

LESSON FIVE: AN ART PROJECT ABOUT FREE SPEECH

OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn:

- What symbols and visual metaphors are.
- What the elements of art are.
- How artists use formal means to express ideas.
- To create a piece of art that expresses their own ideas about freedom of speech, liberty, and citizenship.
- To critique their own and each other's projects.

MATERIALS:

You can decide whether you want students to create a two-dimensional project or a three-dimensional project. Materials could include but are not limited to: pencil, pen, marker, crayon, pastel; acrylic, oil, or watercolor paint; cardboard, foam core and hot glue, wood, clay, plaster, or paper mache.

Limit or expand this list of materials depending on what is available and what will work well in your situation. If possible, select a range of materials your students have used for previous projects, so they can focus on form and content instead of technique as they plan their art projects.

PROCEDURES:

1. Use “Leaning Keep” as a way of talking about symbol and metaphor.

Begin by asking students what a symbol is, and have them give examples from everyday life. You can start them off with things like peace signs and a white dove. Then ask them what a metaphor is, and have them give examples. You can start with things like “quick as a fox” or “clear as day.” Then ask about **visual** metaphors:

What is an example of a **visual** metaphor?

Would you say that “Leaning Keep” is a visual metaphor? In what way?

Would you say that “Leaning Keep” is a symbol? That it is not a symbol, but that it is symbolic?

2. Discuss the way an artist can use the elements of art to express ideas.

There are lots of ways to communicate. One way is to speak directly, in words. One way is to use a symbol, so that something stands for something else, as when an eagle stands for freedom.

A third way to communicate is by using the elements of art, such as line, color, shape, form, space, and texture. These are also called formal elements, because they have to do with form, or the elements that make a piece of art be what it is. While communicating through formal

elements may seem indirect, these elements can have as great an impact as explicit statements with words.

You can use these questions and examples to explore the concept of using formal elements to communicate ideas. In the coming weeks, examples from art history that illustrate these concepts will be posted on our website.

If you were making a sculpture and you wanted to create a feeling of insecurity, would you make it balanced or imbalanced? Would you make it symmetrical or asymmetrical?

If you were making a painting and you wanted to create a feeling of warmth and security, what colors would you use? If you wanted to create a feeling of coldness and dread, what colors would you use?

Can the same color evoke different feelings? For example, what are some of the associations you have with the color red? Are they all positive, all negative, or some of each?

What kind of experiences do you have when you look at different kinds of lines? Does a smooth, flowing line communicate something different to you than a sharp, jagged line?

What effect do different shapes have on you? Do you get a different feeling from seeing a painting with a lot of squares, rectangles, and angles than you get from seeing a painting with lots of curves and round shapes?

How can you create a sense of motion in a still piece of art?

3. Talk about ways students could use the elements of art to express their ideas about the issues Lessons 1 – 4 focused on: censorship, free speech, freedom, liberty, and security.

You can begin with these questions:

What kind of sculpture would you create to make a viewer feel trapped or confined? What kinds of forms, shapes, lines, and colors would you use?

What kind of sculpture could you make to give someone a sense of freedom?

A sense of safety? A sense of danger?

How did Brian David Dennis communicate his opposition to censorship in “Leaning Keep?” How did he use line? Form? Shape?

4. Now that students have a foundation, ask them to make a sculpture (or two-dimensional work) that expresses their own ideas about censorship, free speech, freedom, liberty, or security.

You can use the student handout called “An Art Project About Free Speech” at the end of this lesson plan. Students may also find the “Elements of Art” handout useful.

5. When they are finished, have students present their projects to the class.

Each student can take a turn showing his or her project. They can either explain their ideas and then get feedback, or they can ask the class to give their impressions, and then explain their ideas. When everyone has had a turn, reflect on the experience by using these questions:

Which strategies were particularly effective in expressing the artist's ideas?

Which strategies were visually exciting?

Was there any conflict of interest between communicating an idea and making something interesting to look at?

Do you think art is an effective way to express ideas?

Do you see Brian David Dennis' piece differently in any way after doing this project?
How?

Do you see art differently after doing this project? What did you learn?

EVALUATION:

This lesson is successful if:

- Students learn what symbol and visual metaphor are.
- Students learn what the elements of art are.
- Students learn how artists use formal means to express ideas.
- Students create a piece of art that expresses their own ideas about freedom of speech, liberty, and citizenship.
- Students thoughtfully critique their own and each other's projects.

AN ART PROJECT ABOUT FREE SPEECH

You have discussed the way artists use the formal elements of art to express ideas. You have seen “Leaning Keep” as an example. Now you will get to make a piece of artwork that will express your own ideas about the issues Brian David Dennis worked with.

YOUR TASK IS TO CREATE A PIECE OF ART THAT:

Expresses your ideas about one or more of these things:

Freedom	Censorship
Liberty	Citizenship
Free speech	Security
Democracy	

Your idea might be that censorship is wrong, or it might be that unlimited free speech is dangerous. There is no right answer. It is important to make a piece that reflects your own beliefs.

YOU HAVE ALL THE ELEMENTS OF ART TO USE IN EXPRESSING YOUR IDEA:

Form	Space
Line	Color
Shape	Texture

YOUR WORK OF ART SHOULD:

- Communicate your idea clearly.
- Be exciting to look at as a work of art.

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- Brainstorm ideas for what you want to communicate.
- Choose your favorite one.
- Brainstorm ideas for what you could make to communicate your message.
- Choose your favorite idea.
- Brainstorm ways of making this idea work well. What material could you use? What size should your art work be? What colors, shapes, and textures should you use? What other details do you need to think about?
- Once you make your plan, start making your artwork. It’s fine to change your plan if you discover something better along the way. Artists do this all the time!

YOU WILL BE EVALUATED ON:

- How effective your artwork is as a piece of art.

- How clearly your artwork communicates your idea.
- Whether you used good craftsmanship in executing your idea.

ENJOY THIS CHANCE TO USE ART TO EXPRESS YOUR BELIEFS !!!! THE ELEMENTS OF ART

There are typically six elements of art that can be found in most art works. Artists use these elements as a "visual alphabet" to produce all kinds of art forms. The way in which elements are organized is referred to as the *Principles of Design*.

Line is the most basic element of art. A line is a continuous mark made on a surface that can vary in appearance (length, width, texture, and direction).

Color is produced when light strikes an object and reflects back to your eyes. This element of art has three properties:

Hue: the property of colors by which they can be perceived as ranging through red, yellow, and blue, as determined by the wavelength of light (red, yellow, blue)

Intensity: the purity and strength of a color (bright red or dull red)

Value: the lightness or darkness of a color (light blue or dark blue)

Shape is two-dimensional (circle, square, triangle, rectangle) and encloses space. It can be geometric, man-made, or free form.

Form is three-dimensional, encloses space, and takes up space. It too can be geometric, man-made or free form.

Space is defined and determined by shapes and forms. Positive space is where shapes and forms exist; negative space is the empty space around shapes and forms.

Texture refers to the surface quality or "feel" of an object: smooth, rough, soft, etc.. Textures may be actual (felt with touch, or tactile) or implied (suggested by the way an artist has created the work of art. For example, an artist can make a piece of paper can look like it has a rough texture even if the paper is smooth).