
Masterpiece: *Three Flags*, 1958

By Jasper Johns

Keywords: Pop Art, Symmetry, Repetition

Grade: 1st Grade

Month: November

Activity: Mono-print on Foil

TIME: 1.25 hours

Meet the Artist:

- He was born in 1930 in Augusta, Georgia, but grew up in South Carolina. He began drawing when he was 3 but had little exposure to art education since there was no art or artists nearby.
- He moved to New York City when he was 19 and briefly studied at a famous art school. He became friends with other prominent artists of the day and together they began developing their ideas on art concepts.
- He is best known for his "Flag," (1954-55) painting after he had a dream about a large American Flag.
- Many images in his art are recognizable symbols that are pure on their own design that don't need interpretation or have a hidden meaning or emotion.
- He liked the simple design of objects like the American Flag, the alphabet, numbers or a map of the United States as these symbols are powerful on their own.
- He carefully chose the subject matter for his art based on its simplicity, symmetry, and basic patterns.
- His Flag series was what made him famous as an artist but he also worked with other mediums.



Discussion on Key Words:

What is Pop Art? Pop Art was a major art movement during the 1960s in the United States that used subject matter of popular culture such as comic strips, movies, popular idols, or everyday objects seen in a new way. Typical American Pop Art was generally bolder, aggressive, even overpowering.

What is repetition? Repetition is created when objects, shapes, space, light, direction, lines, faces, etc. are used over and over again as an identical form. This was a popular method used in Pop Art.

What is symmetry? When the object is placed to be proportional or balanced on either side of a center line. It also means that the same pattern is repeated exactly at the same mathematical measurement (or other formal system such as geometry or physics) to make a sequence.

Compare and Contrast the US and AZ State flag with the following **questions:** After discussing, display the flag at the front of the classroom for future reference.

- Do you see repetition in both flags? Where?
- Is it symmetrical-are parts arranged in the same basic way on both side?
- How many stripes are on the US flag? How many stripes are on the AZ Flag?
- How are these lines the same? How are they different?
- Compare the star(s) on each flag. Why does the US flag have 50? What does the color of the star on the AZ flag represent? (Copper industry)
- Does it remind you of anything?
- Does it make you feel anything?
- Do you like it? Why/Why not?
- What makes the Jasper Johns picture different from a real American Flag?

Activity: AZ Flag - Monoprint on Foil

Materials Needed:

1. 10"x14" precut aluminum foil (one per student)
2. Star cutout (two per student)
3. Large paint brushes
4. Red, yellow and blue tempera paint
5. Paper plates for each paint color
6. 12"x 18" white construction paper (one per student)
7. Glue stick.
8. PVC rollers
9. Sharpies: Black, Fine-Tip
10. AZ State Flag

Process:

1. Give each child a piece of foil and two star cutouts. Using a Black Sharpie, help the students write their names on the back of the foil. *The foil will tear with too much pressure. Remind students of this in Step 3.*
2. Place plates with red, yellow and blue paint, 3-4 paintbrushes per plate and water bowls at each workstation to be shared between two students.
3. Keep the AZ flag hanging at the front of the room for the students to reference. Have students complete the following steps:
 - a. Fold the piece of foil in half along the 14" length for a horizontal line.
 - b. Unfold the foil
 - c. Glue one of the star cutouts in the middle of the foil.
 - d. Using their fingernail, have students carefully draw the lines on the top portion of the flag that project out from the center star. Have them focus on how many red (7) and yellow (6) rays so they can have symmetry to the flag.
4. Once they have traced the AZ flag design, they will need to work quickly on painting. Have them first paint the lower portion in blue; next the rays with alternating red/yellow. Tell them to **USE LOTS OF PAINT** so it doesn't dry and encourage them to keep the center star clear of other paint colors.
5. When they are done have them raise their hands so that you can come by with the white construction paper.
6. Have them gently press the white construction paper down on the foil painting making sure all areas of the foil are on the paper. Using the PVC rollers, gently roll over the paper so all areas of the foil have made contact with the foil.
7. BEFORE lifting the white paper, GENTLY write the student's name on the exposed side of the white paper—DO NOT press down.
8. Gently lift the white paper evenly off the foil to see the flag image.
9. Let dry.
10. Glue the other star cutout onto the finished paper print.
11. Keep the foil and paper print together.

Photograph of Jasper Johns and other paintings



