

MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

Age: Second Grade

Lesson Duration: 90-100 Minutes

Subjects: Art & Social Studies

Cityscapes in Primary Colors: Inspired by Jacob Lawrence

A HANDS-ON ART
ACTIVITY DESIGNED BY
MONA EDUCATORS

Description

During this activity, students will use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to examine Jacob Lawrence's art. Then they will design and paint a picture of their own inspired by Lawrence's work.



*Project example
Image source: Jessica Conway*

Materials

- Tempera paint (red, yellow, blue, white, & black)
- Brushes
- Containers to hold paint
- Cups of water
- Pencils
- Thick white paper
- Jacob Lawrence biography and images of his work (included at the end of this lesson)

Instructions

1) Introduce the students to Lawrence and his work and use VTS to ask questions and look at the art more closely.

- VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.

2) Ask students to describe what they might see in a city setting.

Brainstorm ideas & list them on the board. Use all five senses for "clue" words.

3) Briefly introduce primary colors and demonstrate how to change the value of each color by adding white or black to make shades and tints.

- Primary colors are the three true colors that can be mixed to create all other colors. These colors are red, blue, and yellow (also known as cyan, magenta, and yellow).
- Show students these two videos for a brief, in depth explanation of color theory and the history of the color wheel.

4) Ask students to fill the whole paper with a design that reminds them of a cityscape. Suggest that students use pencil first to sketch these designs and to keep their images simple.

- Encourage unique interpretations of a cityscape. For instance, some students might want to sketch out how being in a big city makes them feel rather than a visual skyline.

5) Then color your design using one or more of the primary colors. Add black or white to at least one color to change its value.

- Ask kids to try to not to mix the primary colors this time in order to use a color palette similar to the one used by Jacob Lawrence.

6) If time allows, invite students to think of a title for their work.

Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Cityscape
- ✓ Primary Colors
- ✓ Value
- ✓ Shade
- ✓ Tint
- ✓ Design
- ✓ Shapes



Learning and State Standards

Fulfills [Washington State Arts Learning Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr1.1.2** (Brainstorm collaboratively multiple approaches to an art or design problem)
- **VA:Cr3.1.2** (Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork)
- **VA:Re7.1.2** (Perceive and describe aesthetic characteristics of one's natural world and constructed environments)

About the Artist: Jacob Lawrence



Portrait of Lawrence

Source:
Smithsonian American Art Museum

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) was an African American painter who specialized in the cubism style. Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey to southern migrants, he spent the majority of his life in New York City. His art was inspired by the Harlem Renaissance and depicted African-American life with vivid color. He moved to Seattle, Washington in 1970 and taught at the University of Washington until 1983. He is most famous for his series of paintings known as the *Migration Series*. This series of paintings depicts the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to the urbanized north in the United States.



When the subject is strong, simplicity is the only way to treat it.

-Jacob Lawrence

Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development, including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art, encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

What's going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say...?

What more can you find?

Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to use in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators



Harlem Street Scene
1942, Jacob Lawrence
Image source: jonathanboos.com

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE



75th Anniversary
1910-1985

The Builders: National Urban 75th Anniversary League Poster
1985, Jacob Lawrence
Image source: artnet.com