

When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Children about Murals

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Overview

Rationale

Background

Objectives

Strategies

Classroom Activities

Annotated Bibliographies

Appendices/Standards

Endnotes

Overview

When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Children about Murals is a curriculum unit that takes students out of their school building and onto the sidewalks. Their neighborhood becomes their classroom. Philadelphia is world renowned for its thousands of community murals. Capitalizing on this rich resource, the main objectives of this unit are to teach students to look at, think about, and talk about the murals in their city. These murals are daily passed by while children walk with their families, play in the alleys, or ride on the trolley. This is art in their immediate environment. Budget cuts and standardized testing mandates often have the adverse side effect of reducing students' exposure to art education. The aim of this curriculum unit is to ameliorate, in some small way, lack of student exposure to art making and art criticism.

This unit has been designed for use with a regular kindergarten class of approximately twenty-seven students of mixed ability and experience over a two-month time span. However, the lessons could easily be used with students up to grade three or could be adapted and made more challenging for use with even older students. It is also feasible that by using science, mathematics, literacy, or social studies as a lens through which to view and construct murals, these lessons could be developed into cross-curricular units of study. Children, especially five and six year olds, are quizzical and curious. They are like sponges, soaking up everything around them, noticing every detail, and asking questions, questions, and more questions. *When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Children about Murals* capitalizes on children's proclivity for asking questions. It channels that penchant for questioning into art criticism. One of the goals of this unit is to teach students not only to ask, "What did the artist paint on the wall?" and "Why did she choose those colors and textures?" but also "How does that mural make me feel?" and "What do I like or dislike about it?"

Human beings have forever been engaged in mark making. From early cave paintings to contemporary mural arts, people have felt a compulsion to tell their story and tell it big.

Murals have served many purposes: documenting history, glorifying political regimes, illuminating injustice, symbolizing hopes and aspirations, and, at times, being just simply beautiful. Many children enter school still in the scribbling stage. Their crayon gliding across the surface of the paper makes bold marks that attest to their existence. The first recognizable symbol that often emerges is a person. “Me,” They are seeming to say, “Here I am.” As a culminating project for this unit, students will contribute their own images to a class mural to display either in their school or in their neighborhood. They will use line, color, pattern, and imagery to make their marks and contribute to the dialogue of Philadelphia’s mural arts.

Rationale

A good story holds the power to conjure an image or spark a memory. It sucks readers in and takes them on a fantastic journey. Kindergarten students go on read-aloud “trips” every day. It is often the one time during the day that a teacher can rely on having every child’s captivated, undivided attention. Art holds the same power. It can inspire and provoke. Just as students need to be taught techniques for comprehending storybooks, they need to be educated in the ways of interacting with artworks. The main reason for writing and teaching this curriculum unit is to help children use art as a springboard for storytelling, self-esteem building, and hope summoning.

If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities.
-Maya Angelou (*American Poet*)¹

This quote illuminates the appeal of the Mural Arts Program (MAP) to Philadelphia’s populace. Do cascading waterfalls belong in abandoned lots? Should pastoral harvest scenes hover on corner store walls? Could multicultural scenes of peace and harmony exist without defacement in racially tense neighborhoods? Jane Golden, executive director of MAP and Philadelphia’s residents who live in the shade of these murals would answer with a resounding “Yes.” In these examples and in a multiplicity of other ways, murals fulfill people’s need for beauty and reprieve from the permeation of urban decay.

Caused by a host of socio-economic conditions, urban decay affects many neighborhoods in Philadelphia. Living among such corrosion and collapse has a damaging effect on the visions, thoughts, and health of a blighted community’s inhabitants. Many children in such environments are educated in schools that may also be void of art adornment and an art education program. In the current standardized test-driven atmosphere, funds and space for talking about and making art seem to disappear. As recently as 2006, forty-four percent of schools in the School District of Philadelphia lacked a full time music teacher. Forty-one percent lacked a full time art teacher. More than one in five schools had neither an art nor a music teacher.² These percentages reveal that art education is not a top priority in many of Philadelphia’s classrooms.

Blankenburg Elementary School, for example, has not had an art teacher on staff for a number of years. It is up to the individual classroom teacher to determine if and when to expose her students to art. Even if a teacher wants to incorporate art into the curriculum,

it can be difficult to find rich artwork to critique with students. It can also be difficult to procure supplies so that students can practice making artwork themselves. Fortunately in Philadelphia, there is an ample source of artwork free to all passersby. To date, MAP has created over 2,800 murals across the city. *When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Children about Murals* aims to help teachers tap into that resource and engage students with the murals around them.

Positive public interventions like MAP work with community groups and schools to create focal points of inspiration, hope, and beauty on neighborhood buildings and walls. This unit will purposefully expose children to the murals in their community and take them on extraordinary “see-aloud.” It will teach them to look at and respond to those murals from the platform of individual experience.

Mural on Second Avenue

By Lilian Moore

Someone
stood here
tall on a ladder,
dreaming
to the slap of a
wet brush,

painting
on the blank
unwindowed wall of
this old house.

Now the wall is a
field of wild grass,
bending to a wind.
A unicorn's grazing there
beside a zebra.

A giraffe is nibbling a
tree top
and in a sky of
eye-blinking
blue

A horse is flying.
All
right at home in the
neighborhood.

Moore, Lilian. *Mural on Second Avenue, and Other City Poems*. Cambridge: Candlewick Press, 2004.³

Background

So how do Philadelphia’s murals fit into the larger context of mural marking in the United States and beyond American borders? The history of mural making is woven with the cultural identity, human experience, and political ideals of the people who commission, create, and respond to them. Every mural, like any work of art, can reveal something of the time and people who created it. Unlike canvas paintings, which can be transported from gallery space to gallery space with relative ease, murals are permanent. Well, to a great degree. Like real estate ventures, success is often about location, location, location. For unless there is active local interest in preserving a mural, paint begins to fade and chip away – a process quite like natural selection.

Many historians locate the roots of contemporary community mural projects, like Philadelphia's MAP, within the Mexican muralism movement of the 1920's. At this time The Mexican government commenced a national mural program. The mission of the program was to revive and unite the Mexican people and to educate them about the revolution of 1910. Muralists of this era, most famously Diego Rivera Jose Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, referred to as Los Tres Grandes or The Big Three, were awarded free thematic and stylistic license. Their subject matter included the indigenous people of Mexico, the impact of the Spanish conquest, the socio-political environment of the country, and upward visions of hope. They worked in public spaces where their work would be accessible to all people, regardless of race or class.⁴

The most natural, purest, and strongest form of painting is the mural. It is also the most generous . . . it is for the people.

*-Jose' Clemente Orozco (Mexican Muralist)*⁵

Following in the footsteps of the Mexican government's mural program was the American government's Federal Arts Project. The Federal Arts Project was part of the Works Project Administration (1935-1943). This considerable arts initiative was a parcel of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, aimed to rescue the collapsed economy. During this time, the Federal Arts Project commissioned roughly twenty-five hundred murals throughout the United States. Just Mexican muralism had birthed renowned artists, the Depression-era murals produced in America drew recognition and attention to the names of Thomas Hart Benton, Sid Larson, Reginald Marsh, and Ben Shan.⁶

American history and mythology, the American landscape, and the lives and struggles of the American working class were often the subjects of these murals that were painted in post offices, hospitals, libraries, prisons, and schools. The American muralists embrace of realistic subject matter signaled a rejection of European Modernism (Cezanne, Picasso, and Braque), which in comparison to the realism of the Depression-era murals seemed hollow and aloof. Nodding to the nationalism of the Hudson River style landscape painters of the 1830's, the government sponsored muralists ushered in a new style called Regionalism or American Scene painting. Artists like Benton saw the swath of muralism as recording an American society that was vibrant, struggling, and everchanging.⁷

However, it should be noted that during that era, the majority of murals depicting historical themes were generally commissioned for public institutions and at that time, African Americans had very little official authority over such public spaces. Telling the story of the African American experience, especially from the perspective of African Americans, was not a top priority of the Federal Arts Project. Though the eminent American muralists of the 1930's and 1940's may have emulated the Mexican muralists at times in terms of style and subject matter, their murals were not always accessible to all. Historically black colleges, universities and similar institutions served a dual role as both commissioner of and venue for history paintings from an African American perspective.⁸ Iconic African American muralists of this time period include Aaron Douglas, Charles Alston, Hale Woodruff, Charles White, and a bit later John Biggers. These mural artists celebrated the strength and spirit of historical black heroes.

Influenced by the Mexican muralists, they illuminated those who advanced the struggle for freedom and equality, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

Prior to the 1960's, murals were created for the public (ideally), but the public was not necessarily part of the mural making process. The 1960's and 1970's saw the dawn of an age when the public became an essential part of the process. Mural artists of the time created a model for making community murals that involved the community in all parts of the project. From identifying a location, to determining the subject matter, to securing materials, even to feeding the artists and providing them with protection and conversation, community members were invested in every way.⁹

In 1967, the *Wall of Respect*, a mural depicting African American heroes, was painted in Chicago by a collaborative group of artists. It is often cited as the first commanding example of contemporary American muralism, the aim of which is to "reclaim the visual field in the urban environment."¹⁰ William Walker, a notable Chicago muralist of the time and one of the founders of the Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC), is often named in starting the *Wall of Respect*. Twenty-three African-American artists made a list of black heroes who might be depicted in the mural. Community members gave their input, local businesses donated paint, and the *Wall of Respect* developed into a collage of images that shifted and was modified over time until it was destroyed in 1971 due to lack of upkeep and a fire.

Prior to the *Wall of Respect*, iconic African American artists like Aaron Douglas and John Biggers had executed most of their commissioned works on interior walls. These pieces were not necessarily accessible to everyone, as they were housed in institutions that regulate admission and visitation. In contrast, *Wall of Respect* was executed on the exterior of a neighborhood building without official approval or sponsorship. It was painted by a collaborative of community supported artists. As a form of truly public art, it served as a rebuttal to the imagery of those in power. It celebrated black leaders, poets, musicians and artists. It brought untold stories to the fore to be celebrated and used to inspire pride, dignity, and hope in Chicago's neglected South Side neighborhood. The *Wall of Respect* succeeded in creating art that was immediately accessible to the black community living in the surrounding vicinity. Because of this, Chicago gained national recognition as a site where such murals were taking off.

Cities around the nation followed suit as people saw the potential these powerful public images had to spark both admiration and debate. Mural artists in Los Angeles, New York, Santa Fe, and Philadelphia painted work in concert with community members and organizers to depict their particular challenges: drugs, racial discrimination, police brutality, and absentee landlords. They also used the murals to portray their heroes, hopes, and strengths: beloved leaders, cultural ambassadors, and neighborhood champions. In 1973 the Department of Urban Outreach, also called the Department of Community Programs, was newly founded at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Roughly one hundred thirty murals were painted in the city at this time. Chief mural artists Don Kaiser and Clarence Wood were devoted to involving community members in specifying subject matter for the murals. They considered themselves to be facilitators for the

community mural making process, and claimed no authorship over the murals they painted.¹¹ Some of the mural subjects chosen by community members included Malcolm X and Aretha Franklin.

Simultaneously, community murals were being painted on the other side of the nation. In Los Angeles, Judith Francisca Baca was heading the Social and Public Art Resource Center. The West Coast, California mural movement of the 1970's acclaimed Judith Francisca Baca as the "Mother of American Muralism".¹² She too placed importance on locating murals in neighborhoods and understood the necessity of involving local residents in the fullness of the mural process. Baca gave Golden her beginning in painting public murals. Golden was living in Los Angeles in 1976 and received her first mural commission from the Social and Public Art Resource Center. Through working with Baca, Golden's talents for mural painting, organization, administration, and involving the community were strengthened. In 1984, Jane Golden moved to Philadelphia and began working as the director of the newly established Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network. She sought out graffiti artists who were defacing and tagging the city. Regardless of any negative past experiences as graffitists, Philadelphia's Anti-Graffiti Network offered young people an outlet for their mostly frustrated energies. It was an outlet for positive change. Art classes, creative opportunities, and steady pay were helping young people transform their lives. By 1990 there were more than 500 graffiti artists on the waiting list for the program. Since the inception of MAP's art education centered programs, more than twenty-five thousand youth have participated in its programs and mural painting projects.¹³

The 1980's witnessed a shift from grassroots organization and production of community murals to the institutionalization of neighborhood mural projects. Larger city and nationally funded groups were able to provide more financial and administrative assistance and absorbed many small community mural projects. Both a blessing and a curse, this had the effect of bolstering the mural movement while simultaneously removing it from its grassroots origins. Timothy Drescher is an independent mural historian and photographer hailing from Berkeley, California. He has been studying, archiving, and advocating for the conservation of America's community murals for more than thirty years. Drescher maintains that during the 1980's, the best programs remained woven into the fabric of the neighborhoods they serviced because they retained community involvement as an integral component of the mural making process.¹⁴ Jane Golden has always kept this understanding in the forefront of her vision for Philadelphia's mural arts movement.

The Philadelphia Mural Arts Program has flourished over the past twenty-six years. What is the underlying pedagogy of MAP today? Strikingly, it remains unchanged. The focus of MAP is not on adornment and beautification. These are simply an added bonus. The focus continues to be the positive dialogue that surrounds the process of mural making and the uplifting effects such dialogue has on the community. This is the core of Golden's program. Surrounding each vibrant mural is a halo of unseen beauty. Beauty that is produced by bringing together a group of people who may have otherwise not shared a common vision. Philadelphia muralism is more about process and

communication than about ornamentation. It is about exchanging collective thoughts, hopes and dreams over time. MAP's repertoire is broadening. Activities falling under the umbrella of the Mural Arts Program include art education, community mural making, criminal prevention, rehabilitation, and public engagement. As MAP expands, the stakeholders in this shared investment grow to include educators, students, municipal employees, elected officials, taxpayers, community service workers, funding organizations, even incarcerated offenders, and victims of crime.¹⁵ The murals woven through the city somehow touch every Philadelphian. Not claiming to be a social panacea, MPA strives to improve the quality of life for the broad spectrum of residents in Philadelphia through its dynamic, humanistic approach to mural making projects. The most successful murals are not one dimensional in substance or symbolism. The most effective murals resonate with their creators and their viewers on many layers. If a mural sparks a multiplicity of responses, meaning different things to different people, it has a vitality that extends its edges.

Golden's challenge is to maximize MAP's impact and realize how fully public art can influence a neighborhood. She is devoted to collaborating with communities and public organizations like the Department of Human Services and the Philadelphia School District to maximize the impact murals have as educational tools.

Urban spaces shift. Demographics are in constant flux. Golden's constant concern is maintaining the integrity of a neighborhood while simultaneously making it more artistically special. It is apparent that murals play a vital role in preserving the identity and history of a neighborhood. They are like mirrors. Golden holds murals up as a form of public art that are at once stunning, enchanting, and augment the growth of Philadelphia as a city.¹⁶

When we make art for public spaces, we define ourselves: this is what we think is worth remembering, this is what we believe. The driving forces of Philadelphia muralism are human concerns and our murals commemorate human history, understanding, and interaction. An effective mural reminds us of what we share. It reminds us on several levels; beautifully, eloquently, and in a way that makes the city a more welcoming place.

-Jane Golden (Executive Director of the Mural Arts Program)¹⁷

Objectives

The main objective of *When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Kindergartners to Interact With Murals* is for students to understand murals as sources for making meaning. Much like what happens during a read-aloud, when students look at murals in this unit they will practice relating what they see to their own experience. Students will be asked to answer questions, such as "What is the artist showing me?" and "What does this mural mean to me?" Murals are made through a collaborative process in which an artist works in concert with a community to create a public artwork. What can be learned about one's self and one's neighborhood by studying the murals that adorn

public spaces? This is the overarching question that will be examined throughout the unit.

There are multiple auxiliary objectives that will be met through the lessons in this unit: to visit nearby murals, to spot the title of a mural and the artists who designed it, to identify elements of design in a mural (use of patterns, colors, textures, etc), to describe the content of a mural, to relate what is seen to a personal experience, and to participate in discussions that compare and contrast multiple interpretations.

Throughout this unit, as students visit murals in their neighborhood, they will learn about public art and the mural making process. They will gain knowledge of artist's purpose and the importance of having a say in the design of one's physical environment. Students will connect what they know about understanding author's purpose and making text-to-self connections from read-alouds in the classroom to the practice of interacting with murals in the community. Comparing and contrasting both subject matter and aesthetic components of a variety of murals will deepen students' understanding of murals as sources for making meaning. As students interact with murals, they will use these public artworks to focus their thoughts and discussions about who they are as people and what the murals mean to them. Here murals become the objects that focus student discussions. Just as muralists add layers of paint to build up the richness of an image, students will be adding multiple layers of meaning to their schemas for understanding murals as much more than large beautiful pictures.

As a final objective, students will create their own large artwork that tells a personal story and share it publicly. Throughout the unit, students interact with murals that the community has created in the past. At the end of the unit, students will engage with the rich history of muralism and mark their place in the present. Each child will create a large painting that illustrated something they would like others to know about them. They will then collaborate, displaying all of their paintings publicly as one large mural. By designing a piece of a larger collective mural, students will see how their own unique story is a part of a larger one that can be shared with one another and with the larger school community. The mural that they create becomes an artifact that marks their place in time and tells their unique story.

This is a unit that can easily integrate multiple areas of the curriculum. Social Studies, Art, Math and Literacy are all embedded within each lesson. Discussions of the historical context of murals and the practice of studying each mural's surrounding community fall under the umbrella of Social Studies. Analyzing and critiquing murals and designing a unique contemporary mural are Art endeavors. Identifying patterns and shapes sharpen Math skills. Engaging in lively discussions and critical thinking exercises is a central component of the Literacy curriculum. A list of the specific standards addressed by the objectives of this unit has been included as an appendix.

Strategies

This unit will employ a range of teaching strategies to help students successfully achieve the objectives of the unit. Some of the activities designed to help them interact with artwork include: whole-group discussions of artworks in class using images in books and posters, “turn-and-talk” or paired exchange of ideas and thoughts about particular artworks, visits to neighborhood murals, developing questions about the artist’s methods and intentions, whole-group letter writing to the mural artist, experimenting with a variety of art materials (paint, pastels, pencils, and computer software like TuxPaint), and designing a large drawing or painting to share with classmates and exhibit publicly as a group mural.

When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Kindergartners to Interact With Murals " is designed for implementation in a regular education kindergarten classroom. Class size is expected to be twenty-five to thirty students between the ages of five and seven. The lessons for this unit were developed with that particular audience in mind, however the strategies used in the lessons could easily be adapted or made more complex for working with older children or smaller groups of students. The format for the majority of the lessons is a whole group discussion or activity followed by a small group or independent activity. The unit consists of three lessons, which will be taught over the course of two months, preferably toward the end of the school year when the weather is more agreeable. The lessons are long and kindergartners' attention spans are not. For this reason, each lesson may be broken up in to manageable chunks and taught over the span of several days.

Real murals and images of murals are critical to the success of this unit. Discussions will be centered on these images and public artworks, helping students to relate new knowledge to their own experience. Gathering images of murals and tracking down the location of murals in the school’s surrounding neighborhood is part of teacher preparation for this unit. Helpful websites and texts for doing so are located in the Teacher Resources section at the end of this unit.

Assessment will be ongoing throughout the unit. Teacher observation and frequent checks for understanding will be used to guide discussions and maintain conversations on a level that students can understand. Students with special needs will receive the same accommodations that they normally do, including preferential seating for those finding it difficult to focus on the on the discussion or demonstrated activity. During small group and individual activities, students will be paired up with or seated near peers of differing abilities in order to help and learn from each another.

The culminating project, constructing a class mural, will illustrate students' understanding of murals as a medium for storytelling and constructing meaning. Each child will design an image that shows something he feels is important about himself or his life. The children will then work collectively to piece the images together to make one large mural. As a celebratory component of the unit, students will put the mural on display for the school community and share the meaning of the mural with one another. In this way, they will be able to show what they have learned about the impact of the mural arts on their lives.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1: The Mural as a Story

For this lesson it will be necessary to gather images of murals to share with students beforehand. The children's book *Murals: Walls that Sing*, by George Anacona, is a beautiful photo-essay of murals in the United States that is full of images that could be shared for teaching purposes. Images of Philadelphia's murals can be found online on the City of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program website. Additionally, the director of the Mural Arts Program, Jane Golden, has coauthored two books that are chock full of gorgeous pictures of Philadelphia's murals. Regardless of how they are collected, images of murals will be used to guide both large and small group discussions, so it will be useful to have plenty of them to go around.

Begin by bringing students together as a whole group. Explain that murals are large paintings that are usually done on walls or on similar big flat spaces. Discuss any murals that students may have noticed in their community before. Choose an image of a mural to share with the class. Ask students to look closely as they think about the question, "What do you see?" After discussing this for a few minutes ask students to think about the question, "What story does this mural tell?" "Who do you think made this mural?" and "Why do you think the artists wanted to make this mural and tell this story?" Jot ideas onto chart paper to keep a running record of students' thoughts.

Explain that in many parts of the world, and especially in Philadelphia, people use murals to help them remember things, to tell stories, to beautify a space, or to send a message. Explain that as a class, you will be looking closely at murals in the neighborhood and thinking about the stories they tell. Connect looking at murals to reading a story. Compare stories and murals. Make connections between artists and authors, storyline and subject matter, audience and purpose.

As a closing activity, divide students into small, mixed ability groups of two or three children and give each group a different image of a mural to look at. Direct students to look at their group's image and think about the same questions, "What do you see?" "What story does this mural tell?" "Who do you think made this mural?" and "Why do you think the artists wanted to make this mural and tell this story?" Afterward, come back together as a large group and share the images and ideas. As a final thought, explain that for the next lesson, students will be taking a trip out into the neighborhood to look at, think about, and discuss a mural up close.

Lesson 2: The Mural as a Mirror

For this lesson it will be necessary to find a local mural to visit. With nearly three thousand murals in Philadelphia, it should be easy to find one near by. Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program's website has self-guided tour maps that can be downloaded to aid in locating murals. There is also an extensive database called MuralFarm.org, which allows

users to search by theme, artist, or neighborhood to locate a mural of interest. Students should be involved in the hunt. Ask if there is a specific mural nearby that students want to visit or give students several images of local murals and come to a group consensus about which one to go see.

As students walk to the mural, encourage them to look around and notice different colors, textures, and patterns in the neighborhood. When the mural is reached give students time to inspect it closely and touch it if possible. Gather students together in a whole group discussion format and as a group look over the mural. Note the colors, textures, and patterns in the mural. If there is a title, artists' name, or any other text on the mural, read it aloud. Have students describe what they see in the mural. You may want to review questions that were covered in the previous lesson. "What do you see?" "What story does this mural tell?" "Who do you think made this mural?" and "Why do you think the artists wanted to make this mural and tell this story?"

More importantly, explain to students that because this mural is in their neighborhood, it is important to identify how they feel about it and how they relate to it. Pair up students and initiate a turn-and-talk. Students should discuss the following questions with their partner: "What does this mural make you think of?" "How do you feel when you look at it?" "Do you like this mural?" "Why or why not?" Afterward, come back as a whole group and share ideas and thoughts. With permission, take pictures of the mural and of students' discussions. Later the pictures can be used during review to remind students of their ideas and talking points.

As an extension activity, students may want to share their feelings about the mural with the artists and/or community group that created it. By researching the mural online, locate contact information for someone involved in the construction of the specific mural that the students visited. Help students write a letter from the class that shares their feelings and thoughts about the mural. They may also have a few questions they would like to ask that could be included in the body of the letter. Send it and share any received response with the class. This correspondence can be used to enrich students' understanding of artist's purpose and audience participation and interpretation of public art. Students will be able to see that they are part of a larger dialogue about the aesthetics and values of their community.

Lesson 3: The Mural as Me

The materials required for this project may vary. Depending on the resources you have access to, your class mural may be assembled with anything from paper and glue to paint and butcher's paper. Students could use free online art software like Tux Paint to sketch out preliminary ideas. You may want to work in concert with your school's art teacher if you have one. Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program has many educational off shoots and you may want to contact them to see if your school could be involved. In any case, think about what is feasible for creating a mural with your class.

Explain to students that they are going to take everything they have learned about murals

and put it to work. They are going to make their own class mural to share their story with the school. Share images of murals and discuss how the mural artists used teamwork and collaboration to create one complete mural. Each artist is unique and different, but they work together to make a cohesive project. Talk to students about the fact that many times artists choose colors, shapes, textures, and patterns to set the tone of a painting and send a message about mood or feelings. For example some muralists use shades of blue to make a mural feel cool and soothing. Orange and red can be used to brighten and excite.

Each child will then participate in creating a large mural. Whether students work in small groups during designated times of the day or all at once in concert, every child should have a hand in creating the mural. Ideas include tracing profiles, finger painting, hand printing, and collaging. The resulting mural may be finished off with a decorative patterned border that students create individually and piece together as a finishing touch. Hang the mural in an area of the school where the school community can view it. Students should have an opportunity to admire and talk about their work. Here an extension activity would be to sponsor a mural dedication. Invite other students, school staff, family, and community members to celebrate the students' work. In this way the mural they have created becomes catalyst for dialogue just like the murals they studied and visited throughout the unit.

Bibliography

Teacher Resources

Barnett, Alan. *Community Murals: The People's Art*. Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1984. An historical account of the community-based mural movement in major American cities including San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia from 1965 to 1980. Includes many photographs of murals and graffiti that have since been destroyed.

Cockcroft, Eva. *Toward a People's Art: The Contemporary Mural Movement*. New York: Dutton, 1977. A study of the community-based mural movement in the United States with an emphasis on the participatory democratic process of making public art.

Dunitz, Robin. *Walls of Heritage, Walls of Pride: African American Murals*. San Francisco: Pomegranate Press, 2000. A collection of over two hundred African American murals coupled with descriptive narratives of the works by the artists who created them and a historical description of the contexts in which they were created.

Golden, Jane. *Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002.

and

Golden, Jane. *More Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell*. Philadelphia:

Temple University Press, 2006. Splendidly illustrated chronicles of the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program.

City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program.
<http://www.muralarts.org/>

Mural Farm. An interactive database that allows search and exploration of Philadelphia's thousands of community murals.
<http://www.muralfarm.org/Muralfarm/>

Student Resources

Ancona, George. *Murals: Walls that Sing*. New York: Marshall Cavendish Children's Books, 2003. A children's book of colorful photographs of outdoor murals and the communities they are housed in.

Greene, Alesia. *A Mural for Mamita*. Omaha: Centering Corporation, 2002. A children's storybook about the making of a fantastic mural by a community to commemorate the life of a girl's grandmother.

Tux Paint. Free and award-winning drawing program for students ages 3-12.
<http://tuxpaint.org/>

Appendices/Standards

The Core Curriculum used by the School District of Philadelphia is aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Academic Standards. *When Looking at Me, What do you See?: Teaching Kindergartners to Interact With Murals* is also aligned to those standards, which may be viewed in their entirety at www.pdesas.org/. This is a curricular unit that incorporates standards for the Arts and Humanities with standards for Speaking and Listening. Students will practice looking at art in the form of murals. They will rehearse thinking about the murals and forming an aesthetic and critical response to them. They will repeatedly engage in discussions about their opinions. In a sense, it will be the students themselves who making meaning from the artwork before them.

Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities

9.3.3. Critical Response

A. Recognize critical processes used in the examination of works in the arts and humanities.

- Compare and contrast
- Analyze
- Interpret
- Form and test hypotheses
- Evaluate/form judgments

- B. Know that works in the arts can be described by using the arts elements, principals and concepts.
- D. Explain meanings in the arts and humanities through individual works and the works of others using a fundamental vocabulary of critical response.
- E. Recognize and identify types of critical analysis in the arts and humanities.
 - Contextual criticism
 - Formal criticism
 - Intuitive criticism
- F. Know how to recognize and identify similar and different characteristics among works in the arts.
- G. Know and demonstrate what a critic's position or opinion is related to works in the arts and humanities.

9.4.3. Aesthetic Response

- A. Know how to respond to a philosophical statement about works in the arts and humanities.
- B. Know how to communicate an informed individual opinion about the meaning of works in the arts.
- C. Recognize that the environment of the observer influences individual aesthetic responses to works in the arts.
- D. Recognize that choices made by artists regarding subject matter and themes communicate ideas through works in the arts and humanities.

Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

1.6.3. Speaking and Listening

- A. Listen to others.
- C. Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.
- D. Contribute to discussions.
- E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.

Endnotes

¹http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/3503.Maya_Angelou

²<http://www.thenotebook.org/may-2006/061110/budgets-tightening-arts-education-further-squeezed>

³Lilian Moore, Mural on Second Avenue, and Other City Poems (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2004) 4.

⁴Jane Golden, Robin Rice, and Natalie Pompilio More Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2006) 19.

⁵Christy Hale, "Mural: Real High," *Instructor* 113(2), 2003: 8.

⁶Golden, *More Murals*, 18.

⁷Ibid.,18.

⁸Robin Dunitz, Walls of Heritage, Walls of Pride: African American Murals San Francisco, California: Pomegranate Press, 2000 4-5.

⁹Jane Golden, Robin Rice, and Monica Yant Kinney, Philadelphia Murals and the Stories They Tell (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 2002) 7.

¹⁰Golden, More Murals, 23.

¹¹Golden, More Murals, 27.

¹²Golden, More Murals, 28.

¹³Golden, More Murals, 40.

¹⁴Golden, Philadelphia Murals, 8.

¹⁵<http://www.muralarts.org/whatwedo/arted/>,
<http://www.muralarts.org/whatwedo/justice/>, and
<http://www.muralarts.org/whatwedo/community/>.

¹⁶Golden, More Murals, 154.

¹⁷Golden, More Murals, 33.