

Unit Title: Street Art in Mexico

Author: Lori Cottle

School: Jerome Middle School

Subject Area: Visual Art with Social Studies and Language Arts activities

Topic: A study and project of painting in the streets of Mexico – from signs to graffiti

Grade Level: 6–8th Grade

Time Frame: This unit will take place over 5 50-minute class sessions.

Brief Summary: This unit starts with a brief background lecture about the history of human painting /drawing in public places. Whether it is during the Paleolithic time in the Lascaux Caves or in modern Mexico, humans have been driven to express themselves with text and images in a public setting. The class will then have a discussion about the various purposes of street art in modern Mexico while viewing several photographs. After this discussion, each student will create their own street art project that must be lawful and appropriate in a school and community setting. This project will follow the creative process used in most state art curricula which includes brainstorming, research, sketching, production, and reflection. The resulting imagery and text will be turned into a stencil and then painted on paper. The class will finally discuss and then decide on an appropriate venue for their street art, which will most likely be somewhere like the school hallway, and then hang their art. As the reflection part of the creative process, each student will write a paragraph about their street art.

Established Goals:

U.S. National Visual Art Standards:

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Using knowledge of structures and functions
 - a. Use the creative process (brainstorm, research, rough sketch, final product) to create a work of art.
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

Understandings:

Students will understand that...

1. humans have always been driven to express themselves with text and images in a public setting.
2. in Mexico, street art, graffiti, and wall painting are all interrelated and have various purposes and meanings.
3. street art has social and legal consequences.

Essential Questions:

1. Why did early man paint in the Lascaux Caves?
2. Why do people in Mexico make street art, graffiti, and wall paintings?
3. What are similarities and differences between early and modern man's street art?
4. What are the similarities and differences between street art in Mexico and the United States?

Students will know...

1. the reasons why people make street art.
2. the connections between early and modern man with street art.
3. the social and legal consequences of street art.
4. how to design, produce, and create their own street art.

Students will be able to...

1. read and respond to Lascaux Cave paintings.
2. read and respond to modern street art writing and imagery.
3. use the creative process to create their own street art.

Performance Tasks:

1. Explain the purpose behind various street art images through participation in class discussions.
2. Create a personal piece of street art that expresses an idea.
3. Write a reflective paragraph to explain their street art creation.
4. Discuss, choose an appropriate venue, and then hang the street art at school.

Other Evidence:

1. student street art stencil
2. student street art image
3. student sketchbook
4. student reflective paragraph
5. teacher assessment rubric

Learning Plan

This visual art curriculum unit for 6–8th grade consists of five 50-minute class sessions that focus students on street art. Much of the purpose behind ancient and modern street art is unknown, but can be extrapolated from the history, the imagery, the artist, and the location. Modern street art is constantly changing so the Internet is currently the best source for current street art. Larger versions of all images are accessible via a companion image file that can be downloaded via this Web site:

<http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/llilas/outreach/fulbright09/>

Session 1:

1. Engage prior student knowledge of street art by asking them what they think it is. Most likely the words graffiti and tagging will surface. Ask them about local street art in their city. Most likely graffiti, gangs, and tagging will surface again.
2. Why do people create street art in Mexico? Introduce this question with a class discussion about the following images. Probable meanings of the street art are included.



Discussion Image 1

July 2009

San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico

This is a very typical hand-painted store sign painted directly on the wall.



Discussion Image 2

July 2009

Mexico City, Mexico

This is a very typical hand-painted political sign painted on a wall by a road.



Discussion Image 3

July 2009

San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico

This is a public phone that appears to have no text, just simple, spray-painted color. The colors did not seem to be significant so the probable meaning was just graffiti or decoration.



Discussion Image 4

July 2009
Radio Totopo, a small community radio station, Juchitán, Mexico

Lucha, meaning fight, is a typical word found throughout southern Mexico in conjunction with the ongoing indigenous people's fight for rights and recognition.



Discussion Image 5

July 2009
Juchitán, Mexico

These Michael Jackson tributes were seen all over southern Mexico.



Discussion Image 6

July 2009
Oaxaca City, Mexico

This is just a simple graffiti tag found almost everywhere in Mexico.



Discussion Image 7

July 2009
Oaxaca City, Mexico

This stenciled and spray-painted image is very typical in Oaxaca City and is most likely related to the political protests from previous years and the ongoing indigenous people's fight for rights and recognition.



Discussion Image 8

July 2009
San Cristóbal de las Casas, Mexico

This stenciled and spray-painted image was seen on a wall near a church. No other clues were found or available as to meaning.

3. Have students summarize and condense all of the discussion into a few categories. Such as: street art can be informational, political, decorative, for communication, and/or religious. This can be done individually, in small groups, or as a class. Record the summarization for later comparison.
4. Connect modern to ancient by showing the students these images. More Lascaux Cave and Greek/Roman graffiti images can be found via Google images.



Source:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lascaux_03.jpg

This image is from the Lascaux Caves in France. This realistic painting of animals is some of the earliest found art created by humans – about 16,000 years ago. While we don't know exactly what the paintings were used for, most scholars think they were a type of communication or a record of something that happened.



This image from ancient Pompei is a caricature of a politician found on a city street. Scholars have learned much about the Greeks and Romans from graffiti or street art.

Source:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Graffiti_politique_de_Pompeii.jpg

5. End this session by having students compare and contrast modern and ancient street art as a class discussion.
6. Evaluate student discussion using the attached rubric.

Session 2:

1. Review the recorded purposes of street art in Mexico from session 1.
2. Review the compare and contrast discussion of modern and ancient street art.
3. Engage students personally by asking them how is street art in Mexico the same or different than street art in their town? Most likely the students only think of the graffiti and tagging in their town as street art. Upon further reflection, they will come up with other examples, like posters, signs, and painting on businesses.
4. Introduce the stencil street art assignment through images from Mexico as an inspiration (larger images can be downloaded with the image file on the Web site). As students look at the images, prompt them to be thinking about their own project. What will be the purpose of their street art? Who is their target audience? Where will they put it? Will they have text or an image or both? Will it be legal or will they get in trouble?
5. Show students the example project made using the creative process: brainstorm, research, rough sketch, and final product.

Step 1: Brainstorm

With this particular project, the image will be shown at school so the target audience members are students and teachers. Because learning is the main objective at school, the brain is a great image. The phrase “brain power” would make a great statement.

Step 2: Research

Clip art imagery is a great source to help you get started.



Project Image 1

Step 3: Rough Sketch

In your sketchbook, draw your idea. You'll probably have to greatly simplify your image.



Project Image 2

Any “islands” formed with your design must have “roadways” in order for the stencil to work.



Project Image 3



Step 4: Final Product

Using your sketch, draw your stencil on a sturdy piece of paper or plastic. Manilla folders or overhead projector film works great. Cut out your image with scissors or an X-acto knife.



Project Image 4

Using spray paint, paint your street art image on a piece of poster paper using your stencil. Paint and a stencil paintbrush will also work.

 <p>Project Image 5</p>	<p>Hang your street art in a place at school like the street. The hallway is always a great choice.</p>
 <p>Project Image 6</p>	<p>Multiple copies of your art can be visually arresting.</p>

6. End this session by sending students home with the task of brainstorming. They should show up for the next session with an idea.
7. Evaluate student discussion using the attached rubric.

Session 3:

1. Review the example project from session 2.
2. Review the street art images from Mexico as an inspiration. What will be the purpose of their street art? Who is their target audience? Where will they put it? Will they have text or an image or both? Will it be legal or will they get in trouble?
3. Have students begin their projects using the creative process.
4. Walk around and assist students.
5. Evaluate each student's idea, sketch, stencil, and project using the attached rubric.

Session 4:

1. Review the example project from session 2.
2. Review the successes and failures from session 3.
3. Have students continue and finish their projects using the creative process.
4. Walk around and assist students.
5. Evaluate each student's idea, sketch, stencil, and project using the attached rubric.

Session 5:

1. As a class, determine what order the street art projects should be in the hallway. There usually is a whole new level of communication with a large number of projects together. Hang the street art projects in the hallway together as a class of street artists.
2. As a student reflection activity, have the students write a paragraph about their street art project. This paragraph could be a reflection on the meaning, intent, and audience for their street art or it could be a how-to paragraph explaining the project process.
3. Have students evaluate their own street art project using the attached rubric.
4. Finish evaluating each student's project, as a teacher, using the attached rubric.

Street Art Student and Teacher Assessment Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Street Art in Mexico Discussion	Student made several appropriate and thoughtful comments in the large or small group discussion and was able to appropriately defend their comment.	Student made at least 2 appropriate and thoughtful comments in the large or small group discussion and was able to appropriately defend their comment.	Student made at least 1 appropriate and thoughtful comment in the large or small group discussion. Student could have participated more.	Student did not add much to the discussion and did not make comments or thoughts known during the discussion.
Street Art Purpose Discussion	Student made several appropriate and thoughtful comments in the large or small group discussion and was able to appropriately defend their comment.	Student made at least 2 appropriate and thoughtful comments in the large or small group discussion and was able to appropriately defend their comment.	Student made at least 1 appropriate and thoughtful comment in the large or small group discussion. Student could have participated more.	Student did not add much to the discussion and did not make comments or thoughts known during the discussion.
Street Art Idea	Student's idea is appropriate for the target audience, is very creative, and conveys their meaning.	Student's idea is appropriate for the target audience and conveys their meaning.	Student's idea is appropriate for the target audience, but may not convey their meaning exactly or may not be creative.	Student's idea is not appropriate, does not convey their meaning, and is not creative.
Street Art Sketch	Student's sketch is very creative and sets them up for success with their stencil.	Student's sketch is creative and will work with their stencil with just a few issues.	Student's sketch is finished and will have several issues when applied as a stencil.	Student's sketch will not work when applied as a stencil and is not creative.
Street Art Stencil	Student's stencil is fully functioning and was made with very good craftsmanship.	Student's stencil has a few functioning issues and was made with acceptable craftsmanship.	Student's stencil has many functioning issues and needed to have better craftsmanship.	Student's stencil is partially or fully non-functioning and has poor craftsmanship.
Street Art Painted Project	Student's project has paint applied with very good craftsmanship and is centered on the paper well.	Student's project mostly has paint applied with good craftsmanship and is nearly centered on the paper.	Student's project has several paint craftsmanship issues and is not centered on the paper.	Student's project is partially or fully unreadable because of poor centering and painting craftsmanship.
Reflection Paragraph	Student's paragraph accurately describes their creative process with appropriate mechanics.	Student's paragraph mostly describes their creative process with a few mechanical errors.	Student's paragraph barely describes their creative process and has many mechanical errors.	Student's paragraph does not describe their creative process and is full of mechanical errors.

Materials and Resources:

- An Examination of Lascaux Caves by Jacqueline M. Robinson
<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~raar/regions/jrobinson.htm>
- Graffiti
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graffiti>
- Lascaux
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lascaux>
- “Mexican Street Art With An Edge” by Tim Stelloh, *Christian Science Monitor*
<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0815/p13s02-alar.html>
- Microsoft Brain Clip Art
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/results.aspx?qu=brain&sc=20#36>
- Oaxaca Street Art
<http://belindaschneider.wordpress.com/2008/11/13/oaxaca-street-art/>
- Rebellion and Graphic Art in Oaxaca
http://www.justseeds.org/blog/2009/05/ i_came_a_cross.html
- “The Street Art Evidence of Anonymity in Oaxaca” by Jose Espinoza (originally from the street periodical, *Street Smart*, in Oaxaca, Oaxaca)
http://callejera.com.mx/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=165&Itemid=9&lang=en