

PMA CLASSROOM
BEST FOR
Middle School
High School

Ghetto Wall #2

by David Driskell



Ghetto Wall #2, 1970

David Driskell (United States, 1931–2020)

Oil, acrylic, and collage on linen, 60 x 50 inches

THEMES

- Civil Rights Movement and History
- Symbols and symbolism
- Identity and representation
- Community
- Unity and Diversity

CONTENT AREAS AND STANDARDS MET

VISUAL ARTS

A1. Artist's Purpose

Students research and explain how art and artists reflect and influence culture and periods of time.

B3. Making Meaning

Students create art works that communicate an individual point of view.

- a. Demonstrate skills in the use of media, tools, techniques, and processes.
- b. Demonstrate knowledge of visual art concepts.
- c. Communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and meanings.

D1. Aesthetics and Criticism

Students analyze and evaluate art forms.

- d. Research and explain how art and artists reflect and shape their time and culture.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Civics & Government

Students draw on concepts from civics and government to understand political systems, power, authority, governance, civic ideals and practices, and the role of citizens in the community, Maine, the United States, and the world

English/Language Arts: Writing

Process and Production

Composing for Audience and Purpose

3. Routinely produce a variety of clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, audience, and purpose.

SEL COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness: Identify and recognize emotions, linking thoughts and feelings, integrating personal and social identities

Social awareness: Perspective taking, empathy, respect for others

Relationship skills: Communication and active listening, social engagement

Responsible decision-making: Identifying social problems, reflecting

OBJECTIVE

(What will students do/experience/think about, etc? What is the overall goal of the lesson plan?):

Students will explore how our personal experiences influence how we see the world

Students will understand the role that public art plays in communicating community values, dreams, stories, and change

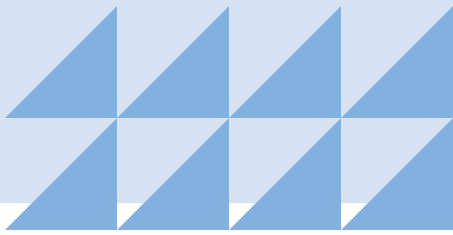
Students will compare Driskell's depiction of America in 1970 to America today, grappling with the similarities and differences

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

(What is the big question that this lesson plan seeks to explore or have students grapple with?):

How do we respond meaningfully and authentically to our historical moment?

What is the artist's role in creating social change?



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MATERIALS NEEDED

(A list of any materials that may be needed; Think about alternatives to materials (example: if people don't have a box, can they use a milk carton?):

- Paper to write on
- Writing Utensil
- Scissors (Community Murals Activity)
- Paper scraps – old magazines, colored paper, newspaper, etc. (Community Murals Activity)
- Glue or tape (Community Murals Activity)
- Markers (Community Murals Activity)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Look

We will start just by looking silently at this image. Take about a minute to really look – scan the whole image with your eyes and notice where your eyes are drawn.

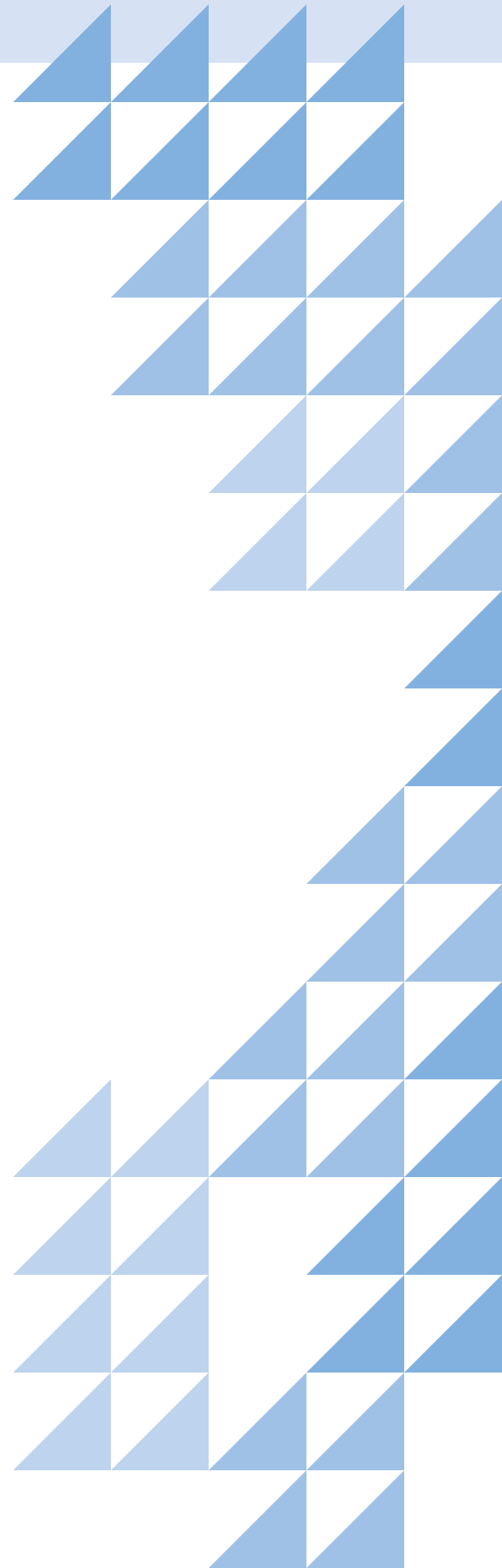
Respond

After you have had about a minute to just look and contemplate what you are seeing, think to yourself:

- What's going on in this image? What seems to be happening here?
- What details do I notice?
- What symbols do you recognize? Which ones are unfamiliar to you or ones that you are uncertain about?
- How would I describe the colors? The lines? The shapes?
- Is this work realistic or abstract (art that does not attempt to represent visual reality, but uses colors, shapes, forms, lines, etc. to achieve meaning)? What am I seeing that is making me answer that way?
- Why do you think the artist created such a layering of paint and material?
- Does this composition read as chaotic or orderly to you? Why?
- Where do you think this scene is taking place?

Respond to these questions.

Write your responses down, share them with someone in your house, or share with classmates and discuss.





Learn

Use this section to learn more about the artist, the process, and the subject.

David Driskell was an artist, educator, curator, and art historian and his work in each of these areas helped develop the field of African American art. His artwork often depicts nature, color, symbols, a mix of abstraction and realism, and his personal vision and memory. Driskell's artwork of the 1960s and 1970s reflected his personal and artistic contribution to the growing Civil Rights Movement, which was a struggle for social justice mainly during the 1950s and 1960s for Black Americans to gain equal rights. In *Ghetto Wall #2*, Driskell responded to what was happening around him: a movement in history that continues today.

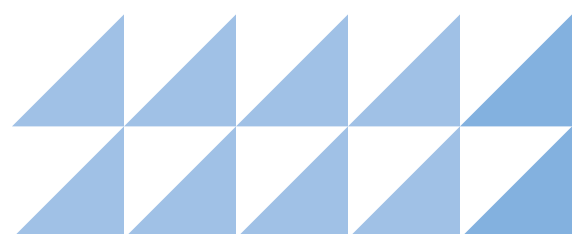
The composition of *Ghetto Wall #2* appears to be divided into three parts – the top, middle, and bottom sections. In the bottom section, Driskell painted realistic bricks thus creating the illusion of a brick wall. The top section with the black bar helps to frame the middle section, is reminiscent of a mural, like ones that might have been painted on city walls during the Civil Rights Movement. In the top section, we see the black paint has been scraped away to reveal the paint underneath and to spell out words and include more symbols. The whole composition appears to depict a mural that was applied directly to a brick wall.

In the middle section, we see a mix of bright colors and symbols – a star, an X, some lines that resemble the American flag, circles, a single figure, a heart in the upper right-hand corner, and more. These symbols and colors all have meaning that we can connect with the Civil Rights Movement or with themes that populate Driskell's artwork. According to Driskell, the X symbolizes the work of Civil Rights leader Malcolm X and his influence, as well as the influence of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

How do the other symbols relate to Civil Rights Movement?
What parallels can we make with the BLM Movement or other movements today?

“Symbolism – the use of the flag, the star, the lone figure, which of course says something about the social scene. The almost photographic rendering of the bricks, aspects of the city walled in, trying to show certain elements of our own encounter in the Civil Rights Movement as well as what was going on in America in general.

– David Driskell



“I call your attention to the fact that if you look very carefully... the word love appears as though it's an aspect of the way out. How do we get out of this?” – David Driskell

Act

Community Murals

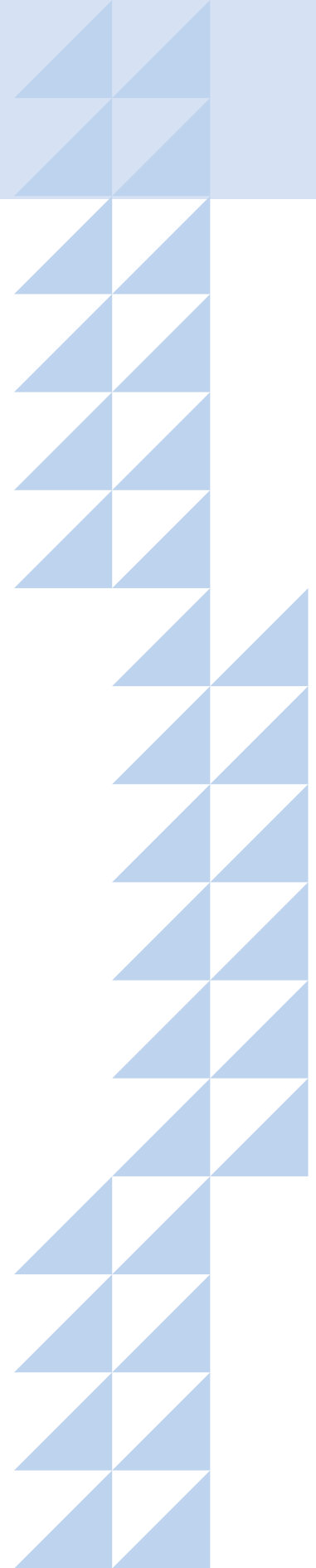
In *Ghetto Wall #2*, Driskell created a painting of a mural on a brick wall. Murals help communicate a community's values, hopes, dreams, and stories. They can be empowering and give voice to the community and help to visualize change.

You will utilize the process of collage to create a small-scale mural for a specific wall in your community on a piece of paper. Driskell often used collaging to create layers and to utilize multiple sources and influences in his artwork. Driskell said that *Ghetto Wall #2* was his attempt at depicting a personal experience with the Civil Rights Movement, and what was going on in a broader sense in America. This painting was created in 1970. What do you think Driskell might be saying about America at this time? How are the ideas depicted in this artwork relevant to America today?

Instructions:

1. Gather your materials
2. Think of a wall in your community. Who lives near or spends a lot of time around this wall? Who sees that wall? What type of message would you want to convey to people who see this wall? Create a collage that speaks to the message you want to get across. Think about our present moment – what movements or events come to mind that you could respond to? What moments in your personal history could you depict? What moments in your community's history could you visualize and commemorate? Think about how you will communicate your message visually. What symbols will you use? What colors?
3. Write down some words or phrases that help capture the hopes, dreams, stories, or values of the community there
4. Brainstorm some colors, symbols, and imagery that help you visually depict those ideas
5. Using your blank paper, glue, and collage materials, create a collage that visualizes the message for your community

OPTIONAL: Share your idea with someone who could help you create this mural on the wall that you chose. How would your artistic process differ?





Writing Activity

In the center section of the composition is a shadowy figure. We cannot tell who this person is, adding to the ambiguity of the overall meaning of this painting. Notice the way the figure is outlined in other colors such as white, yellow, brown, and red. Who or what might this figure represent?

Write a story about the figure's life – imagine you are this figure in the painting, what has happened in your life that has led you to this moment? What are you witnessing as this scene is taking place? Where are you in your life now? What are your hopes for the future?

Reflect and Share

Let's reflect on what we just did and the experience we just had engaging with this artwork

What was this process like for you? How did the information you learned change your perspective of the artwork?

Did you feel that you were able to accurately reflect your community's values in your mural? What are some ways you could make sure that you represented diverse voices and perspectives in the creation of your mural?

The last step in interacting with art is to share your experience with others.

Share your artwork or writing with the PMA! Or, share your artwork or writing with others in your home or class.

RESOURCES

LINK to (MECA) Anne's collage activity once that is posted?

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/abstract-art>

<https://www.dcmooregallery.com/exhibitions/david-driskell-resonance-paintings-1965-2002>

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/civil-rights-movement>

Can we share this video linked on this page? <https://www.portlandmuseum.org/eventscalendar/2019/8/22/friends-of-the-collection-with-david-driskell>

HOLD for OTHER DRISKELL resources? Catalogue from upcoming show?



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