

## Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

### STORY

#### **The Art of Economics or the Economics of Art, 1/09/2009**

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/arts/jan-june09/artecon\\_01-09.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/arts/jan-june09/artecon_01-09.html)

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

### PROCEDURE

#### **1. WARM UP**

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

#### **2. MAIN ACTIVITY**

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

#### **3. DISCUSSION**

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

### INITIATING QUESTIONS

#### **1. How do artists make money?**

#### **2. How do theaters, museums and performance spaces make money? What happens to them during a recession?**

### READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

#### **1. Who are the traditional funders of the arts?**

##### ANSWER

Arts organizations typically are dependent on a combination of federal, state and private grants for support.

#### **2. Why is that money running out?**

##### ANSWER

All three funding sources are stressed by the current recession: Government agencies are hard-hit, foundations endowments are hard-hit, and corporations are suffering in the markets.

#### **3. Name at least four states that have cut their arts funding by half or more.**

##### ANSWER

Newsweek reports that Massachusetts, California, Florida and Michigan have cut their arts budgets by half or more this year, while lawmakers in Colorado, Oregon and New Jersey are considering eliminating their arts agencies altogether.

#### **4. Are people attending arts events? Why?**

##### ANSWER

"Entertainment tends to do well in a recession or depression. Movies do well in a recession or depression. People want to be entertained, and they're traveling less and spending less in other ways," Kaiser said on the NewsHour.

**5. Why are ticket sales not enough to fund the arts?**

**ANSWER**

Under the current model it is the contribution base which makes up 40 percent to 50 percent of the income for many arts organizations.

**6. How is the Indianapolis Art Museum coping with a drastically slashed budget?**

**ANSWER**

The 125-year-old Indianapolis Museum of Art, whose endowment dropped by \$57 million in the past two months, has delayed the opening of a new arts and nature park for at least one year, and scaled back this year's special exhibitions. An estimated \$1.7 million in cost cuts are in the works, along with a salary freeze.

**7. How is the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut coping?**

**ANSWER**

The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut threw an undercover arts fundraiser. People bought tickets for \$150 for the chance to buy new paintings ranging from \$150 to \$450. The catch? All of the artists names were hidden until the pieces were sold.

**8. Go online and find out how many signers have signed Quincy Jones' petition.**

**ANSWER**

Varies, as of publication more than 30,000.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

**1. Do you think the arts are important? Why or why not?**

**2. Do you think the government should pay for arts programs in schools? Why or why not?**

**3. Currently ticket sales alone cannot pay for most of art programs, would you pay more for your tickets to support the arts? Why or why not?**

**4. The article talked about some cost cutting measures that operas and theatre troops are using, can you think of any other inventive ways to save money?**

**Extension Activity**

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.