



***Maybe Something Beautiful* Mini-Unit Plan**

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Meet the Designers:

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Introducing the Mini-Unit:

This unit is designed for classroom instruction in any integrated classroom in grades K-5, specifically in Springfield, Massachusetts. This lesson can be used in small groups of special education students, in full classes, or with grade- or school-level teams.

Student Goals:

- * Be introduced to and practice using critical thinking skills to analyze images/texts in multicultural picture books
- * Use symbols in both words and pictures to represent ideas, specifically the ideas of beauty and community
- * Discuss agency and the process of change

Contextualizing the Picture Book:

Bibliographic information:

Compoy, F.I. & Howell, T. (2016). *Maybe something beautiful: How art transformed a neighborhood*. (Lopez, R. Illu.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Library of Congress Themes:

Neighborhoods – fiction, City and town life – fiction, mural painting and decorations

Summary:

Mira works with a muralist and her community to beautify her section of an urban neighborhood overcome with social decay. Based on a true story, Mira discovers how color can transform her neighborhood. If one person can make a difference, maybe... (something beautiful). This story is based on experiences of the husband-wife artist team of Rafael and Candice Lopez. With their community, they worked to beautify and improve their own neighborhood of the East Village near downtown San Diego, California.

See also: <http://maybesomethingbeautiful.com/portfolio/the-book/>, the website for this picture book.

See also: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUZ5ccdXZSA> , YouTube video of this book, featuring Mira in action in her neighborhood.

About the authors and illustrators:

Author Theresa Howell began as a children's author and pioneer of bilingual printing. She is editor and author of many children's books.

- * The author's portfolio for this book: <http://maybesomethingbeautiful.com/portfolio/theresa-howell/>
- * Howell's blog: <http://theresahowellbooks.blogspot.com>.

Author F. Isabel Campoy is an educator and author, and has published books and art that exemplify the richness of Latino/a culture. She writes poetry, theatre, stories, and biographies. She is an educator and studies language acquisition. She has won many awards including American Library Association notables and the San Francisco Library Award.

- * The author's portfolio for this particular book: <http://maybesomethingbeautiful.com/portfolio/f-isabel-campoy/>
- * Campoy's website: <http://isabelcampoy.com>

Illustrator Rafael Lopez is part of the topic of the book, and with his wife, heads up the movement entitled Urban Art Trail, which works to mobilize communities to beautify urban neighborhoods through art. Illustrations are combination of acrylic on wood, original photography, digital art.

- * <http://maybesomethingbeautiful.com/portfolio/rafael-lopez/>, the portfolio of the illustrator and this particular book
- * <http://www.rafaellopez-books.com>, website for the illustrator and his other works

Building background for the book:

Urban art and mural making

This book honors the work of the Urban Art Trail and distributes the message of the power of one person to make a difference and the commitment to revive communities through art.

<http://maybesomethingbeautiful.com/maybesomethingbeautiful/>

Video of students working together to beautify with mural dedicated to Revered Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGqmV9-bTCk>

Urban Art initiative in Springfield, MA to beautify utility boxes near Stearns Square.

<http://springfieldculture.org/utility-box-murals/>

Urban Youth Art and mural making.

<http://www.precitaeyes.org>

The East Village in San Diego

Local community group for the East Village in San Diego

<http://eastvillagesandiego.com>

Article on the history and transition of the East Village pre- and post-2004.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/23/home/hm-guide23>

Kid-initiated beautification projects and other arts-service learning

Teen works to clean and beautify his neighborhood

<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2012/04/16/east-side-pride.html>

Starting Art Projects Yourself

<https://freshartists.org/for-kids-parents>

Music described in the book

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8kxCB8GMt0> Classic Salsa

<https://youtu.be/ccATWl9-9MU?list=PL9441D1E4E8B809AF> Classic Merengue

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAEryfjeUB4> Kids dancing cha cha cha

Learning Experiences:

Learning Experience Design #1: Read Aloud, Image Analysis, Beautify “Own” Space

The purpose of this lesson is for students to look closely to analyze images and to develop a picture to beautify their own space.

Consider the title and cover. Ask – What is beauty? What makes something beautiful?

Using Visual Thinking Strategies, describe and discuss the endpapers. Record thinking using chart paper to compare beginning end pages (gray) to last end pages (color).

- ✱ What's going on in this picture?
- ✱ What do you see that makes you say that?
- ✱ What else can you find?

Read the story through, pausing so students can see the pictures. Read for enjoyment.

Look back at the page that begins, “in the heart of a gray city...”. Using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper.

- ✱ What's going on in this picture?
- ✱ What do you see that makes you say that?
- ✱ What else can you find?

Look specifically at the characters:

- ✱ How do you relate to the character or illustration?
- ✱ Make your body look like the character's body. How do you feel? Look at others in your class. How do you think they might feel?

Look back at the page that begins, “teachers and papas jumped in.” Using VTS questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper.

- ✱ What's going on in this picture?
- ✱ What do you see that makes you say that?
- ✱ What else can you find?

Look specifically at the characters:

- ✱ How do you relate to the character or illustration?
- ✱ Make your body look like the character's body. How do you feel? How do others look?

Think about how people felt when their neighborhood was gray, and how they felt when their neighborhood had color. Why do you think Mira is making her neighborhood beautiful? Write a sticky note as Mira, starting with “I want...” Can you describe what Mira may have been feeling that encouraged her to make art? What feelings do you have that inspire you to make art?

Mira started the process by beautifying her own space – let's start here, with her motivation. Keeping your sticky note at hand, we are going to draw a colorful picture for ourselves to beautify our own space. Use Mira's motivation sticky note to guide your thinking and drawing. While creating, consider where you might put your drawing.

Students use regular pencils, colored pencils, and sketch paper to draft, draw, and color a vivid image.

Students share out their Mira motivation sticky note and picture with their table/small groups and discuss:

- ✱ Where will I put this? Why should that place be more beautiful?
- ✱ What would Mira say?

References for Learning Experience #1:

Yenawine, P. (2013). *Visual thinking strategies: Using art to deepen learning across school disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Roche, M. (2014). *Developing children's critical thinking through picture books: A guide for primary and early years students and teachers*. London, UK: Taylor and Francis Ltd.

Lambert, M. (2015). *Reading picture books to/with children: How to shake up story time and get kids talking about what they see*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Learning Experience Design #2: Image Analysis, Figurative Language, Beautify "Our" Space

The purpose of the activity is to inspire change/beautification in the world around us by using words and pictures that describe beauty.

Distribute prepared sentence strips containing the following text excerpts:

loudest color; sparkling eyes; glowing sun; laughter like a rainbow; wall lit up like sunshine; art followed like the string of a kite; his paintbrush was like a magic wand

Teacher rereads story, having students hold up each sentence strip as it is read aloud. Students will verbally answer: What is being described? How is it described?

Example:

Teacher reads: The lady with the sparkling eyes.

Students holds up "sparkling eyes" sentence strip.

Teacher: What is being described?

Student: The author is describing her eyes.

Teacher: How are the eyes described?

Students: She says the eyes are sparkling. That might mean shiny.

Student can dramatize with voice and actions what the description means.

Example:

Student puts hands up and moves fingers while speaking in high voice, "Sparkling!"

As sentence strips are used, they can be compiled on chart paper.

Form a "discussion donut" (see facilitation example video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoMFPsmAkFM> not for content but for process).

Students on the inside circle are holding picture cards of children's book characters. The outside circle is given directions to describe the card using comparative figurative language (simile, metaphor, etc). After the first child goes, the inside circle hands the cards to the outside circle. All children step one partner to their left. The outside circle holds a card for the inside circle and inside students describe the character they see using figurative language. This is repeated.

Make something beautiful.

Teacher says: Today, we're going to describe something beautiful using words and pictures (prose way) using similes/describing words; share – picture w/poem or chalk poem.

(Visualizing activity): Close your eyes and think of something beautiful – what does it look like (pause) smell like (pause) feel like (pause) sound like (pause) taste like (pause)?

Pick up your chalk and use words and or pictures on this black paper to describe this beautiful thing.

Consider elements of poetry and prose (if any previously taught). This is the bulk of the work of the day, so take time for children to revisit, add, and comment on their work. See below for ways to give feedback on artwork:

Feedback process on artwork: <http://www.lizlerman.com/crpLL.html>

Feedback for drama and specific examples of phrasing to work from:

<https://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/educators/how-to/tipsheets/what-do-i-say>

Praising phrases for process instead of product:

<http://articles.extension.org/pages/25728/praise-effort-instead-of-product-when-discussing-childrens-art>

Students share out their pictures with their table/small groups and discuss:

Where will I put this? Why should that place be more beautiful? Consider places like school hallways, post office, grocery store, home/ in windows facing in or out, etc.

At home, conduct interviews with at least three people to determine what the collective community would like to see beautified and to harness some new ideas. Design the interview questions ahead of time or with the children. Bring the completed interviews back to school for next learning experience.

Learning Experience Design #3: Read Additional Notes, Discover Community Connections, Beautify “Our” Space

The purpose of the activity is to discover how public art is used in the community.

Reflect on the book, why does Mira do this? What is Mira's motivation? Discuss the meaning of her name, “Mira” means “look” in Spanish.

Look back at the first vertical page that begins, “Then, just like that...” Using VTS questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper:

- ✱ What's going on in this picture?
- ✱ What do you see that makes you say that?
- ✱ What else can you find?

Look specifically at:

✱ Who is in this illustration? Why?

Look back at the second vertical page that begins, “Wherever Mira and the man went...” Using VTS questions, analyze this page and record on chart paper:

- ✱ What’s going on in this picture?
- ✱ What do you see that makes you say that?
- ✱ What else can you find?

Look specifically at the characters:

- ✱ Who is pictured? Who is biggest? Why might that be?

Discuss: Who is making the change in this neighborhood? How are they doing it? Do all children need grownups to help them make change or can children make change on their own?

Read “a note from the author” about the *Maybe Something Beautiful* /Urban Art Trail campaign. Discuss how murals are usually found in public places and how they generally tell a story. <http://opticosdesign.com/the-power-of-public-art-murals/>, a reference website demonstrating purpose and placement of public art.

Invite local artist/graffiti specialist/etc. In Springfield, MA, this is someone from the Springfield Central Cultural District office to showcase the recent installation of utility box paintings by local artists and children.

<http://springfieldculture.org/utility-box-murals/>

In your community, think of someone who works locally on public art.

With guest speaker, have students ask questions about public art (could be developed with students ahead of time). Examples: How does public art change the neighborhood? How do symbols represent? How do public artists work together to create or change a community? What are the steps to create public art?

Collectively analyze group data from interviews – what does the larger community determine most important to be beautified? What are the collective ideas for art or beautification?

With guest, begin to sketch or draft a design for a mural or public art piece. Use urban art trail and other websites as inspiration. Relating back to the text, play music that the children know while students work – see references. Potential to colorize with any medium available.

Students tape up pictures and one sentence summaries of their work. Hold a gallery walk for the class, other classes, staff, or parents to view ideas.

Summative Learning Experience: A Mural-Making Block Party

The purpose of the activity is to bring people together to beautify the community with a mural.

With students, work to engage community members including: police/fire/rescue, Urban Arts Council, Springfield Central Cultural District, Mass Arts Council, families, local businesses, other schools, etc. to participate actively or passively in a block party at the school. Students will work to become the experts on this.

With art teacher and/or guest art speaker, design and decorate mural for use in beautification of area. Mural could be semi/permanent paint on wall OR also consider non-permanent large canvas or wood that could be moved throughout the area.

Live music, representative of the community (drumming, salsa, and merengue are examples from the book) could be available throughout via DJ or live band. Consider showcasing dance or live art, including graffiti or spoken word performances by students, families, or community members.

Standards:

3.RL.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

3.RL.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

3.RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from non-literal language.

3.RL.7 Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

3.SL.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

3.SL.6 Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification. (See grade 3 Language standards 1 and 3 on pages 36–37 for specific expectations.)

3.W.4 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

3.W.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grade 3.)

MA.3RL.8a Identify elements of fiction (e.g., characters, setting, plot, problem, solution) and elements of poetry (e.g., rhyme, rhythm, figurative language, alliteration, and onomatopoeia).

Next Steps for Your Learning:

Consider a comparative study of Diego Rivera murals

<https://www.crayola.com/lesson-plans/the-murals-of-diego-rivera-lesson-plan/>

Consider looking at the purpose and usage of urban mural arts

<http://www.muralarts.org/>

Free field trip to Smith Art Museum for K-12 schools, with mural presentation

<http://www.smith.edu/artmuseum/Education/School-Adult-Group-Visits/K-12-Schools-Teachers>

Compare *Maybe Something Beautiful* with *The Big Orange Splot* by D.M. Pinkwater. (1977, 15th ed.).

Chicago: Hastings House.

Available online: <https://www.amazon.com/Big-Orange-Splot-Manus-Pinkwater/dp/0590445103>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzVTJwpUrHM>

Compare *Maybe Something Beautiful* with *My Painted House, My Friendly Chicken, and Me* by M. Angelou. (1994). New York: C. Potter.

Available online: <https://www.amazon.com/My-Painted-House-Friendly-Chicken/dp/0375825673>