

Grade Level: 8

Element of design: Form

Big Idea:

- Artists often challenge the status quo and open us to new perspectives and experiences.

Aspect of the Element of Design:

- Recognizing and exploring the relationship between a sculpture and its surroundings

First Peoples' Principles:

- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Curricular Connections

- This unit integrates well with the Social Studies 8 curriculum, particularly the Big Idea: Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas and those wanting to preserve established traditions.

Important Note: Some of the content of this unit is sensitive in nature (including visual profanity and discussion of children's deaths in residential schools). It is best practice to send out an email to parents prior to the beginning of the unit explaining the content and purpose and encouraging them to contact me if they have any questions or concerns.

Exploring and Creating #1: Introduce Element of Form

Curricular focus: Explore relationships between identity, place, culture, society, and belonging through arts activities and experiences.

1. Consider the statement "Art Should Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable."
 - a. Class Discussion – what do you think this means?
1. Introduce the element of form through exploring the 3D objects in the classroom through the following game (this prepares students for the idea of "readymade" art).
 1. Students should be in groups of 3-4.
 2. Tell them that they will be creating temporary sculptures made out of small to medium objects as a response to the above discussed statement.
 3. They can use any small to medium object in the classroom that is easy to move and put back, with no alteration of the objects themselves (no cutting or gluing,

- etc). Explain that you want the final product to somehow convey an idea to the audience (our class) and that students should try to relate it to the statement.
4. Each group should also give their sculpture a title. Encourage them to not make it obvious (eg: Scissors on Chair) but rather trying to link it to the statement and convey the idea (eg: Army Marching)
 5. Give students time to build their sculptures.
 6. Gather back together to view and discuss the sculptures. Have the audience reflect on each one first, and then have the artists explain their piece, the title, and the process of creating it.
 7. Document the sculptures by taking photos of each one.

Reasoning and Reflecting #1: Ai Weiwei and Carey Newman

Curricular focus: Reflect on works of art and creative processes to understand artists motivations and meanings.

Note: Critical Analysis is interwoven into both the process of viewing of the art and at the end of this Reasoning and Reflecting section. Due to the nature of the discussion questions below, each artist will most likely take at least a whole block to explore.

1. Artist: AI WEIWEI
 - Show the PBS Art Assignment Video “The Case for Ai Weiwei”
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YMtsodcAsVU>
 - Content Warning: there is visual profanity (the middle finger)
 - During watching this video pause at various points to both review and discuss the points being made. You may want to watch it more than once. (Note the SKIP FROM of this, as there is mildly sexualized content).
 - 0.23 – What did Ai do with the urn? What do you think about this act?
 - 0.53 – Fill in any gaps in student’s knowledge of the cultural revolution in China and put it in context of Ai’s childhood.
 - 1.09 – Pause to read the definition of “readymade” and give some other examples; talk about Duchamp’s *Fountain* and *Bicycle Wheel*
 - **SKIP FROM 1.25 to 1.35**
 - 1.51 – “Reverence for the past and the irrepressible drive towards the future”
 - Discuss: What do you think this means? Why is this concept important to Ai Weiwei? Why is this important in the context of modern China?
 - 3.04 – “If a nation cannot face it’s past, it has no future”
 - Discuss: Why do you think he says this? Do you agree?
 - 4:52 – Iconoclast – “A person who attacks cherished beliefs or institutions”
 - Do you think Ai is an Iconoclast? Why or why not?
 - 5:28 – “Steeped in remember, valuing, preserving.”
 - What do they mean by this? Do you see this in Ai’s work? How is this in contrast to him as an Iconoclast?



Sunflower Seeds – Ai Weiwei, 2010

- Discuss the following quote in relation to the Sunflower Seeds work;
 - “The part in relation to the whole, the self in relation to the collective”



Life Vest Installation in Berlin – Ai Weiwei, 2016

- Give more context to the installation – refugee crisis from Syria, the escape routes across the Mediterranean, the drowning of Alan Kurdi
 - Discuss the following questions;
 - Why in Berlin? Why not China?
 - How is this installation a ‘call to action’?
2. Project: THE WITNESS BLANKET - Carey Newman Hayalthkin’geme
- Website: <http://witnessblanket.ca/#!/project/>
 - Watch “Witness Blanket Official Trailer 2015: Canadian Museum of Human Rights”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNJ0a5P9YDo>
 - What did you hear? What did you see?

- What is the Witness Blanket?
- Watch: “The Witness Blanket at CMHR w/artist Carey Newman
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6alxTwo2X84>
 - What was the purpose of this piece?
 - What were Carey’s inspirations?
 - It is made from a variety of objects, including wood. Why do you think it is called a “blanket”?
- 1. Can read them this quote from the website after discussion “*The blanket is a universal symbol of protection. For many of us, it identifies who we are and where we’re from – we wear them in ceremony and give them as gifts. Blankets protect our young and comfort our elders.*”
 - Why do you think it is called a “witness” blanket? Why use the word ‘witness’?

Note: If needed, you can at this point explore Residential Schools in more detail, especially if students do not have much knowledge about them and the history of Canada’s relations with First Nations peoples.

- Explore the Blanket (online portal) - directed by student interest and questions
 - <http://witnessblanket.ca/blanket/> (you can click on individual parts of the blanket to learn more about each item)



Critical Analysis Questions:

1) Initial Reaction: Integrated into above discussions.

2) Description: Integrated into above discussions.

3) Analysis: Integrated into above discussions.

4) Cultural Context:

- How is the art of Ai Weiwei and Carey Newman Hayalhtkin'gme informed by their cultures?
- How is it a reflection of their cultures?
- How is it a challenge to their cultures?
- What do you think have been the consequences for these artists in creating work that challenges the status quo?
- What do you think are the potential impacts on the wider community and world of these artist's works?

5) Informed Point of View

- What do you see in their art now?
- What story are they trying to tell?
- How are the works of Ai Weiwei and The Witness Blanket by Carey Newman Hayalhtkin'gme similar in their purpose? How are they different?

6) Reconsider the statement "Art Should Comfort the Disturbed and Disturb the Comfortable." How does the work of Ai Weiwei and Carey Newman Hayalhtkin'gme comfort and disturb?

Teacher should evaluate students' contributions through notes after the critique: did the student participate; were they able to discuss concepts and use appropriate vocabulary? Were they able to think & respond critically and respectfully about what they were viewing?

Universal Design

1. Challenge: Performance anxiety, there may be students in the room who are not comfortable sharing their ideas out loud in front of others.
2. Solution: Include a written portion for the critical analysis after the discussion, by giving students 5 minutes to write down some important thoughts they had about the pieces they viewed.
3. This also assists students who may need time to think before formulating a response, or those who think better with silence, or who felt uncomfortable sharing their personal thoughts on the subjects we were discussing.

Exploring and Creating #2: Exploring the ‘readymade’

Curricular focus: Create artistic works collaboratively and as an individual using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play.

The goal of these stations is to further explore the concept of ‘readymade’ through the element of form. Each station has a statement (in italics) that should be printed out along with the instructions.

Materials: Prior to this part of the unit, students are asked to bring in items from home that represent their own daily lives but that can also be used up in creating art (ie: a cereal box, old clothes, knickknacks, etc.) Let them know these objects will be for communal use. The teacher should also provide lots of different materials for students to experiment with during these activities. Materials can be any small to medium object; thrifts stores and recycling can be excellent sources. Items that have pop culture references to them work well for readymade objects. Be creative in what you bring in. Ensure to also include traditional art materials for students to use, such as paint, clay, paper, etc. Have on hand scissors, packing and duct tape, hot glue gun, glue sticks, twine, etc. – for attaching objects to each other.

Students visit at least 2 of 3 centres to explore art making. These stations could be explored over several blocks.

1. **Name:** Assembly Line (*repetition and collaboration can be part of ‘readymade’*)
 - **Materials:** This station should have small materials only and paper and pens to record the instructions. You should also have an example of an object and instructions ready to give first student who finishes (so they have something to make)
 - **Instructions for station:**
 1. Make a simple object (using only a few materials).
 2. Write out Instructions on how to make your object.
 3. Attempt to follow at least one other instruction for previously made objects to make your own version of their object.
2. **Name:** Object Empathy (*alteration and repair can be part of ‘readymade’*)
 - **Materials:** Have a selection of small slightly broken objects (a bent pencil, a ripped photograph, a sock with a hole in it, etc). There should be enough objects for each student in the class to participate in this station. Also provide materials to “fix” the objects, such as tape, glue, twine, bandages, stapler, etc.
 - **Instructions for Station:**
 1. When we think about empathy, we normally think about it being directed towards humans. This activity encourages you to express empathy towards objects.
 2. Pick one of the objects on the table that you might feel sad for. Fix it!!

3. Don't repair the object so it is useable. Instead fix the object so the repair is obvious and becomes part of the "art" of the object. Can you repair it in a way that evokes empathy for that object in others?
3. **Name:** Out of Context (*strange & humorous contexts can be part of 'readymade'*)
 - **Materials:** Along with the materials listed above in the general instructions, include copies of the three photographs (attached at end of this document).
 - **Instructions for Station**
 1. Pick one of the landscape photographs.
 2. Make an object that would be "out of place" if it was in this landscape. Try for as much humour as you can get!!
 3. Give your object a title that helps to put it even further out of context with the picture (eg: you might make something that looks like a piece of fruit, put it in the context of the underwater landscape and call it "Lunch on the Moon").



Non-judgemental Critique: Once students have explored the various stations (could be more than one class) do a nonjudgmental critique to share techniques and ideas.

Assessment: Students Self-check of participation in speaking during the Non-judgemental critique. Afterwards, connect with students who did not speak during the group Non-judgemental critique to have a short discussion about either their own piece or other pieces they saw.

Exploring and Creating #3: Make own form sculpture using the Big Idea

Curricular focus: Intentionally select and apply materials, movements, technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and principles in art making.

Students will use any of the materials explored in the unit to make their own 3D form sculpture. The goal of this inquiry is for students to combine the ideas of the “readymade” with the idea of art as challenging the status quo and creating new perspectives.

For materials, follow directions from the previous activities.

Evaluation: Use the following one-point rubric, with anecdotal feedback (strengths & considerations) to assess the form sculpture. Use the BC Proficiency Scale for a grade.

Form Unit Rubric: Final Sculpture

Strengths	I am assessing your ability to...	Considerations
	Intentionally select and apply materials to explore the element of form.	
	Create artistic works using ideas inspired by imagination.	
	Have a completed piece of work that demonstrates an understanding of the concept of the ‘readymade’.	

Communicating and Documenting: Reflection Questions and Unit Portfolio

Curricular focus: Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts

Assessment: Students will do a self-assessment of their process over the whole unit.

Self-Assessment questions about the unit:

1. How has your experiences through this unit opened up new perspectives for you?
2. What was your process of your final piece?
3. What have you learned generally about how art comforts and disturbs?
4. Explain how your final piece “Comforts the Disturbed and Disturbs the Comfortable.”

Portfolio: self-administered checklist of what should be included in the student’s portfolio:

- First Exploration of Form – photo documentation of your group’s temporary sculpture
- Any writings or notes from the Critical Analysis of the two artists.
- Explorations from the Stations – including pieces not completed – can be photo documentation or the actual piece.
- Final Sculpture - exploration of Big Idea – should be actual piece
- Answers to the Self-Assessment Questions