

If you only have 30 minutes ...

How Does Cultural Knowledge Continue?

At the Venice Biennale, the artists in the Moroccan, French and Saudi pavilions draw on knowledge and practices inherited from the past. But they do not simply reproduce them. As you investigate the three pavilions, consider what allows a tradition to remain meaningful as people, places and circumstances change.

Text Mining (8 minutes)

Task: Trace three paths.

Working individually or in small groups, find evidence showing what happens to cultural knowledge in each pavilion.¹

As you work, consider these three processes:

- Transmit: knowledge or skills pass between people or generations;
- Adapt: inherited knowledge is changed or used in a new way;
- Remember: art carries the memory of a place, practice or experience.

Which process is most visible in each pavilion? More than one may apply.

Pavilion	What is carried forward?	What happens to it?	Evidence
Morocco ²			
France ³			
Saudi Arabia ⁴			

Text Analysis (10 minutes)

Task: Tradition and Change

A tradition can change without losing its connection to the past. Which pavilion makes the strongest case for this idea?

Use evidence from the reading to explain:

- What the artist inherited or drew upon;
- What the artist changed, reinterpreted or placed in a new context;
- What remained connected to the tradition?

Then compare your example with one of the other pavilions. Does cultural continuity work the same way in both?

Synthesis (10 minutes)

What Keeps a Tradition Alive?

You have been asked to advise a cultural organization working with a tradition that fewer people are practicing.

Using the three pavilions as evidence, recommend two principles the organization should consider if it wants the tradition to remain meaningful for another generation.

Your recommendation should address questions such as:

- Does a tradition need to remain unchanged?
- Who needs to participate in carrying it forward?
- What role can experimentation or reinterpretation play?
- What can art carry forward when a place or object itself is vulnerable to loss?

Conclude with a claim: *A tradition remains alive when ...*

Support your recommendation with evidence from at least two pavilions.⁵

Common Core Standard(s) Met:

CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

1 Students should recognize that the three pavilions demonstrate different forms of cultural continuity.

- Morocco: Agueznay's work emphasizes transmission and collaboration. Traditional knowledge continues through the work and participation of artisans rather than residing solely with the individual artist.
- France: Barrada emphasizes adaptation and experimentation. Inherited textile and dye knowledge becomes the basis for contemporary artistic experimentation.
- Saudi Arabia: Awartani emphasizes remembrance and reinterpretation. Clay and decorative forms evoke architectural traditions and places vulnerable to damage or disappearance.

Students may identify more than one process for each pavilion when supported by evidence.

2 Barrada offers an especially clear example because experimentation is central to her artistic process, but students may make a case for any of the three artists. Strong responses should distinguish between the aspects that change and those that maintain a connection with inherited knowledge.

3 Students should include some or all of the following:

- UNESCO protects places of outstanding cultural and natural importance.
- These sites preserve traditions, history, languages and archeological treasures.
- They encourage dialog, appreciation and mutual respect among cultures.
- They recognize achievements that belong to all humanity rather than a single nation.

4 Students should include some or all of the following:

- Historic Jeddah reflects centuries of cultural exchange through trade and pilgrimage.
- Samarkand demonstrates how the Silk Roads connected civilizations through commerce and scholarship.
- The Alhambra reflects artistic and architectural achievements that bridged Islamic and European traditions.
- The Taj Mahal blends Persian, Islamic and Indian architectural influences.
- Shakespeare's plays continue to resonate because of their universal themes.
- Portuguese ceramic tiles illustrate how artistic ideas and esthetics moved across cultures and blended with local traditions.

5 There is no single correct recommendation. Strong responses should draw principles from the artists rather than simply summarize their work. Students might conclude that traditions continue when people:

- teach and practice inherited skills;
- involve communities of knowledgeable makers;
- allow techniques to respond to new circumstances;
- reinterpret inherited forms rather than merely reproduce them;
- use art to carry memories of vulnerable places or practices forward.