affect our relationships with other people, with other countries, etc.?

Statements to guide you:

1. My favorite color, sport, food, class, and/or animal is _____.
2. I am _____ years old. I was born in the year _____.
3. I have read (#) _____ books this week, month, year.
4. I have traveled to _____.
5. I would describe myself as (adjective) _____.
6. When I grow up I want to be a _____.
7. I care about _____.
8. I like to spend my free time _____.
9. I would like to travel to _____.
10. _____ is one of my hobbies.
11. One of my family traditions is _____.
12. My favorite holiday is _____.
13. My family speaks (language(s)) _____.

Building Our History

We were learners, inventors, creatives, and architects . . . and we still are! It's time to tap into the skills that our ancestors used for survival—skills that they needed to use while moving to new lands to create new homes. In this activity, students will research why people move. Then they will build their own models of homes to showcase the resilience, creativity, and courage it takes to leave one home for another. As well as building informational content knowledge, this activity also grows empathy in our young learners. Before beginning the building process, have students explore the following:

We are learners!

Have your students research:

- Why do people move?
- How does moving affect the people moving and those they are leaving behind?
- What things do people need to do to adapt to their new homes?
- Why can moving be difficult?
- How does moving show strength in people?

Teacher Resources:

- 📌 [“Why People Move from Place to Place”](#)
- 📌 [“Human Migration”](#)
- 📌 Reflect on and share ideas learned from the research in turn & talks, journaling, and whole group discussion.

We are architects!

After researching, now we can plan and build! Instruct students to reflect on their research about why people move and how moving affects them. For this part of the activity, students will plan and build a model of a home. The model should be a visual representation of what they learned in their research (e.g., showing resilience, strength, difficulties, emotions experienced, etc.).

- Gather supplies for your students to get creative with cardboard, craft sticks, pipe cleaners, construction paper, glue, scissors, tape, etc.
- Set guidelines for your students to follow. Go over clear expectations for using the different supplies.
- They may work independently or together in small groups to create their home.

We are creators!

Next, students reflect on their model and write several paragraphs* analyzing and describing what makes this home special. How did they build it? What supplies did they choose and why? How does their home showcase resilience, etc.?

We are a community!

Students share their model homes and writing pieces with one another. Consider hosting a day where families and students from other classes visit and your students present their model homes and their new understanding for why people move and the related experiences of moving.

We Are Storytellers

Nikkolas Smith is a storyteller. He tells stories through words and pictures. In this activity, students will explore how different cultures share stories and will examine how these stories are similar or different from one another across cultures.

Discuss:

- Think of your favorite story! How was it shared with you?
- What are some ways we share stories today (e.g., speaking, drawing, writing, songs, art, books)?
- Why do we share stories?

Today we're going to learn more about folktales and how they compare across different cultures.

- What do you already know about folktales (i.e., usually involve magic, short story, a character struggles with something)?

Teachers:

- Choose the same folktale but from two different cultures.
- Have your students listen to or read both folktales aloud and create a table or a Venn diagram to list the similarities and differences between the two folktales.
- Instruct them to listen for details related to **plot** (events/actions that happen in a story), **theme** (a message from the story), and **conflict** (a struggle or problem in the story).
- Once the activity is complete, ask students to share what they noticed while listening or reading.
- How was the plot, theme, and conflict similar or different in each of the stories?
- Why might there be similarities between stories even when they come from different countries or cultures?
- Why might there be differences?
- Encourage students to create their own short folktales and participate in a Buddy Read where they share their stories with younger readers!

Teacher Resources:

👉 [“Fairy Tales Archive”](#)

👉 [World of Tales](#)

List similarities and differences:	Story 1:	Story 2:
Plot		
Theme		
Conflict		

Earth Exhibition

In *The History of We*, humans are highly dependent on the earth's resources. Let's explore what the earth is made up of and dive deeper into the earth's core to discover how complex and helpful the earth has always been and continues to be!

- Research the different layers of the earth. In your notes be sure to include interesting and fun facts about crust, mantle, outer core, inner core, plates, temperature, and pressure.
- Continue your research on rocks and the following terms: minerals, sandstone, granite, igneous, sedimentary, metamorphic.
- After gathering your notes, ask yourself, "What did I learn?"
- Pull your most interesting and fun facts together to create an Earth Exhibition presentation to share with your peers or to travel to a younger classroom to teach them all about your new knowledge!
- Options for presentations:
 - **Rock Notecards!** Identify which facts you'd like to present/share with your audience. Search for rocks around your home or school. Instead of presentation notecards or slides, use Earth's rocks to help you remember your talking points! Write the first letter of the fact that you'll share on each rock and talk away!
 - **Model or Diorama!** Build a diorama or model using everyday items you have at school or home (e.g., mud, rolled up paper wrapped in duct tape, shoebox, toothpicks for labels, paint/markers, cardboard).
 - **Trivia!** Create a fun trivia game for your classmates and hold a competition! Who can remember the most facts about the earth and rocks!
- After exhibitions are complete, think about all the different elements of each layer of Earth and review *The History of We*.
- How did rocks and the different parts of the earth come together to support humans in *The History of We*? How does earth support us today? Are humans part of the earth or separate? Explain. How can we work to protect Earth?

Sample Note-Taking Table for Student Research

Layers of the Earth:	Rocks:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Teacher Resources:

- ["Layers of the Earth for Kids"](#)
- ["What is Earth?"](#)

Gallery Walk

Nikkolas Smith painted an incredibly brilliant and beautiful collection of art for *The History of We*. He painted a total of 24 canvas paintings for this book and you can see 11 examples with more information on those pieces at the back of the book.

- Copy and print each painting and display them on the walls around the room.
- Divide the class into small groups. Instruct students to walk around the “gallery.”
- Allow each group time to visually explore each painting.
- On the board, post these guiding questions for students to discuss with their groups as they walk around the gallery and write their responses on sticky notes to stick around the border of each painting:
 - What do you see?
 - What might the author have wanted you to think about when he painted this?
 - How does this painting connect to your own life?
 - How does this painting connect to other early world civilizations, geographies, and ancient peoples and cultures that we’ve studied? What similarities do you see?
 - How do the paintings, the words on this page, and the information on each of the eleven paintings at the back of the book all connect?

After viewing all of the paintings, have students share their discoveries with the class. During the discussion, use this opportunity to highlight some of the facts and history in the book from Nikkolas Smith’s [research](#).



A History of Firsts (and You)!

How does our past shape our present and future? Throughout history, humans have done something for the first time and helped the advancements of humans to where we are now. *The History of We* shows readers how it must have looked to be the first to do many things in all areas of our lives—music, medicine, dance and more! What curiosity, ingenuity, and courage it takes to be the first at anything! This activity has students exploring our history's firsts and the people who moved us all forward. Students will also tap into their creativity to share their new knowledge and understanding by creating Inspiration Boards!

Ask

- How do you feel when you do something completely new for the first time?
- How does your body react when you are about to do something new (e.g., sweaty palms, shaking muscles, full of energy).
- If you are nervous about doing something new, how do you calm your nerves?
- How can you prepare yourself to do this new thing successfully?

Research

- Now let's learn about people in history who have been the very first at something! I wonder what steps they took to be the very first?
- Students research using your school's favorite websites, articles, books, and videos. Additional teacher resources about history's "firsts" are listed below. And feel free to use other examples from topics you've studied together already!

Teacher Resources:

- [First Black player to play in Major League Baseball](#)
- [First Person to Successfully Perform Heart Surgery](#)
- [Founder of the Special Olympics](#)
- [America's First Prima Ballerina](#)
- [First Person to Land Five Quadruple Jumps in a Single Ice Skating Program](#)
- [First Person to Play the Flute in Space](#)
- [First Black Woman Elected to Congress](#)
- [First Scientist to Design Systems to Help Farm Animals not be Afraid](#)
- [First Person to Walk on the Moon](#)

A History of Firsts (and You)! Continued

Inspiration Boards!

Think about what you learned researching people in our world.

- Ask:
 - What qualities do they share?
 - What goals did they set?
 - What obstacles did they face?
 - How did they overcome those obstacles?
 - How have people who are the first at something inspired us?
 - What qualities do you need to set and reach your own goals?
- Students will create Inspiration Boards to highlight how they can inspire themselves and others to achieve their goals.
- Distribute paper, scissors, pictures from magazines or other sources, markers, paint, glue, and other craft materials.
- At the top of the paper, students write “My goal is _____” and they fill in a goal they’d like to set...maybe to be the very first at something!
- Encourage students to design their Inspiration Boards with words, images, colors, etc. that will inspire them to reach their goals.
- Decorate your school’s hallways with these beautifully inspiring Inspiration Boards. Your students may be making history soon!

