

PAPER MACHE BIRDS

An 8-period paper mache unit plan, adaptable for grades 9-12, incorporates Social Emotional Learning throughout, builds community, celebrates diversity *and* creates a vibrant piece of collaborative art for display in your school.

SEL Area: Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

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At the end of this 8-period unit, students will have strengthened problem-solving skills, learned how to use paper mache, and practiced creating shade, depth and detail using acrylic paint. They will have seen a celebration of diversity modeled for them and explored complex ideas of strength through difference.

PREPARE

Media Resources:

Artist profile of Papier Mache sculptor Melanie Bourlon 3:06

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNh4KLKJSm4>

A documentary about Kashmiri Paper Mache Artists

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RluLIF6ytQI>

Artist Profile of Paper Mache Sculptor Dan Reader 2:56

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkV7Qtwoq3O>

Michael Gavin on Why Cultural Diversity Matters 17:52

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48RoRiOddRU>

How Biodiversity Creates Stronger Ecosystems 4:18

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK_vRtHJZu4

Artist Lily Taylor on how COVID isolation inspired her Paper Mache wrestlers series 3:37

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFtymHw-k4g>

Ace of Clay discusses demonstrates sculpting and painting a frog prince. 20:48

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbgEOaN8TxQ>

Ace of Clay discusses demonstrates sculpting and painting a sea witch. 23:54

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUN-9IWbgh8>

Materials:

Sculpture Frame: sketchbooks for planning, styrofoam balls, newsprint, painters tape, wooden skewers, gather kitchen utensils from a thrift shop, fishing line for hanging loop.

Paper Mache: newspaper or paper towel, liquid glue.

Painting: Acrylic paint, brushes.

Tree: construct a display for your birds by taping together real or fake branches, bring in a fake Christmas tree, or suspend the birds from the ceiling using fishing wire, as if they're flying.

Before the first class: Do Google Image Searches for 'Bird Plumage' and 'paper mache Birds', collect images you think your students will connect with. There are examples from many different cultures and artists. Create PowerPoint to show students the diversity of birds colors, bodies, feathers, etc *and* how they are represented.

Feel free to use images from the PowerPoint at www.sarahsharris.com/lessonplans

Make your own bird! Take photos along the way in your process to show your students on the first day.

DAY 1 Describe the project you will be embarking on to your students. Share your PowerPoint presentation of images of paper mache bird sculptures.

Discuss: Students may associate paper mache with elementary school execution. Ask them if they've made paper mache before? What they made? How it was done? Do they think of it as art?

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNh4KLKJSm4>

Ask: How is this different than the work they made in elementary school?

If you made one, show a step by step process of making a paper mache bird.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFtymHw-k4g>

Share Grading Rubric for Project with Class.

Show students the tree the birds will be displayed on.

Discuss: all of the birds will be suspended together on one tree, but each of their birds will look entirely different. Emphasize: the tree will be more interesting, more colorful, all-around better, because of their differences.

Students research birds (plan a visit to the library, allow them to use their phones or computers provided depending on your situation).

Instruct students to choose any bird that they like. Students draw a plan for their sculptures in their sketchbooks.

Circulate and discuss plans with students.

DAY 2 Materials for constructing bird sculpture frames are introduced.

Review each sketch to make sure students have a realistic plan for their bird.

Instruction: Tell students that problem-solving is an important skill, figuring out how to make the materials work is part of their grade for this assignment.

Remind students of the importance of balance and weight distribution, so birds stand independently.

Show how to use wire & pliers for birds' feet and beaks.

Use fishing wire to create a loop with a knot, and tape the knot to the birds' body so the weight is balanced and the bird will hang properly.

Reinforce that all the students will be given the same objects to use for their frame, wire, styrofoam balls, paper, cardboard and tape. Even though they start with the same materials each of their projects will evolve differently based on their problem-solving choices and their goals.

Support: Students begin frame construction, circulate to problem solve and assist.

DAY 3 *Support:* Students construct bird frames out of materials provided, circulate to problem solve and assist.

If you notice a student has solved a construction problem (how to make a bird foot out of wire or tape), draw the classes' attention to their work, describe their process, and (if they're comfortable) ask them to describe. This method of skill-sharing can highlight individual students' strengths.

DAY 4 *Watch:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkV7Qtwoq3O>

Demonstrate: how to tear paper, use a paintbrush and glue to apply to the paper on the base.

Support: circulate to problem solve and assist while students start the paper mache process.

Paper mache clean up instructions & clean up.

DAY 5 Support: Student paper mache workday, circulate to problem solve and assist. While students are working quietly, play this video about the importance of diversity on your Smartboard: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48RoRiOddRU>
Clean up.

DAY 6 Demonstrate: which brushes to use, the importance of a base coat and detail work. Instruct students to first focus on getting base color on, then build up details.
Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbgEOaN8TxQ> (skip to the painting at 13:52) & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUN-9IWbgh8> (skip to the painting at 19:48)
While watching point out how the artist starts with a base color, then adds details.
Support: Students begin painting workday, circulate to problem solve and assist.
Paint clean up instructions & clean-up.

DAY 7 Students painting workday. Circulate to problem solve and assist.
Focus on details of feathers, patterns, etc.
Clean-up.

DAY 8 Invite each student to hang their bird from the tree, one at a time, and talk about why they chose their birds and their design choices.
Ask: Whose is the most realistic? Whose is the most colorful? Who has the most detail?
Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK_vRtHJZu4
Discuss: how are we as a class or school made stronger by our differences?

PAPER MACHE BIRD RUBRIC

GRADED SKILLS	3	2	1
Problem Solving: Using materials to make a frame.			
Paper Mache: Using materials to create a skin, texture, details.			
Paint: Base coat, shading, color matching, detail.			
		Total	/ 9