

Push and Pull: Ideas of Migration in the Beehive State

Symbols of People and Places: Flags

Kasper Sonne's *Untitled (Flag) No. 8* and *Untitled (Flag) No. 9*

Summary:

Students will explore the use of symbolism in flags as visual representations of cultures or places before creating an illustration of their own flag.

Curriculum Ties:

K-2 Integrated Core- Standard 1, Objectives 2, 3
Fine Arts- Visual Arts- Grades 3-6- Standards 1-4
Fine Arts- Visual Arts- Foundations I and II- Standards 1-4
Social Studies- Grades 1, 2- Standards 1, 3
Social Studies- Grade 3- Standards 1-3
Social Studies- Grade 4- Standards 2, 3
Social Studies- Grade 5, 6- Standards 3, 4
Social Studies- Grade 7- Standards 1-6
Social Studies- Grade 8- Standards 1-10
Social Studies- Utah Studies- Standards 1-6

Time Frame:

45-60 minutes

Materials:

- Construction Paper
- Pencils, markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Optional: additional art materials as desired

Resources:

Website: Kasper Sonne
www.kaspersonne.com

Kasper Sonne is a Danish artist whose work includes video, installation, sculpture and painting and often blurs the lines between these mediums. Sonne asks viewers to find meaning in points of conflict between opposites, exploring such dichotomies as control and chance, perfection and imperfection, and creation and destruction. His works *Untitled (Flag) No. 8* and *Untitled (Flag) No. 9* are part of a greater series of flag paintings constructed by hand-dyeing commercial carpeting. These flags allude to the “individual and cultural references” (source: artsy.net/artist/kasper-sonne) that influence the way we understand the world around us, from the customs and symbols adopted by our government that define who we are as a nation to the subliminal association of ideas and expectations with people and places that are born from each individual’s personal experiences.

Website: World Atlas
www.worldatlas.com/webimage/flags/flags.htm

Website: Historical Flags of Our Ancestors
www.loeser.us/flags

Background For Teachers:

Students should understand the following vocabulary for this activity:

Symbol- A symbol is a thing that stands in for something else, often an image or shape that represents an idea or value. For example: a red octagon symbolizes “stop” even without the word written inside it. Letters are symbols that stand for individual sounds; the word “cow” is a symbol we use to signify the idea of a real cow.

Culture- A culture is made up of the beliefs, customs, and other ways of living of a group of people and is passed down from one generation to another.

OPTIONAL: Vexillology- Vexillology is the scientific study of the history, symbolism and usage of flags. The word comes from the Latin word for flag (*vexillum*).

Painting- A painting is typically a 2-dimensional surface covered in paint and often hung on a wall.

Sculpture- A sculpture is a 3-dimensional artwork, whether made of metal, wood, clay or found materials.

Color- Color is the element of art that is produced when light, striking an object, is reflected back to the eye.

There are three (3) properties to color. First is hue, which simply means the name we give to a color (red, yellow, blue, etc.).

The second property is intensity, which refers to the strength and vividness of the color. For example, we may describe the color blue as "royal" (bright, rich, vibrant) or "dull" (grayed).

The third and final property of color is its value, meaning its lightness or darkness. The terms shade and tint are in reference to value changes in colors. (Source: Wikipedia)

Shape- Shape pertains to the use of areas in two-dimensional space that can be defined by edges, setting one flat specific space apart from another. Shapes can be geometric (e.g.: square, circle, hexagon, etc.) or organic (such as the shape of a puddle, blob, leaf, boomerang, etc.). (Source: Wikipedia)

Emphasis- Emphasis is the area of the artwork that holds the most interest, or where your eye is drawn first.

Composition- Composition is the placement or arrangement of visual elements or ingredients in a work of art, as distinct from the subject of a work. It can also be thought of as the organization of the elements of art according to the principles of art. (Source: Wikipedia)

Elements of Art- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elements_of_art
Shape, form, color, line, value, space, texture

Principles of Art- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principles_of_art
Movement/rhythm, unity/harmony, variety, balance, proportion/scale, pattern, emphasis

Intended Learning Outcomes:

Understand what a symbol is.

Understand how symbols are used to represent people and places.

Understand similarities and differences between people.

Connect understanding of flags and symbolism to state and national history, geography and culture.

Be able to use color and shape to design a flag that represents you as an individual.

Be able to verbalize the symbolism in your flag to others.

Instructional Procedures:

Use images of a variety of flags as visual aids as you lead a discussion about the meaning of flags around the world. Discuss the use of different colors and symbols to represent different cultural values or political histories. Include a conversation about the flags of your school (if applicable), the State of Utah, the United States and other flags related to current areas of study in class. Conclude by examining images of Kasper Sonne's flag artworks and discussing the similarities and differences between these flags and real world flags.

Common meanings of colors in country flags:

Black: determination, ethnic heritage, or defeating one's enemies
Blue: freedom, vigilance, perseverance, justice, prosperity, peace, or patriotism
Green: the Earth, agriculture, fertility, or the Muslim religion
Yellow: the sun, wealth, or justice
White: peace, purity, mountain snow, or innocence
Red: courage, revolution, hardiness, blood, or valor

Some combinations of certain colors have additional meaning; for example, the colors red, white and blue together can represent revolution or freedom (such as in the flags of France or Cuba) or identify a country's people as having a Slavic background (such as in the flags of Poland, Russia or Bulgaria).

(Source: enchantedslearning.com)

Utah's State Flag:

Beehive: the state emblem, representing hard work and cooperation
Sego Lily: the state flower, representing peace
State Motto: "Industry," relating to the beehive, representing hard work and progress
Eagle: the national bird, standing for protection in peace and war
National Flag: support of the United States
Dates: 1847 is the year Brigham Young led a group of people to the Salt Lake Valley to reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. 1896 is the year Utah gained admission to the United States.

(Source: 50states.com)

The United States Flag:

Stripes: 13 stripes alternating red (top and bottom) and white, representing the 13 colonies that declared independence from Great Britain.
Stars: 50 white, 5-pointed stars on a blue background representing the 50 states.
There are various interpretations of the colors of the flag as well as additional interpretations of the stars and stripes. See swampland.time.com/2013/07/04/why-the-u-s-flag-is-red-white-and-blue/.

Questions to be asked during the discussion:

What shapes and colors do you see?
Do you recognize any images of things from real life?
Is there writing on the flag?
Do the colors on the flag take up about the same amount of space, or does one color seem the most important?
Do each of the shapes on the flag take up about the same amount of space, or does one shape seem the most important?

What might the colors or images on a flag say about the place it represents?
What does Utah's flag say about Utah?
Are all flags rectangular?
How do flags from different time periods compare to those that came before or after?
(American flag during the American Revolution, the confederate flag during the Civil War, Nazi flag, flag of the Soviet Union, etc.)
Where and when were the first flags used?
What was the role of the flag in European exploration and colonization?
How do symbols help unite or divide groups of people?
Are flags ever used for non-political purposes? What about a pirate flag, the flag of your favorite sports team, or the flags at an amusement park?

Questions to be asked while viewing *Untitled (Flag) No. 8* and *Untitled (Flag) No. 9*:

What colors do you see? How do these colors make you feel?
Are the colors of each flag similar to or different from the other flag?
If you had to make up a story about two different places these flags represented, what would you say?
Did we look at any real world country flags that had stripes like these flags?
Why do you think these flags are longer up-and-down than side-to-side?
What material does it look like these flags are made out of? Why might the artist use carpet instead of fabric?

Students should use the class discussion as inspiration for designing their own flag. Have students use blank paper to brainstorm ideas through sketching or writing. They should choose symbols or shapes that represent things that are important in their life (this could be hobbies, books, movies, sports, family, friends, where they live and more) and be thoughtful about their color choices. Their flag can be simple or have many different symbols and colors on it. When they have a good starting idea for the layout of their design, students can use construction paper, scissors, glue and colored pencils, markers or crayons to create their flag. When completed, each student should share the meaning of the symbols and colors of their flag with the class or in small groups.

Questions to be asked during the art-making process:

What shape is the flag itself?
What are your favorite activities?
Who are the most important people in your life?
Where are your favorite places?
Instead of drawing a person or a thing, what is a shape or color that could stand in its place? (For example, if your mom loves to garden and her favorite color is purple, you could cut out a purple leaf for your flag to represent your mom.)
What is the most important symbol on your flag?
Why did you use the colors that you did?
Why are your shapes the size that they are?
Why are your shapes placed on your flag the way that they are?

If you could make your flag out of any material, what unusual material would you choose? (Marshmallows? Shoelaces?) Why? You can cut or color your paper to look like this material.

Extensions:

For older students, include an individual research component prior to designing their flag in which they use research skills to gain in-depth understanding about a country's flag, a state emblem or a flag from world history and then share their knowledge with a partner.

Provide students with a broader range of materials to work with to create their flag, including found materials. Discuss the potential for the material an artwork is made out of to convey meaning, and have students choose one material from which to construct a sculptural flag (they can search out their own materials, too). Have students explain why they chose the material they did and how their artwork is different or not different based on this decision.

Example Images:



Untitled (Flag) No. 8

2013

Commercial carpet, industrial paint, heavy duty glue and aluminum

208.3 x 125 cm



Untitled (Flag) No. 9

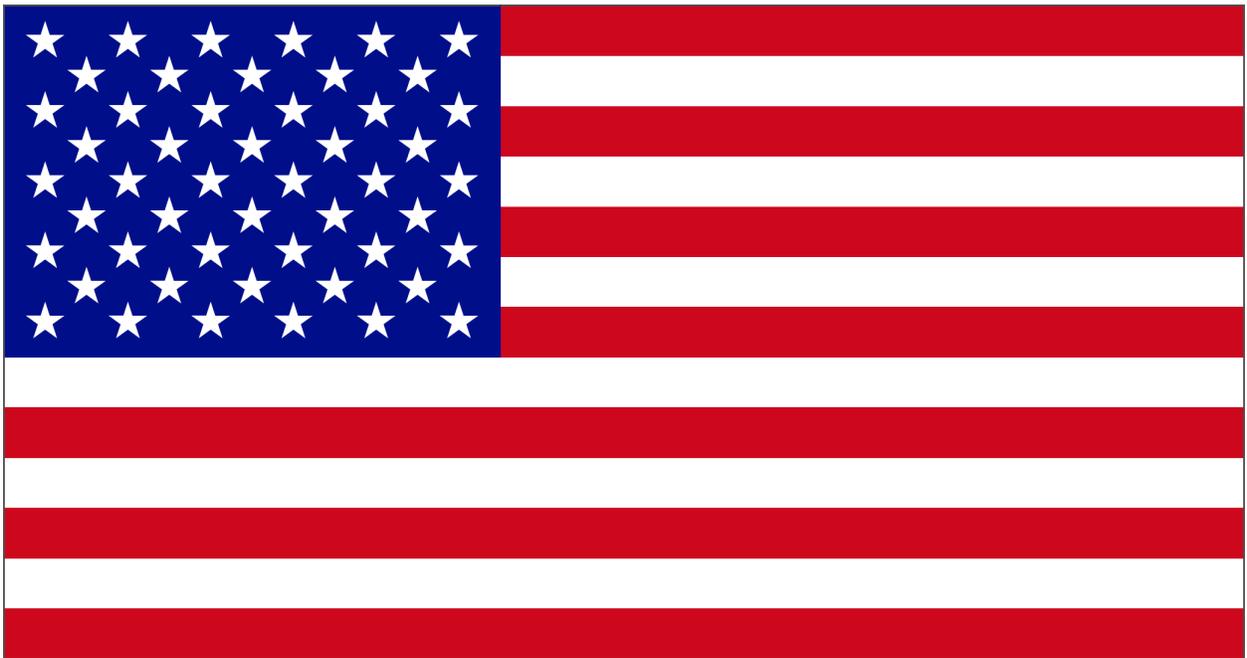
2013

Commercial carpet, industrial paint, heavy duty glue and aluminum

208.3 x 125 cm



Utah State Flag



United States of America National Flag