



No Kiln, No Problem!

Jennie Roles-Walter

As an art educator who has taught K–12 and college level art, I have learned that art teachers often have to improvise due to a multitude of contributing factors, including student population, financial resources, space, proper equipment, and time schedules.

While preparing my art curriculum for the year with a tight budget and no kiln for grades four through nine, I found myself struggling with ideas for how to incorporate three-dimensional

projects, but I was inspired by a project I had recently completed with my sixth graders where we collaged discarded newspapers onto donated poster board as a base for painted realistic self-portraits.

I knew I wanted to further explore the use of recycled materials in art, and while sitting in the school cafeteria one day, I looked at the salad bar items displayed there that had come from cans, and had an epiphany. I quickly approached the cafeteria

supervisor and asked if she could begin saving the tin cans for me instead of throwing them away. For two weeks she saved all the large tin cans she had and ran them through the dishwasher for me.

Introducing Folk Art

I introduced folk art to my students with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, focusing on Grandma Moses, Appalachian artists who made ceramic face jugs, and the self-taught



artist Fred Babb. We discussed the difference between classically trained artists and self-taught artists, and fine art versus craft.

Collaging Cans

Next, I distributed the tin cans. Each table was already equipped with glue, paintbrushes, markers, and various printed papers with diverse designs and colors. I instructed students to use the markers to write their names on the bottom of the cans and to select two contrasting sheets of paper. I showed students how to tear, overlap, and collage one sheet of paper to the front of their cans. They placed the remaining sheet of paper inside of the tin and placed the cans in a designated area to dry.

Folk Art Face Jugs

The next week, students drew on the contrasting paper to create features for their folk art jugs. I reminded them to think independently and to be imaginative. It was interesting to see how students utilized the existing designs on the printed paper before cutting and collaging the eyes and

mouth to their tin cans. I encouraged students to first draw the eyes and mouths, then outline them in black with markers, then cut them out and collage them to the cans, making sure to leave an adequate amount of space for the nose.

After students collaged the eyes and mouths, I demonstrated how to create a realistic or abstract polymer clay nose. Once their noses were complete, they placed them on a large cookie sheet, used a marker to draw a circle around their noses, and signed their names within those circles. I dropped the cooking sheets off at the cafeteria to have the noses baked every afternoon, picked them up the next morning, then I placed the noses in the appropriate student's can. I repeated this process all week.

The next week, students used paint or markers to detail their jug's hair, eyes, and mouth. I encouraged students to use paint sparingly, as too much would overpower their faces. They used acrylic paint to paint their noses, dried them with a hair dryer, and glued or taped them on.

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A Pyramid of Faces

Once the cans were thoroughly dried, I removed the tape and built a pyramid with them in the hallway. This was such a fun art assignment and the faculty, administration, students, and parents loved it! Every day, students and teachers alike were found in the hallway admiring the folk art faces and awaiting new additions.

Initially, I was very concerned that I did not have a kiln in my school system, but I found that the lack of a kiln made me and my students think far more creatively and independently. We had to problem-solve together to create, which I find is one of the most rewarding aspects of art education. 🌀

Jennie Roles-Walter is an artist and art educator who has exhibited and sold work all over the United States. jennieroleswalter@yahoo.com

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

WEB LINKS

www.doublewhammy.etsy.com
www.fcsboe.org/teachers/walterj/index.html