

MOSAIC MESSAGES

Recommended for grades 3-6 (can be adapted for younger and older children).



From old coffee mugs to bicycle wheels, Isaiah Zagar has made his artwork almost entirely from found and recycled objects. This lesson uses paper mosaic techniques to encourage students to think critically about the environment and their impact on their community.

Learning Objectives

- Explore the environmental impact of trash through research
- Create works of art that promote environmental awareness
- Experiment with discarded materials to create works of art

Materials

- One piece of cardboard or cardstock per student
- Scissors
- Glue
- Variety of recycled colored paper

Discussion Questions

- How did the citizens of Philadelphia help save Philadelphia's Magic Gardens?
- What might Philadelphia's Magic Gardens look like today if people had not organized to save it? What might be in its place?
- How does a group of people working together have a different impact than an individual working on their own? What are the advantages of each?



- Some of the main recycled elements Zagar uses are bike wheels, bottles, and broken ceramic dishes. How does using trash to make art change the way people think about trash?
- What other types of trash could you use to make art?

Key Vocabulary

Reduce: to lower the amount of waste produced by individuals or industry

Reuse: to use an item more than once, either for its original purpose, or new purpose

Recycle: to process old materials into new products to prevent waste

Found Object: a material used in a work of art that has not been designed for artistic purposes

Activity

1. Optional: Research or learn about trash and recycling and ways to reduce our own impact.
2. Collect found paper materials (cereal boxes, magazines, old math tests, wrapping paper, junk mail, etc.).
3. Cut different colors of paper into small pieces. The size of the final project should determine the size of the paper pieces. It will be helpful if the paper is sorted by color.
4. Brainstorm environmental slogans and images to go along with the slogans.
5. Use pencils to write your message and sketch the outline of your image onto a piece of heavy paper or cardboard (the sides of cereal boxes work great for this).
6. Mosaic your sign by gluing the pieces of paper along the lines, and filling in the shape of design.

Adaptations

- Younger children can work in groups instead of individually. Each group can make a "Save the Environment" banner. Children still learning to write can trace an adult's lettering with mosaic pieces, and draw the design with crayon or marker on the banner. Rather than cutting paper shape, children can rip paper into pieces.
- Older children should be challenged to think critically about environmental issues and why they exist. Children can be assigned a particular group of people (government officials, youth, corporate executives, etc.) to whom they can target their message.

PA Academic Standards

Environment & Ecology

Environmental Health 4.3 A

Environmental Health 4.3 B

Humans and the Environment 4.8 C

Arts & Humanities

Production, Performance, and Exhibition of Dance, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts 9.1.E

Historical and Cultural Context 9.2 A

Resources:

<https://www.phillymagicgardens.org/about-us/>

<https://www.phillymagicgardens.org/about-us/virtual-tour/>

Further instruction for paper mosaics: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vthXgusrho&t=1s>