

Art, a Capital Idea

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES: Lee Greene Richards

QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

How does art impact our understanding of historical events and people? What does art tell us about the character of historical figures? How can art help us understand the day-to-day life in historical times? Can an artist exaggerate history? How?

What artistic elements such as line, color, value, shape and form, texture, and use of space can you find in these murals?

Select one mural to use in answering the following questions: Can you find the area of dominance in the work? What contributes to the balance of the work? Is the balance symmetrical or asymmetrical? What mood does the work suggest? How well does the work express subject, idea, or theme?

ACTIVITIES

Art

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of how symbols, ideas, subject matter, meanings, and/or purposes of art are used by an artist by working on a class

project to create a mural that reflects a positive part of past or present American culture

The following major steps will need to be included:

1. Selection of subject matter
2. Planning and design of the mural including all elements and their placement in the mural
3. Preliminary drawing
4. Execution: Who does what?

(These steps can be broken down into more specific steps.)

The mural could be made on a large sheet of paper mounted in the classroom and which can be easily rolled up when not in use. If the opportunity exists, perhaps a wall of the school needs to be brightened, and this could become an art project for the entire school.

This activity will of necessity be a long-term project and can also include any other aspects of art such as line, color value, texture, perspective, blocking-in, selection of appropriate media, and etc., which are part of your curriculum. In short, let yours and your students' imaginations run free.

Arts & Activities magazine for March, 1991, contains an article entitled "A Hall Awash in Warm, Brilliant Hues" by Heide Kraps describing one school's experience in creating a mural for the school.

Adventures in Art (3) by Laura H. Chapman, also has a module on "Creating a Mural" which though very simple, has some good ideas. Both of these resources should be helpful in the project. However, keep in mind that this project can be used in a variety of ways to cover a variety of art and social studies curriculum.

Art

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of murals as an art form by writing a report that defines what a mural is, includes ways murals can be created, and some particular features of murals by a specific artist.

Students will pick one muralist such as Lee Greene Richards, Minerva Teichert, Diego Rivera, or Michelangelo and research that artist's history. Based on their research, the students will write a report that includes a definition of a mural, the artist's methods such as fresco, painting directly on a wall, or as in the case of Richards, painting on another medium and attaching it to the wall. The report also should discuss the artist's reasons and purposes in creating the murals and any particular characteristics of the muralist's works.

The Visual Experience by Jack Hobbs and Richard Salome contains a section on how fresco is created and pictures of works by Diego Rivera. In addition, any biography of Diego Rivera is likely to contain examples of his work. Images of Faith by the Museum of Church History and Art contains good information about Minerva Teichert.

Variation for young students: Show the class some examples of murals such as Richards' and Teichert's works. Discuss what murals are, their purposes, characteristics, typical locations, and the differences between murals and art meant to be displayed in a more intimate setting. (For this last consideration, you will need to show the students some art, reproductions of art, or slides of artwork that would be appropriate for a typical home. Many examples are available in past Educator Evening packets, in the newly released posters, or your school, your own or a friend's home may contain useable art—just make sure the art is of high quality.)

Encourage students to use whatever vocabulary and understanding they have of the elements and principles of art in their discussion.

Language Arts

Objective: Students will increase their skills in the writing process by imagining

themselves in any one of the scenes in the murals by Lee Greene Richards and describing life during that time.

Discuss with students what life was like during the given time period. Also review or have students research the historical event depicted in one or more of the murals.

Students will then write about one of the scenes depicted by imagining themselves as part of the scene. The format can be a journal entry, a description of the event that is depicted, a description of daily life in that time period, or a "How I Spent My Summer Vacation" type essay.

Social Studies

Objective: Students will be able to illustrate their understanding of the Great Depression by creating a written or oral report on one of the following topics: the Great Depression and its causes, the role government assumed to bring the country out of the Depression under Hoover and under Roosevelt, the WPA and similar public works programs created by Roosevelt during this time, or how government decisions made during the Depression impact us today. This can be a group project.

Have each student or group of students research one of the above areas and create a written or oral report. As an alternative format, students may want to visually represent some aspect of the Great Depression.

Many Utah artists took part in Works Projects during the depression and the Springville Museum of Art was built as part of a partnership which included the WPA. Information is available in the biographical information of individual artists and on the Museum's homepage at the following address: **<http://www.sma.nebo.edu/museum.html>**