

CONTEXT Since piloting our Culture, Community, and the Classroom (CCC) series in 2018, we have engaged traditional artists from diverse communities and connected them with public school teachers and museum educators in learning residencies. This lesson was developed as part of the Local Learning CCC initiative in Binghamton, NY, that began with a two-day workshop in July 2021. The workshop offered training for K-12 educators and folk artists to introduce the interview process, explore teaching and learning through a cultural lens, and provide curricular resources to help students identify their personal traditions. We funded a number of folk artists for two classroom visits in the fall. The project culminated with a showcase at Binghamton’s Roberson Museum in November 2021.

This lesson plan was shared by a teacher who participated in the CCC program. It can be adapted for use with a local artist in another region. Or [Contact Us](#) to learn how to invite the named artist in this lesson to your learning space.

WHAT WE LOVE

Students’ buy-in was fierce. By studying mosaics across time, students could put a local artist into the context of art history. The lesson also heightened awareness of mosaic art in their community. After a two-part residency (demonstration, interview), the artist and teacher devised an extension to create a large class mosaic. Students made individual leaves for *The Collaboration Tree* to reflect their own sense of cultural identity. They focused intently and worked hard together and with the artist. During the fall CCC Showcase at the Roberson Museum, students took the lead in describing the residency and their collaborative artwork. Despite the pandemic, students were able to work with the artist in person.

TITLE Culture, Community and the Classroom: Introduction to Mosaic and the Collaboration Tree Project

AUTHOR AND TEACHER Christine Crossgrove

ARTIST COLLABORATOR Luigi Gobbo, Italian Mosaic Artist

SUBJECT AND GRADE LEVEL High School Visual Art

LENGTH 2 class periods for Residency, with 5 more weeks of multiple interactions for Mosaic Extension (October 4 - November 20, 2021)

HANDOUTS

History of Mosaics worksheet
Introduction to Mosaics worksheet
Mosaic Design worksheet
Mosaic Reflections worksheets, parts 1 and 2
Mosaic Opus worksheet

SUPPLIES

Mosaic books, PowerPoint, Google Slides, Google Classroom, Quizlet, camera/video recorder. If doing lesson extension: Glass tile, Wedi board, thin-set mortar, wheeled glass nippers, white grout, trowels, floats, safety glasses, vinyl gloves, dental tools, palette knives.

Find the complete lesson plan and handouts in the sidebar under “Downloads.”

STANDARDS ADDRESSED New York State Standards for the Fine Arts

HS Proficient VA:Cr3.1.HSI

a. Apply **relevant criteria** and the feedback of others to revise and refine works of art and design in progress.

HS Proficient VA:Cr2.1.HSI

a. **Generate** and develop **artistic work** in a self-directed manner.

HS Proficient VA:Cr1.2.HSI

a. Consider a range of **materials** and methods of **traditional and contemporary artistic practices** to plan works of art and design.

HS Proficient VA:Cn11.2.HSI

a. **Investigate** how skills used in developing artistic solutions can be applied to study in other disciplines, and explore how they are sought-after work force attributes in other fields.

HS Proficient VA:Pr5.1.HSI

a. **Analyze** and **evaluate** how decisions made in the preparation and presentation of artwork affect a viewer's perception of **meaning**.

HS Proficient VA:Re7.1.HSI

a. Recognize and **describe** personal **aesthetic** and empathetic responses to the natural world and **constructed environments**.

HS Proficient VA:Cn10.1.HSI

a. **Document** the process of developing ideas; from early stages to full elaboration.

HS Proficient VA:Cn11.1.HSI

a. **Investigate** ways that art and design from one **culture** or time period can influence artists and designers from a different **culture** or time period.

VOCABULARY

Important introductory vocabulary included mosaic, *tesserae*, *opus*, *andamento*, design cycle/process, immigrate, culture, community, contrast, analogous colors, complementary colors, craftsmanship, character, perseverance.

PURPOSE/CONNECTION

Teaching mosaic art processes and history provided students an authentic art experience under the guidance of a local master mosaic artist, Luigi Gobbo. Students experienced an ancient artform and learned that this is one of the longest lasting types of art. We discussed being connected to mosaic artists from all over the world and from almost every historical era. [History of Mosaics Worksheet and Powerpoint]

We considered mosaics that students see in their daily lives and others located in the Southern Tier. We introduced the possibility of creating more mosaic art in the future because of the depth of knowledge shared seven weeks of working side by side with an experienced master artist of Italian Mosaic. [Interview Slides] The experience also enriched students' connection to each other and their sense of purpose. Creating a beautiful work as a team with Luigi's (and my) guidance allowed them to realize that each of their contributions is important artistically and created a beautiful, meaningful outcome in *Our Collaboration Tree*. [Lesson Extension]

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit #1 (first hour)

Engagement Luigi's bio was read to our students and they developed questions for interviewing him when he arrived for the first class. We also looked at photos of his work via a Google Photos slideshow and listened to Luigi describe special details of creating mosaics and his story as an artist and immigrant from Italy to the U.S. Luigi also brought some of his smaller works to the classroom. We showed students these examples that they could see in person, and we also viewed photographs of his work in our community. Local connections to the artwork prove compelling to the students.

Model/Demonstration Luigi demonstrated the process of deciding on colors, patterns, and placement as well as how to cut tiles with the wheeled nippers. He then showed students how to adhere them to the Wedi board using thin-set mortar and eventually grout their designs.

Share/Closure Students asked Luigi questions about their designs and got feedback on how best to begin working with the tile to create their leaf design.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN—Visit #2 (second hour)

Engagement Students prepared questions to ask Luigi about his life and background. We read his Artist Statement, and students listened to his story of coming to the U.S. in 1965 and his experiences working with mosaics.

Interview Students prepared questions for the interview based on the questioning techniques taught during the July CCC Workshop. They took turns asking questions and took notes of his answers. These questions and notes were graded. Most students were shy at first, but Luigi made them feel comfortable and encouraged them to ask him whatever they would like to about his life and work.

Share/Closure/Assessment Students wrote two-part reflections about their experience working with the artist. One was completed two-thirds of the way through and another at the end. These will be sent to the artist. We gave a small gift to Luigi to express our appreciation.

Students thanked Luigi in person in our last class. We stood in a circle and each student shared at least one important thing they learned from Luigi. It was wonderful to hear how valuable the experience was. Six students also reflected at the CCC Showcase at the Roberson Museum November 20. It was an incredible and unforgettable experience for them and for me! We also made a thank-you poster that all students signed.



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Our class engaged in a 7-week mosaic activity, creating a final mosaic artwork *The Collaboration Tree*. This part of the artist residency required additional funding for supplies and a dedicated space with specialized tools for the mosaic work. The process created significant learning outcomes for students and reinforced the learning that happened through the residency activities above.

Independent Exploration [Lesson Extension] Students continued to ask Luigi questions as they worked side by side with him, building upon the interview process and the scaffolding established through this lesson. There were many teachable moments when he gave advice on mosaics and life in general. It was truly priceless. Students could practice what they learned from Luigi about the mosaic creation process in multiple class periods and the opportunity for independent hands-on learning was truly phenomenal! Students made decisions about pattern, color, and tile shapes and sizes. They also had to problem solve and revise designs to fit their leaf or the tiles they selected. See the final product in the photograph above.

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