

Enduring Idea: Meaning and Objects

Integrated Discipline: Social Studies

Unit Title: Picturing America

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Unit Description: This lesson has been developed for students in 4th – 12th grade for the Columbia Museum of Art's school program. During this program learners discuss American history through different works of art from the 1700s to the 1900s. Learners also discuss the fundamentals of printmaking, such as a collagraph, Americana and what a symbol is, and what makes it important. In this lesson, students will be introduced to Robert Indiana's 'The American Dream' and will analyze his use of different symbols and numbers to represent his interest in Americana, social issues, and philosophical themes. Students will then design their own print using symbols that signify important aspects of American culture.

Images: CMA 2005.6.7 *The American Dream*, Robert Indiana. 1971.



Key Concept: Symbols can be used to signify important facets of the human experience and cultural communities.

Essential Question: How can ideas, places, people, and culture be translated into symbols through artwork?

CCSS Art: VA7-1.3 Select and apply the most effective materials, techniques, and processes to communicate his or her experiences and ideas through the artworks.

VA7-2.3 Select the elements and principles of design to create artworks with a personal meaning.

VA7-3.2 Select and use subject matter, symbols, ideas, and the elements and principles of design to communicate meaning through his or her artmaking.

Integrated CCSS: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Learning Outcomes: The learner will:

1. Discuss and define what symbols are, and identify specific examples of American symbols.
2. Analyze Robert Indiana's *The American Dream* and his use of symbols to represent American culture at that time.
3. Design personal symbols representing his/her experience with American culture.
4. construct a collagraph plate using foam cutouts.
5. make several prints, experimenting with ink colors and printing techniques.
6. reflect on their artwork by writing an artist statement about their symbols.

Motivator: The teacher will show different photos of perceived American symbols, such as a baseball. The students will be asked if they think these images represent American culture and why.

Day Breakdown: Day 1

1. In the studios the students will be guided in a discussion about symbols and Americana and how

those two ideas will go hand-in-hand for this studio. The teacher will ask students about various symbols and what they represent. Examples may include a heart, the stars on the American flag, colors, or a shamrock. The teacher will explain how symbols can often have multiple meanings and hold different importance to different people. For example, Robert Indiana thought of numbers as representing the spectrum of existence, the basic elements structuring our daily lives.

2. The teacher will start a discussion on how symbols can be designed and arranged in a composition. The teacher will ask the students to design symbols that represent Americana. The symbols should be personal to each student's own experiences.
3. For the rest of the class, students will sketch their ideas. Students will be required to turn in at least 3 variations of their symbols.

Day 2

4. The students will be given a tutorial on how to use printmaking foam to make a collagraph. Various other materials can be used to provide complimentary textures, such as aluminum foil or yarn. This will help students visualize and translate their sketches into a print. The teacher will remind students that numbers and words will appear backwards when printed, therefore they must be designed backwards to appear correct when printed.
5. The students can continue sketching and begin drawing their final designs on their foam. They can then cut out their shapes and glue it onto their cardboard plate. (The teacher will hand out scissors, foam, various materials for constructing the collagraph, and Elmer's glue) The students can add other materials to their plate to provide textural variation to their print.
6. As some students are finishing up, the teacher will give a demonstration on how to print their collagraph. Different techniques can be shown such as using a brayer to roll ink, or a brush to apply the ink to the print plate. The teacher will stress how students should experiment with different techniques and ink colors and color

combinations.

Day 3

7. Students will begin to print their collagraphs. Each student will be asked to make at least 3 different prints using different color combinations or printing techniques.

7. After the student has done their print, they will then write an artist statement on a separate sheet of paper. They will discuss what their symbols mean to them and how/why the symbols describe their experiences in America.

Materials: Foam Board
cardboard
Paper
Pencil
water based printmaking ink
Foam Brush
brayers
Scissors
Glue
various experimental materials for constructing the collagraph:
yarn
aluminum foil
tape
leaves

Resources: Collagraph Printing:
<http://cdn.dickblick.com/lessonplans/collagraph-printmaking/collagraph-printmaking-collagraph-printmaking.pdf>
Americana symbols and photos:
<http://miraimages.photoshelter.com/gallery/-/G00000tvabRZoyZw/>

Assessment: Did the student:

- Turn in sketches, 3 variations of symbols
- use multiple textures to construct collagraph plate
- Experiment with ink colors and printing techniques
- Turn in 3 final prints
- Complete an artist statement which addressed

their use of symbols

Vocabulary:

Symbol – A form, image or subject representing a meaning other than the one with which it is usually associated.

Americana – A collection of books, papers, maps, etc. relating to America, especially to its history, culture, and geography.

Printmaking – A print is a shape or mark made from a block or plate or other object that is covered with wet color (usually ink) and then pressed onto a flat surface, such as paper or fabric. Most prints can be produced over and over again by re-inking the printing block or plate