

MOSAIC MESSAGES



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.

The activities are designed for grades 3-6, but include suggestions for teachers to adapt the lessons for younger and older students.

Learning Objectives

- Students will explore the environmental impact of trash through research
- Students will create works of art that promote environmental awareness
- Students will 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?

- List all of the recycled materials you saw in Philadelphia’s Magic Gardens. 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: Students can research or learn about trash and recycling and ways to reduce their own impact.
2. Students will make paper mosaic works from trash and recycling.
3. Ask students to collect found paper materials (cereal boxes, magazines, old math tests, wrapping paper, junk mail, etc.) and bring them into class.
4. Students 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.
5. Students will use mosaic art to create environmental slogans
6. Have each student design a simple environmental slogan along with an image. Once they have a design, they can use pencils to copy their message and their image onto a piece of heavy paper or cardboard (the sides of cereal boxes work great for this).
7. Students can mosaic their sign by gluing the paper along their lines, and filling in the shape of design.
8. Display sign in windows, hallways, or another public place so students demonstrate their message to others.

Adaptations

- Younger students can work in groups instead of individually. Each group can make a “Save the Environment” banner. Students still learning to write can trace the teachers’s lettering with mosaic pieces, and draw the design with crayon or marker on the banner. Rather than cutting paper shape, students can rip paper into pieces.
- Older students should be challenged to think critically about environmental issues and why they exist. Students 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