



An American Vocabulary: Words to Action

Activity Guide

This activity guide was developed by the Education Department of the Japanese American National Museum to accompany the “An American Vocabulary: Words to Action” flashcards created by **Audrey Chan** and **jason chu** for the Artist At Work initiative in Los Angeles County 2021–2022.

Learn more at: janm.org/american-vocabulary

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1. WHO DO YOU HONOR? WHAT MATTERS TO YOU?

Objective: To make the four themes more personal and to understand the concepts included in the flashcards.

Activity:

1. After reviewing the flashcards, define the four themes. This can be done individually or as a group.
 - Ancestor
 - Voice
 - Persistence
 - Care
2. Think about things from your own life that would represent each of the four themes. These can be people (individuals or groups, famous or not famous), events, attitudes, or beliefs.
3. Create your own set of flashcards to add to the deck.
 - On the front side, write the theme, the name of the person, event, or concept you have chosen, and draw something that represents it. If you speak another language, you might want to write the theme in that language. If you do not speak another language, you could use this as a chance to research the translation of the theme in a language that is significant to your family or community.
 - On the reverse side, write a brief biography or description of the person, event, or concept you have chosen.
4. Share your cards with others and tell stories about why they are personally significant to you.

2. IN YOUR OWN WORDS

Objective: To understand and comprehend the meaning of the poems on the flashcards.

Activity: Consider the meaning of the poems on the card and try to convey the same or similar meaning using your own words.

Poems:

Ancestor

Who walked where we walk?
Who spoke what we heard?
Who lived the lives that led to ours?

Those who went before,
Where we will one day go.

Voice

shout, scream, sing, pray
dance, draw, dream, whisper
move, march, make, laugh

Pour yourself into the world
Fierce and kind and brilliant

Persistence

When you hear nothing - listen.
When you see nothing - look.

No canvas is blank,
No room is silent.

Behind eraser marks and echoes
are Everything.

Care

When the winds come
We kindle warmth where we can
Build fires and homes and friends

We plant on land we do not own.
Giving care, taking care,
Feeding each other.

3. DIG DEEP

Objective: To understand the individuals, historical events, and concepts included in the flashcards and the connections to the poems and themes.

Activity:

1. After reviewing all the flashcards, select one flashcard.
2. Research the individual, historical event, or concept on your selected flashcard.
3. Analyze the poem on the card and answer the following questions:
 - In your own words, what is the poem about? What is it communicating?
4. Consider the definition of the theme included on your card and answer the following prompt:
 - In your own words, define the theme.
5. Consider your analysis and research to answer the following prompts:
 - How does the individual, historical event, or concept on your flashcard relate to the theme on your card?
 - How does the individual, historical event, or concept on your flashcard relate to the poem on your card?
 - Why do you think the artist chose to pair the individual, historical event, or concept with the theme and poem? How do they each build on one another? How does each part help you better understand the other parts?
6. Share your thoughts with others.

4. WHO ARE YOU?

Objective: To understand yourself in the context of the flashcards and exercise creative self-expression.

Activity:

1. After reviewing all the flashcards, brainstorm an outline of some identifying characteristics and values that you hold. This activity can be about you as an individual or it can focus on a culture/ tradition/ practice that is important to you.
2. Draft a card that represents this person/ event/ concept in the style of the AAW Flashcards (i.e., image, title, short poem, short description)
3. Reflect on your decision making.
 - What choices did you make in creating a card?
 - What information or characteristics did you choose to include?
 - How did the process make you think about the person/ practice?

5. FIND THE CONNECTION

Objective: To understand the individuals, historical events, and concepts in the flashcards by looking for and detailing connections between randomly-selected cards.

Activity:

1. Get into a group of two or more.
2. Shuffle the flashcards and deal three (3) cards to each person, including yourself.
3. Starting with the person to the right of the dealer, take turns explaining a connection you see between two of the cards in your hand.
4. After your turn, put the two cards you have explained aside and draw one card from the remaining flashcards in the deck. You should each have two cards in your hand after completing the first round.
5. Starting again with the person to the right of the original dealer, take turns explaining a connection you see between the two cards in your hand.
6. Continue until all the cards have been used.