

Essential Question: What does art teach us about the cultures, societies, and people that create it?

Mosaic art is art that is created by arranging different-colored pieces of stone, glass, or other material in order to form designs or pictures.

Slide 2 In the early 7th or 8th centuries BC, pebbles were used to create designs in streets of Turkey. Some of these designs can still be seen to this day. (1,p1)

Slide 3 The Greeks found in about the 3rd century BC that creating pictures in mosaic was much easier if the tiles were first cut into small squares. These squares were called **tesserae**. With tesserae it became easier to use the tiles to draw pictures instead of simply creating designs. Many of the pictorial mosaics that were created depicted either scenes from religion and mythology, or scenes depicting the political rulers of the time. (1, p1)

Question: Why do you think that religion and politics were among the main subjects of the pictorial mosaics of the Greeks and Romans?

Slide 4 This mosaic was discovered on the floor of a home in Pompeii, Italy. (*Question: What is the background of the city of Pompeii?*) As you can see, there is a high level of detail in the mosaic, the artist is attempting to make the picture look three-dimensional, there are a wide variety of colors being used, and the picture is overall very well made (1, p2).

Slide 5: Though the *opus tesserae* technique of using small square tiles was popular, the Romans continued using large pieces of tile to create mosaic images. This technique of using larger pieces of tile to create pictures is known as *opus sectile*.

Slide 6: Roman tile makers discovered in about the early 1st century AD that if they mixed certain chemicals with glass while it was being formed, it resulted in a variety of different colors of glass. Mosaic tile factories were opened, and glass became one of the more widely used materials for creating mosaics, as seen in this picture at Herculaneum (1, p3)

Slides 7, 8: While mosaic art was highly popular in Rome, there were many other locations across the world where mosaic art was being used, as evidenced in these mosaic floors located in Spain and Jordan.

Slides 9, 10: Throughout the centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire, mosaic art continued to be used in both the palaces of the rulers, and in the cathedrals of the time. Art was often used as a means to communicate religious stories to the general public, many of whom were illiterate (3). In this slide the emperor Justinian is shown using “[fused] political and religious imagery” to show how his authority extends over the people and the religions. (4)

Question: How does the way this mosaic (slide 11) is drawn differ from the mosaics we have seen up until now?

Slide 11: As time progressed, the images in the mosaics, as well as in other forms of art, started to become far more symbolic, and much less representational. Instead of using natural colors and detailed backgrounds as the Romans used, the artists used more gold and metallic tiles in order to “avoid a

perfect rendition of realistic space, thereby maintaining the spirituality of the religious figures depicted.” (2, p39)

Slide 12: During the medieval period mosaic art continued to flourish in Islamic architecture as well, as can be seen in this picture of a mosque from the 13th century (4). While this mosaic is similar to those in Christian cathedrals of the time in that it is decorating a religious space, the way the design is created differs greatly, perhaps due to the belief in some tenets of Islam that depictions of people or animals should be forbidden (5). These “orderly, symmetrical arrangements” of pattern, often based on calligraphy, geometric shapes, or plant forms created “a sense of transcendent beauty” to the religious buildings (6).

Question: How does art help to preserve the history and culture of a people? Is it important for art to be preserved?

Slide 13: This mosaic is located in the Hagia Sophia in Turkey. This building highlights the tension that exists between art, religion, and politics. The church was originally built in the year 360 AD. It was “destroyed during riots” in 404 AD (7). The church was then rebuilt, destroyed, and then rebuilt again. The church was converted into a mosque after the city fell to Mehmed II in 1453. The mosaics (including this one) were covered in “whitewash” until 1934 when the Turkish government turned the building into a museum and allowed the mosaics to be restored (7).

Question: What do you think was regained by restoring this mosaic?

Slide 14: In April 2003, as the war between Iraq and America reached its fiercest moments, the Iraq National Museum was looted. Three to four hundred people entered, “smashing the doors” and took “anything they wanted”, which included over 15,000 objects (8, p10). Among the items missing were a gold harp from 3360 BC and a sculpture of a head from about the same time (9).

Question: Why do you think the looters entered the museum and stole so much? What long-term damage could be caused by their actions?

Slides 15-18: During the Renaissance, artists began studying the art of antiquity, and discovered that there were rich artistic traditions in Greece and Rome that were no longer being practiced. They also began studying anatomy, drapery, and linear perspective. As a result, the art of the European Renaissance became far more three-dimensional and realistic than the art of just a few centuries previous. In fact, as you can see from the following slide, this is not a picture of a painting. It is actually a picture of a mosaic made up of many colors of tile arranged to “reproduce the styles” of the contemporary painters (1, p9). This style of mosaic-looking-like-painting continued in America, as seen in the following slides from the Library of Congress.

Slides 19-27: In the late 19th century, an architect and artist named Antonio Gaudí emerged in Spain. He often used the opus sectile method of mosaic, using large segments of tile to create his images and designs. His style was unique, in that he was not trying to make his tile work look like paintings. On the contrary, he allowed the tile to be itself, sometimes even using printed tiles and leaving the designs of the printed tiles showing in the completed works.

Slides 28-32: At this moment, we have an artist named Roger Whiting working with a few groups of students at this school to create large-scale works of mosaic art to become a permanent part of the school. These are a few examples of other mosaic works that he has done with youth.

Essential Question (repeat): What does art teach us about the cultures, societies, and people that create it?

Conclusion Question: In what way can the art you make contribute to the understanding of your own culture, both in the present, and also in the future?

POSSIBLE INTERCURRICULAR TIE-INS TO THE PROJECT / DISCUSSION:

MATH - Have the students design a symmetrical pattern and repeat it as a mosaic.

SOCIAL STUDIES / GEOGRAPHY - As the presentation is being presented, have the students identify on a map where each of the locations being discussed are located.

1. Liz James "mosaic" The Oxford Companion to Western Art. Ed. Hugh Brigstocke. Oxford University Press, 2011. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Salt Lake County Library System. 5 September 2011. <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t118.e1810>>
2. Ancient Mosaics of the Mediterranean. Raezer, David and Jennifer. 2011. Approach Guides, New York, NY. Nook for Mac eBook edition.
3. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Middle_Ages
4. "Byzantine Art as Propaganda: Justinian and Theodora at Ravenna" Hunt, Patrick. 2006. Stanford University online. http://traumwerk.stanford.edu/philolog/2006/01/byzantine_art_as_propaganda_ju.html Accessed 16 September 2011.
5. © 2007 Pattern in Islamic Art <http://www.patterninislamicart.com/background-notes/the-religious-dimension/>
6. © 2007 Pattern in Islamic Art <http://www.patterninislamicart.com/background-notes/the-evolution-of-style/>
7. Wegner, Emma. "Hagia Sophia, 532–37". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/haso/hd_haso.htm (October 2004) Accessed online 16 September 2011.
8. "The Looting of the Iraq National Museum." George, Donny. May 2008. CAA News. College Art Association. Accessed online: <http://www.savingantiquities.org/pdf/caa-news-dg.pdf> Accessed 16 September 2011.
9. "A NATION AT WAR: LOOTING; Pillagers Strip Iraqi Museum Of Its Treasure" Burns, John F. 13 April 2003. New York Times. New York, NY. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/13/world/a-nation-at-war-looting-pillagers-strip-iraqi-museum-of-its-treasure.html> Accessed online 16 September 2011.

Lesson Plan - Paper Mosaic (approx 2-3 class periods)

Objective

Students will:

- **View and analyze examples of mosaics**
- **Discuss the societies and cultures that create mosaics**
- **Discuss what defines the students' own society and culture**
- **Design and create a mosaic out of paper relating to the students' culture**
- **Use value and color contrast to separate an object from the background**

Materials and Tools Needed

Paper, pencils, crayons / Scissors / Colored paper, aluminum foil (optional)

Activity

Day 1: Present the background about mosaics (above), showing the students pictures of examples and using the discussion points to talk with the students about the examples. Once the discussion is finished, return to the essential question and see if their opinions have changed.

Day 2: Explain to the students that they will be creating a mosaic out of paper to explain something about the culture and/or society in which they live. Ask the students what types of categories define their culture and/or society (examples - food, art, film, television, sports, holidays, religion, political structures, etc). List these categories on the board.

The teacher will decide a topic for his mosaic and will do a demonstration sketch according to that topic. Emphasis will be made on the fact that mosaic art usually simplifies the way a subject is depicted in order to make it possible to depict that subject with larger tiles. The teacher will then give the students five minutes to create a simple sketch of an object related to their culture. Explain to the students that in their sketch they should have either a background for their subject, or simply do a design surrounding their subject as a background. Give examples of possible background patterns such as stripes, shapes, swirls, wavy lines, etc.

Once the students have their sketches, demonstrate how to cut colored papers and/or foil into squares, and then use a glue stick to assemble the colored squares onto paper. Explain to the students that their object will stand out best if they use a value contrast (light object against a dark background or vice versa), or if they use a color contrast (complementary colors next to each other - see a color wheel for examples).

Day 3: Allow the students sufficient time to finish their paper mosaics.

Sample Assessment

Excellent 90 to 100	Very Good 80 to 89	Good 70-79	Acceptable 60-69	Unacceptable 59-
Shows exceptional effort. Object identifiable with high level of detail. Lots of detail in background.	Variety of colors. Object is clearly identifiable. Good contrast with background. Many pieces used	Many colors and pieces used. Object not easy to identify. Object blends in with background a bit.	Many colors and pieces used. Object hard to identify. Object blends in with background.	Object cannot be identified. Few colors or pieces used. Shows minimal effort..