

Activity Lesson: Black Panther and the Art of Costume Design

Ruth Carter considers herself a story teller. She says that costume design is about telling stories through the colors, patterns, and styles of clothing that a character wears. As the costume designer for the film *Black Panther*, Carter draws from traditional and contemporary African fashion with the intention that her designs help the viewer to learn more about the people of Wakanda.

Watch the interview with Ruth E. Carter on PBS News Hour and think about the following guided discussion prompts:

- Ruth Carter says that “a costume designer is a storyteller...that tells stories through wearable art.” How do the things we wear tell about us?
- Carter’s goal was to “make fantasy familiar.” Do you think she was successful in doing that? In what ways?
- Among others, Carter was inspired by the Dogon people of Mali and the Himba people of Namibia. Why do you think that is important to the storytelling of *Black Panther*? How does this help to make the fantasy familiar?



Design a Superhero Costume

Ruth Carter kept four words on her vision board in planning designs for *Black Panther*: *Beautiful. Positive. Forward. Colorful.*

In this exercise, you will create a costume for a new superhero version of yourself based on a series of vision words. In art, words are often combined with line, pattern, or color to create visual representations of their meaning. Use words to create a vision board that will inspire a costume design for your superhero self.

STEP 1

The first step in creating a vision board is to determine what words will drive your decision making. Set a timer for one minute. During that minute, think of all the words that you aspire to or that you feel represent you in a positive way. Quickly write each word on a separate small piece of paper or post-it note.

STEP 2

When the minute is up, organize the words in order of how strongly you feel about them or how connected they are to you. You will need to narrow your words down to the four that you best represent your vision for yourself.

STEP 3

Now you will create your vision board. With a clean piece of white paper, create four rectangles by folding the paper in half two times, creating four rectangles like this:



STEP 4

In each rectangle, write one of the four words you have chosen. When you write the words, use different colors, patterns, sizes, and fonts so that each word visually represents its meaning. Feel free to decorate the entire rectangle by creating borders and backgrounds.

This is your vision board and it will serve as the inspiration for a superhero version of yourself.

STEP 5

With another clean piece of white paper, draw a picture of your superhero inspired by your vision board, paying special attention to the clothing.

- What kind of material is it made out of?
- Are there any special details or features that make it more efficient or useful?
- What colors or patterns is it made up of?

- Does it use technology? In what ways?
- How does the clothing tell more about your superhero?

For further exploration:

Create a short story about the superhero you have created. Include details about the costume that help tell the reader more about the character.