

## **Lesson 5: *The Journey Becomes Larger Than Life!*** **( The Murals of Walter Anderson)**

### **Mississippi Visual and Performing Arts Framework Content Strands**

#### **Key:**

Creating and Performing (CP)

Critical Analysis (CA)

History/Culture (HC)

Aesthetics (A)

Connections (C)

**Time Frame:** Ten 50-minute sessions

**Lesson Overview:** This lesson focuses on Walter Anderson as a mural painter as well as a naturalist and recorder of local history. Students will study the Community House Murals as well as the WPA murals of Walter Anderson in Ocean Springs, MS. This project involves students in designing a mural for their community that shows the history of the area from the earliest inhabitants to the present day. The mural contains a visual representation of the events that were important to the development of the area as well as the plants and animals indigenous to the area.

#### **National Standards:**

Standard 1: Understand and be able to apply media, techniques, and processes.

Standard 2: Use knowledge of the structures and functions of art.

Standard 3: Choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

#### **Mississippi Visual Arts Framework, Visual Arts High School Level I, Competencies and Objectives:**

- 1. Apply proficient skills and craftsmanship in selecting and using various media, techniques, and processes to create original expressive works of art. (CP, CA)**
  - d. Practice safety and conservation in the use of tools, materials, and equipment in the creation of works of art.
  
- 2. Understand how to select and use the elements of art and principles of design applied through various media, techniques, and processes related to the communication of meaning. (CP, A)**
  - a. Integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with subjects, themes, symbols and ideas to improve communication of intended meaning.
  - c. Use appropriate visual art vocabulary related to technique and media as works of art are created.
  - d. Utilize the elements of art and principles of design to create works of art that communicate ideas.

- 3. Understand how media, techniques, and processes create effects that evoke a range of responses. (CP, CA)**
  - d. Analyze artistic intent in own works of art in relation to form, function, and purpose.
- 4. Utilize perceptual skills and apply visual arts vocabulary to make informed judgments while creating and studying works of art. (CA, CP)**
  - b. Use appropriate visual art vocabulary related to technique and media as works of art are created.
  - c. Utilize the visual and organizational components of art and design while creating works of art.
- 5. Understand that a wide range of critical analysis theories exist and provide valid methods for studying works of art. (CA, CP)**
  - a. Examine their own work or that of others to determine the intentions of the artist.
- 7. Know universal themes, concepts, forms, and functions that recur in works of art and design across cultures, times, and places. (HC)**
  - b. Identify different ways artists have conveyed common themes or issues across historical periods.
- 8. Analyze how factors of time and the visual arts influence each other. (A)**
  - b. Describe the function and explore meaning of specific works of art within various time periods.
- 9. Know different theories of aesthetics. (A)**
  - b. Describe different aesthetic perspectives including intention of artists, context, views, and experience.
- 10. Analyze how contextual factors affect the way people respect, value, and derive meaning from art. (A)**
  - c. Determine the origin of possible subjects, themes, symbols, problems, or ideas for use in creating works of art for an intended purpose.

**Intelligences Addressed:** Bodily/kinesthetic, verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, interpersonal

**Essential Question:**

You have been asked to create a visual representation of the cultural, social, and economic history of your community. In what format would you present this, and what events would you immortalize so that the story of your heritage is told?

**Strategies:**

Teacher-directed instructions

Hands-on activity

Self-assessment rubric

Brainstorming/discussion

**Art Concepts:** The elements and principles of design are used to create a unified composition. This lesson focuses on variety, emphasis, and harmony.

**Previous Art Concepts:** Rhythm, balance, proportion, movement

**Instructional Objectives:**

1. To become aware that a unified work of art is when all the elements and principles of design work together.

*The learner will...*

Identify the unifying elements in murals created by various artists such as José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, prehistoric cave painters, and those of Walter Anderson.

Analyze how variety, emphasis, and harmony express ideas and feelings in the murals of various artists and those of Walter Anderson.

Understand how the elements and principles of design are used to create a unified composition in the murals of various artists and those of Walter Anderson.

2. To understand the purposes for creating a mural.

*The learner will...*

Determine the purpose of murals by artists such as José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, the prehistoric cave painters and those of Walter Anderson.

Determine the theme, style, and purpose of an original mural.

Create motifs that reinforce the purposes of the mural.

3. To create a mural inspired by the murals of Walter Anderson.

*The learner will...*

Determine the location, size, and subject matter of the mural.

Design sketches for the mural that focus on the lesson concepts of variety, emphasis, and harmony as well as previously learned concepts of design.

Transfer sketches to the mural space.

Add color, pattern, and other details, such as motifs, to the mural.

Display the mural.

**Vocabulary:**

**Emphasis** - A principle of design that refers to the dominance of one element or part of a composition.

**Harmony** - A principle of design that is associated with the pleasing integration of the components, or elements, of a composition.

**Mural** - A painting on a wall or ceiling, either indoors or outdoors, and that usually has an intended purpose.

**Variety** - A principle of design that refers to differences and is associated with contrast.

**Unified composition** - The completeness of a work of art that is achieved through the effective use of the elements and principles of design.

**Materials/Resources:**

History of the local community including print information from the public library and oral histories of students' families, or other research information relevant to the theme and purpose of the mural.

Print examples of murals created by José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Walter Anderson, and others including any local murals.

Examples of the cave paintings in France.

King, Anne R. (1999). *Walls of Light: The Murals of Walter Anderson*. The University Press of Mississippi and The Walter Anderson Museum of Art: Jackson.

Anderson, Walter (1996). *A Symphony of Animals*. University Press of Mississippi: Jackson.

<http://www.walterandersonmuseum.org>

<http://www.walteringlisanderson.com>

**Preparation:**

To prepare for this lesson, ask students to conduct interviews with older family members or friends and collect oral histories of the area. Conduct research at the local library to discover information about the earliest inhabitants of the area as well as the social, cultural, and economic events that impacted the area. If the mural is to be painted on a wall, prepare the surface with primer or base coats of paint. The mural can also be painted on sheets of plywood to be attached to a wall.

# Session One

## Instructional Plan:

### Motivation:

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Walter Anderson was influenced by the cave paintings in France and by the Mexican mural artists José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Introduce the mural artists José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. All of these artists achieved unity in their compositions through the use of the elements and principles of design.
2. Show examples of the above mural artist's work and examples of the cave paintings. Give a brief biography of the artists and their styles.
3. Introduce the concept of a unified composition and how it is achieved when the elements are applied using the principles of design (variety, emphasis, harmony.)

### Activity:

*The student will . . .*

1. Describe the content of the murals shown in class.
2. Compare the murals of Walter Anderson to that of the cave painters, Orozco, and Siqueiros, through discussion.
3. Discuss the murals in terms of how the elements and principles of design are used and how unity is achieved.

### Assessment:

Class discussion

# Session Two

## Instructional Plan:

### Motivation:

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Show the murals discussed earlier and ask students to reflect on each one in terms of how they make them feel or the emotions the work seems to evoke in the viewer. Feelings and emotions are often an important part of an artist's work, and this is particularly true of mural artists.
2. Reflect on how these mural artists used the elements of design to evoke certain feelings.
3. Direct students to view other artwork to determine similarities in feelings evoked by the work.

### Activity:

*The student will . . .*

1. Divide into groups and list the emotions and feelings each of the works evokes.

2. Compare the murals by various artists in terms of the emotions and feelings they elicit from the viewer.
3. Explore how Anderson's murals compare with those of the other artists in terms of the emotions and feelings they evoke.

**Assessment:**

Groups report findings back to class.

## Session Three

**Instructional Plan:**

**Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Discuss the purpose of creating a mural. Murals are created for a specific purpose. They are used to tell a story, document an event, or provide an historical account. The rich history of an area provides an excellent subject for a mural.
2. Show examples of Walter Anderson's WPA murals and discuss their purpose, Transparencies # 12 and 13.
3. Provide students historical documents for their research.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Research events that helped shape the community and determine which of those should be included in a visual history like the murals created by Walter Anderson.
2. Create a time line of important events in the history of the community.
3. Visit the library and research historically correct images that should be included in the mural.
4. Sketch important events associated with the community including animals, people, and plant life.

**Assessment:**

Observation of student sketches

Time line of historical events

## Session Four

**Instructional Plan:**

**Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Summarize the material for lesson 1-3 for the purpose of creating an original mural with the theme of community.

2. Relate the idea that murals have a theme, a style, and a purpose. Murals have a theme, a style, and a purpose. Walter Anderson created his murals as part of his "public art." He wanted to give something to the community that he loved and where he spent most of his life. His WPA murals were public art pieces that told the stories of the area.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Determine the purpose, the size, and the placement of the mural.
2. Determine the style of the mural. Many murals use abstracted, stylized forms, and flat pattern design.
3. Look at examples of altered proportion figures in Anderson's murals and those of other artists.
4. Practice drawing altered proportions in figures, animals, and plant life.
5. Create abstracted designs to represent the content of the mural.
6. Sketch important events or time periods that represent the community.
7. Refine sketches by simplifying them into abstracted form.
8. Combine sketches into a unified composition using the elements of design to show variety, emphasis, and harmony.

**Assessment:**

Observation of student sketches

Rubric for finished composition based on lesson objectives

## Session Five

**Instructional Plan:**

**Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Show the WPA Murals of Walter Anderson and discuss the different motifs used. Motifs were an important part of Walter Anderson's work. He used seven basic motifs in his work: spiral, circle, half-circle, s curve, 2 half circles, wavy, zigzag, and straight lines, (see Lesson Two, Activity Sheet # 6). These motifs symbolized things in nature and served as unifying elements in his compositions.
2. Discuss the repetition of motifs and the unifying quality they have on the composition.
3. Review how certain images can be abstracted into motifs, (Lesson Two).

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Simplify the compositions from previous sketches.
2. Create motifs from selected images in the compositions.
3. Use the motifs to create variety, harmony, and emphasis in the compositions.

**Assessment:**

Critique compositions based on the lesson concepts

## Session Six

**Instructional Plan:****Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Direct the students to view previous compositions and focus on the lesson concepts of variety, emphasis, and harmony.
2. Reflect on the theme of community and the importance of following the theme in the finished composition. Walter Anderson's murals were a gift to the people of the community. He told the stories of the community from varying points of view, including the earliest inhabitants to present day. These rich visual histories are a testament to the beauty and unique qualities of the area that Anderson called home.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Select previous sketches to create a collage for the finished mural.
2. Transfer the mural collage to the selected mural space.
3. Add motifs to unify the composition.
4. Adjust the drawings as needed while focusing on the principles of variety, emphasis, and harmony.

**Assessment:**

Class critique on the finished composition with focus on lesson concepts and previous design knowledge.

## Session Seven

**Instructional Plan:****Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Review color intensities, color values, and how color can achieve harmony, variety, and emphasis.
2. Determine the best color scheme to enhance the purpose and theme of the mural. Walter Anderson used a limited palette in his WPA murals choosing primarily earth tones of gray, blue, green, ochre, and a low intensity red. Limiting his palette helped achieve harmony in the composition.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Paint in the background of the mural and large spaces.
2. Add colors so that they create harmony, variety, and emphasis.
3. Work on several areas at a time to maintain continuity.
4. Evaluate ongoing work.

**Assessment:**

Class critique of work using the lesson concepts as guidelines.

## Session Eight

**Instructional Plan:****Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Review the work done so far using the lesson concepts as a guideline.
2. Review the use of color in creating a unified composition. Color is the most obvious element in a work of art and can be the most effective in communicating a feeling or emotion. A unified composition can be achieved by using color to create harmony, variety, and emphasis.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Paint in details of abstracted figures, animals, and plants.
2. Add other details such as motifs and repeated pattern to help unify the composition.
3. Use the language of art to evaluate and modify ongoing work.

**Assessment:**

Class critique of the work with the discussion centering around the elements and principles of design and how they are used to create a unified composition.

## Session Nine

**Instructional Plan:****Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Review the reasons for creating the mural. As discussed at the beginning of this unit, murals have a purpose, a theme, and a style. These things should be evident in the finished work. The colors and shapes in the composition should be conducive to the mood and feeling the work was intended to elicit.
2. Discuss the use of colors and shapes to enhance the purpose and theme of the mural.

3. Point out areas in the composition that are particularly successful and ways to improve the work as a whole.
4. Distribute the art criticism worksheet.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Identify and refine those areas of the mural that need more work.
2. Add patterns and motifs where needed to further unify the composition.
3. Make sure there is a balance of color, value, and texture in the composition.
4. Complete the art criticism worksheet.

**Assessment:**

Art criticism worksheet handout.

## Session Ten

**Instructional Plan:**

**Motivation:**

*The teacher will . . .*

1. Plan an unveiling ceremony for the mural. Invite guests to view the work. One of the most important steps in the artistic process is to display the work. The mural was created as a celebration of the community and all those who were a part of its history. The mural stands as a testament to a rich heritage, a reminder of the surrounding beauty, and a challenge to become a positive force for the future.
2. Create a question/answer guide for students to use during the program to explain the work and why it was created.

**Activity:**

*The student will . . .*

1. Answer questions on the question/answer guide.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the purpose and theme of the mural as well as the technical aspects of creating the mural through answers on the question/answer guide.
3. Plan an unveiling ceremony for the mural and invite guests to view the work.
4. Attend the unveiling ceremony.

**Assessment:**

Question/answer guide and observation of student interaction with guests.

**Extensions:** As a further exploration of mural painting, students may create frescos using wet plaster in styrofoam trays and watercolor paints.

**Adaptations:** Students may create individual murals on large paper or they can work in groups on several different murals. The murals can be used to reinforce concepts learned

in class. For example, groups may create a mural on the elements of design, a mural on artists of a particular time period, or a mural celebrating a particular event.

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# Art Criticism Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of artwork: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Use the following diagram to chart how the artist used the elements to achieve unity in the artwork.

	<b>Line</b>	<b>Shape</b>	<b>Color</b>	<b>Texture</b>	<b>Space</b>	<b>Value</b>
<b>Balance</b>						
<b>Variety</b>						
<b>Harmony</b>						
<b>Emphasis</b>						
<b>Proportion</b>						
<b>Movement</b>						
<b>Rhythm</b>						

B. What kind of balance is used? Explain.

C. What is the focal point of the work? Explain.

D. How are rhythm, harmony, and variety achieved in the work? Explain.

E. What are the unifying elements in the work? Explain.

F. What is the purpose, intent, or meaning of the work?

G. Make a judgment about the work, and based on your knowledge of critical analysis, defend your opinion.