



2011-2012 Teacher Fellowship Program Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: Healing Nature

Instructor Name(s) Rita Leary

Class Title Environmental Science

Date Winter to Spring 2012

Grade Level 5th

1. Lesson Plan Abstract

Students explore American consumerism in terms of simple objects that are frequently discarded by members of our community. They compare and contrast this lifestyle to other cultures, e.g. Kenya in East Africa, by viewing objects made by found or repurposed local materials. A visual tour of the work of outsider artists Emery Blagdon and Reverend Howard Finster introduces students to Americans who have used found and repurposed materials as media for their expressions. A community inventory ensues to identify key objects commonly thrown out by families which could be repurposed -- e.g the water bottle. These items are collected and converted into simple bird feeders or mobile structures for our school community garden or their own backyards.

2. Objectives

a. Student Outcomes

Students will

Identify and classify recyclable materials.

Compare the relative effectiveness of reducing, reusing and recycling in actual situations.

Demonstrate knowledge and skills to create works of visual art using problem solving, observing, designing, sketching and constructing.

Identify and describe how outsider artists are driven by passionate intention through original choices, obsessive detail, and unusual or unexpected combinations of materials..

Explore the work of 2 outsider artists to find repetition and passion in their creations.

b. State Goals/ Benchmarks

ILS 12B Ecological Science

Describe relationships among various organisms in their environments.

ILS12E Earth and Environmental Science

Describe and explain short-term and long-term interactions of the Earth's components.

Identify and classify recyclable materials.

ILS 13B Science, Technology, and Society

Compare the relative effectiveness of reducing, reusing and recycling in actual situations

ILS 26A Creating and Performing

Describe the relationships among media, tools/technology and processes.

ILS 27 Arts and Civilization

Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.

3. Motivation/ Anticipatory Set

Exploratory session: Students examine artifacts from a coastal East African village. These include a soccer ball made from banana leaves, ladles and cooking utensils made from coconut remnants, mechanical toys constructed from repurposed wire and metal lids, dolls, and jewelry. Discussion follows the what, how (and why?) each piece was created. Many of the pieces were made by children out of the need to play. Session ends with photo of a young woman in Mombasa, Kenya in her father's local shop. She is enwreathed by household items made from repurposed materials and made by local artisans from a trade known as **jua kali**, "strong sun".

Big Idea: Many people in the world see **purpose** in objects that others throw away.

4. Activities

a. Measure Prior Knowledge

Pre assessment of student understanding of outsider art and recycling.

Survey Focus --> Assess students' understanding of American consumerism, conservation, and the connection to environmental health.

Assess students' exposure to outsider art and the role it plays in American society.

b. Exemplar

Focus: Outsider artists are self trained and often use found objects and self-developed methods of creating their expressions. These creations often show repetitious patterns in the materials or techniques used to apply them.

Act: Students take a visual tour of Blagdon's and Finster's works. Partners or small groups discuss their observations. Teacher guides conversation beyond the "what it looks like" to the "what did he use" and "how did he use it"?

Student teams use the Intuit rubric to identify key elements of the work making it unique to the outsider artist world.

Reflect: Write a journal entry. How is it possible for someone who is "untrained" to make art?

Focus: What materials are typically discarded in our community?
How could some of these materials be reused rather than spending centuries in a landfill?
How can healing the environment help people?

Act: Students conduct an audit of materials that are discarded in our school building and in our homes. From this data, they identify that could be repurposed. They will conduct a two week collection drive (unless more time is needed to get materials).

Reflect: Students make plans and drawing of the object each intends to repurpose. Keeping the rubric in mind, each makes plans for how to proceed?

c. Procedure

Students repurpose an empty juice, water, or other plastic bottle. Materials include the bottles, zippers, paint, hot glue, embellishments, wire hooks, wooden pegs, and miscellaneous items, magazines, etc.

One model is the bird feeder. The top third of the bottle is partially removed and reattached with a zipper. A wire hook through the bottle cap provides ability for hanging. Holes drilled in side of the bottle offer bird perches and feeding holes. Embellish the feeder at will.

Another model results in an embellished bottle along the line of Finster's coca cola bottles. Students may use paint, words, or combinations of the two.

Their creations will be displayed in the school community garden for STEM fest -- an annual celebration of art and science. Students may also choose to take them home.

5. Material and Resources

LCD projections of:

Images of Blagdon from the "Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds" exhibit at the Kohler Art Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Images of Finster from the Plant Farm Museum in Pennville, Georgia.

Biographies of each artist from Intuit website.

Empty water, juice, and pop bottles, zippers, wire hooks, hot glue guns, discarded pencils or pens, bird seed, electric drill, paints and brushes

6. Literacy Building/ Language Arts Integration

Focus: What inspires the passion of a person who creates art?

Act: Students read short bios on two outsider artists. Small groups use details from the passages to complete a concept web of each artist. What life events or circumstances may have led to the art this person created?

Reflect: Write a journal reflection on a work by one of the artists. Include a sketch of the object, a description of what medium the artist chose to use, and how that particular piece speaks to you.

7. Visual Culture/ Annotated Images

Work by Howard Finster Paradise Gardens, Plant Farm Museum, Coca Cola Bottle, 1996.

Work by Emery Blagdon Healing Machines Environment

8. Evaluation/ Closure

Post assessments of student understanding of outsider art and recycling.

Survey Focus --> Assess students' understanding of American consumerism, conservation, and the connection to environmental health.

Assess students' exposure to outsider art and the role it plays in American society.

9. Resources/ Bibliography/ Credits

Kohler Foundation, Inc. website www.kohlerfoundation.org

Howard Finster website www.finster.com

Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art

Intuit Resource Library: "Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists", by Leslie Umberger