

Lesson Title: All About Alma: Alma Thomas Collage

Your name: Rachel Vredenburg

Number of Students: 20

Grade Level: 2nd

Length of each class period: 40 minutes, 2 days

LESSON Rationale

This lesson focuses on black history month by incorporating Alma Thomas, a famous art educator and artist, into the lesson. Students will use colorful construction paper to experiment with using radial or linear balance in their collages. They will use short strips of torn paper to create either of these designs and build fine motor skills in gluing these individual pieces. By choosing which type of balance and planning their own color scheme, students will create personalized works of art that celebrate Alma Thomas's style and legacy. Another objective of this lesson is to show the diverse careers that can be achieved in the field of art. By connecting to artists from history, such as Alma Thomas, students will have a better understanding of how art may function outside the classroom.

The big idea of this lesson is balance. Specifically, students will understand that balance can be literal, or visual and is a means by which artists may organize the visual pattern in their works. By focusing on the color and pattern of a work, students will observe that together each addition to the overall pattern creates a large-scale final image that can have a powerful effect on viewers. For instance, the sample uses bright yellow, orange, and green paper pieces that present a feeling of both warmth and calm. By changing the arrangement and colors, students might have different reactions. Students will be excited to customize and present their own mood through their own specific choices of shape and color when completing this project.

PROCESS

Torn construction paper pieces on background paper; collage

ARTISTS:

Alma Thomas

She was born in Columbus, GA 1891. "Alma Thomas was a teacher and artist who developed a powerful form of abstract painting late in life" (Markoski, 2024). Reflecting on segregation she notes that "One of the things we couldn't do was go into museums, let alone think of hanging our pictures there. My, times have changed. Just look at me now" (Markoski, 2024). In regard to the Civil Rights movement, she sought to bring the beauty that surrounded her to light, in pursuit of a better future.

BIG IDEA(s): Balance

LEARNER OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to identify stylistic markers of Alma Thomas's works such as color, pattern, repetition, and balance.

Students will follow directions to collage their own version of Thomsas's work.

Students will observe patterns and differentiate between radial and linear balance

Students will understand the difference between abstraction and realism.

Students will note stylistic markers of Alma Thomas's work.

3 National Standards for Visual Arts (VAS) (list numbers and full description for each standard) [National Visual Arts Standards At-A-Glance • National Art Education Association \(arteducators.org\)](#)

VA:Re.7.1.2a: Perceive and describe aesthetic characteristics of one's natural world and constructed environments.

VA:Re.7.1.3a: Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art.

VA:Re.9.1.2a: Use learned art vocabulary to express preferences about artwork.

3 VA State Standards of Learning (SOL) in the arts: [Visual Arts | Virginia Department of Education](#)

2.4 The student will express opinions with supporting statements regarding works of art.

2.7 The student will describe roles of artwork and artists in communities.

2.15 The student will refine motor skills (e.g., cutting, modeling, molding, tearing, weaving) to create two-dimensional and three-dimensional works of art.

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR UNIT (*be specific*: how many of each item, what size paper, what color markers/paper, what kind of recycled materials, what size brushes, what kind of markers finepoint/broad tip, name tags, permission slips, etc.)

A. Art Supplies: 20 sheets of construction paper in either blue or yellow per class 18x12," 20 bottles of glue.

Additional Materials: (What books, images, websites, handouts, and other reference materials did you consult in planning this lesson and/or use in presenting it to your students? Include any links to museums or other resources you used. *Include a link to your presentation for introducing artists and the unit/lessons to your students.*)

[Alma Thomas Bio](#)

[The Eclipse, Alma Thomas \(1970\)](#)

PowerPoint Presentation linked here.

VOCABULARY/DEFINITIONS: (list 7-10 vocabulary words you will introduce and discuss during your unit, and definitions)

Color: Bright hues in a range of the rainbow!

Abstract: Painting the IDEA of something

Mood: The feeling you get from a painting/work of art

Primary colors: Those you cannot mix: Blue Yellow and Red

Secondary Colors: Those you get from adding 2 primaries together

Radial Balance: Symmetricity radiating from the center point

Linear balance: pattern that stays in lines (vertical or horizontal)

MOTIVATING STUDENTS: PERSONAL and SOCIAL RELEVANCE

Students can relate to Alma Thomas as she loved color, spent years teaching and years learning. Just like Alma, students will enjoy practicing with her style, while adding their own personalization's. They will be able to choose which type of balance and what colors resonate with them and build their own personalized works from there.

UNIT PROCEDURES

Teacher/Classroom Prep:

Teacher will prepare a PowerPoint presentation, prepare Strips of paper in a variety of colors, prepare glue bottles in baskets for each table, as well as a word search and about Alma Thomas's life/relevant vocab as an extension.

A. Pre-assessment:

Students will understand that color has different relationships and that mixing different combinations results in a different feelings/mood. Students will realize that abstract art often relies on mood but can still remind us of the original objects such as flowers, an eclipse, etc.

B. Behavioral Expectations:

Students are expected to sit in their seats, listen while the teacher is talking, and participate in any class discussion.

C. Organizer: *(How will students be informed of the learning objectives and major activities of each lesson? Will you have handouts? Visuals? Will you put the objectives in a PowerPoint?)*

The teacher will create a PowerPoint to share important ideas and vocabulary with students. The teacher will conduct different demonstrations at each stage of the projects so that students may follow along and build certain skills such as tearing, gluing, and pattern.

D. Extension Activity: *(students who finish task early should have another activity or station to continue to be engaged during class time. Explain that activity/work station)*

Students may complete the Alma Thomas wordsearch or free draw.

UNIT SEQUENCE (scripting and timing).

2 days/classes:

Teacher Actions

DAY 1 2nd grade (9:35-10:15)

9:35 Teacher will greet students and invite them to take their art seats

9:35-9:45 Teacher will begin introducing the PowerPoint talking specifically about Alma Thomas and her accomplishments/ historical significance. Teacher will ask students about what they learned in the Alma Thomas Video Including style and inspiration.

9:45-9:47: The teacher will pass out the large pieces of construction paper (12x18") and ask students to write their names on it.

9:47-9:50 Teacher will demonstrate what size to tear pieces of paper (thumb size) and how to arrange it according to linear or radial examples. Teacher will show that a tiny bit of glue will hold the pieces down. Teacher might even show too much glue so that students can see exactly what NOT to do. Teacher will remind students to use the pattern "tear and glue and tear and glue" Rather than creating too many torn pieces and not having time left to glue.

9:50-9:52 Teacher will pass out baskets of scrap paper and remind students to share in the art room. Teacher will ask students from each table to grab a basket of glue for their table.

9:52-10:05 Teacher will walk around and check in on students see how their collages are going

10:10: Teacher will announce cleanup, remind students to place their collages on the drying rack and throw away tiny scraps, and walk when going to put back glue and wash hands at the sink.

10:13: Teacher will call all students to line up as they finish washing their hands. Teacher will ask questions such as "who did we learn about today" "Alma Thomas!"

10:15: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and teacher will say goodbye to them as they leave.

DAY 2

9:35-9:40 Teacher will remind students about the lesson from last time, specifically reviewing radial vs linear balance and Alma Thomas's style/inspiration.

9:40-9:43: The teacher will pass back the large pieces of construction paper (12x18") from last time. Teacher will ask 2 helpers to pass out glue baskets while she is passing out papers. Scrap paper buckets will already be on the tables.

Expected Learner Actions

DAY 1 3rd grade (10:15-10:55)

9:35 Students will say hello to Mrs. V and Mrs. T as they enter the classroom and find their art seats.

9:35-9:45 Students will use listening ears as the teacher introduces Alma Thomas. When asked, Students will answer questions such as "she was an art teacher" "she was inspired by nature" "She taught in Washington DC."

9:45-9:47: Students will pick between yellow or blue construction paper, thank their teacher, and write their names on the back with a pencil.

9:47-9:50 Students will pay attention to the demo without talking and participate in the discussion to learn about linear and radial balance. Students will be appalled when the teacher uses too much glue.

9:50-9:52 Students will tear paper scraps into thumb size pieces and glue them down as they go as instructed.

9:52-10:05 Students will keep adding to their collage during the work time. Students will raise their hand and ask for help if they need.

10:10: Students will begin cleanup, placing their collages on the drying rack, throw away tiny scrap pieces, and walk when going to put back glue and wash hands at the sink.

10:13: Students will line up as they finish washing their hands. Teacher will ask questions such as "who did we learn about today" "Alma Thomas!" What inspired her work? "Nature and flowers!"

10:15: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and students will say goodbye to Mrs. T and Ms. V as they leave.

DAY 2

9:35-9:40: Students will participate in the review about Alma Thomas. "What does it mean to use Balance in artwork?" "Its how you arrange everything on the paper!" "What 2 types of balance did we talk about last time?" "Circular and lines" "Yes, but does anyone remember the art words for those?" "Linear and radial!"

9:40-9:43: Students will thank the teacher when they receive their papers. 2 helpers will pass out glue baskets. Scrap paper buckets will already be on the tables.

9:45-10:10: Students will work on filling the rest of their pages with paper patterns. If students need extra help, they will raise their hand and ask. Students will put scraps in the cans and clean up their space.

9:45-10:10 Teacher will walk around and admire students work and congratulate them on their progress. Teacher may sit with students that need extra help, briefly. Teacher will pass out mini trash cans towards the end of work-time for easy cleanup.

9:10 Teacher will announce cleanup and ask helpers to return glue baskets, place completed collages on the drying rack, use walking feet to go wash hands, and throw away teeny scraps into the table trashcans.

10:13: Teacher will call all students to line up as they finish washing their hands. Teacher will ask closing questions such as “what was the process we learned about today?” “Collage!” “Show of hands: how many friends chose radial balance? Who chose linear?”

10:15: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and teacher will say goodbye to them as they leave.

9:10 Students will cleanup, helpers will return glue baskets, students will place completed collages on the drying rack, use walking feet to go wash hands, and throw away teeny scraps into the table trashcans.

10:13: Students to line up as they finish washing their hands. Teacher will ask closing questions such as “what was the process we learned about today?” “Collage!” “Show of hands: how many friends chose radial balance? Who chose linear?” Students show of hands in response.

10:15: Homeroom teacher will pick students up and teacher will say goodbye to them as they leave

ADAPTATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: (*Note accommodations for Students with Special Needs as well as any classroom management strategies. Provide examples in your descriptions. This is not optional.*)

Students having trouble controlling the small pieces may use slightly larger pieces. Students who need extra time may be allowed to come back as their homeroom teacher permits. Teacher will ask for “all eyes to me” on her during the presentation so that there is no temptation to talk or not pay attention to the proper use of materials. Asking fun questions on the presentation day is another way to engage learners: ie. “what do you see in this painting?” “How much glue should Ms. V use?”

DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGIES: (These should also be reflected in the unit sequence. When will you integrate these strategies into your planning? Be specific in your scripting/sequencing.)

- Flexible grouping
- Open-ended activities
- Exploration by interests
- Negotiated criteria
- Anchoring/Extension activities
- Independent studies
- Tiered activities/products
- Journal prompts
- Multiple levels of questions
- Scaffolding
- Choice: Learner profile, Readiness, Interest

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION OF TEACHER/STUDENT LEARNING

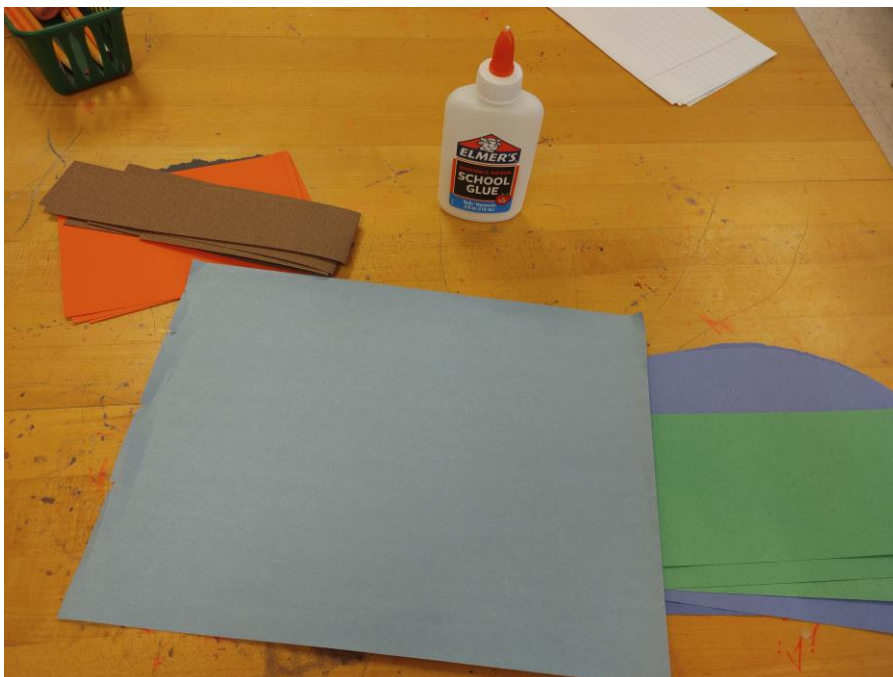
- A. Assessment: (*How will you collect information on what students gained from your unit? How will you evaluate that information? (Refer back to Learner Outcomes to decide how you will know if students learned what you hoped they would learn. Assessment strategies can include exit tickets, a list of questions you will ask students at the closure of the lesson, the critique, etc.*)

The scaffolding in this lesson will start immediately with the class discussion of the videos and an interactive demonstration in which students will test their knowledge of different types of visual balance and patterns. Next, they will expand their ideas and test their knowledge as they assemble their own collages. The final assessment will be in the form of the student's works that are turned in for display on the Main foyer bulletin board.

B. Documentation:

Student's responses to both the video and demo will show that they are paying attention to the lesson materials. Their construction of their own collages will show that they understand how to intentionally pick different colors and arrange them either radially or linearly. While walking around the class the teacher will take in-progress photos of student's works to show that they are using dashed pieces of paper to evoke the dashed, painterly lines that Alma Thomas's used in her paintings.

PROCESS IMAGES



Step1: Gather materials including paper, scrap paper pieces, pencils, and glue.



Step 2: Rip a few pieces of scrap paper and get ready to arrange them on the paper.



Step 3: Start arranging them on the larger paper either radially or linearly



Step 4: Keep adding to your pattern until the paper is totally filled!

References

Markoski, K. (2024). *Alma Thomas* / Smithsonian American Art Museum.

Americanart.si.edu. <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/alma-thomas-4778>.

National Gallery of Art. (2021, September 22). *Alma Thomas: Your New Favorite Artist*.

Www.youtube.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzgT9zEWhmI>.

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