

# Beyond Words: Creating Symbolic Sculptures

**Inquiry Question:**  
What do the symbols I choose say about my identity?

**Symbols are  
a visual  
language.**

**I can  
manipulate  
elements of art  
and principles  
of design to  
help express  
my ideas.**

**Examining the use of  
symbols in other  
artwork and cultures  
can help me to  
develop my own  
symbolic  
representation of my  
identity.**

**I can express my  
identity through  
symbolic images.**

Abstract: Students will use symbols to create a mixed media sculpture that represents their identities.



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**Grade 6**  
Arts Ed.

**Strand**  
Visual Art

**Outcomes**  
CP6.10, CP6.11,  
CP6.12, CH6.3,  
CR6.1, CR6.2

# I. Curriculum

## **Outcomes: Creative/Productive**

### **CP6.10 Create visual art works that express ideas about identity and how it is influenced.**

- Demonstrate self-awareness in decision making about own choices of media, techniques, and subject matter.
- Reflect, analyze, and make connections between the original topic or inquiry question (how can I represent my identity symbolically) and subsequent visual art explorations.
- Reflect on how images, elements of art, and principles of composition can be organized to convey meaning and express identity in visual art.

### **CP6.11 Investigate and use various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about identity.**

- Select various visual art forms (sculpture) to express ideas about identity.
- Investigate how visual artists and popular media manipulate the elements of art and principles of design to achieve intentions, and apply understanding to own work.
- Observe, interpret, and discuss the use of symbols to represent ideas.
- Use the internet to gain information about the use of symbolic imagery and apply to own work.
- Demonstrate how symbols can be used to convey meaning by creating a statement about identity.

### **CP6.12 Demonstrate increased skills and problem-solving abilities in a variety of visual art media.**

- Demonstrate skillful use of a range of appropriate tools, technology, materials, and techniques.

- Describe own critical and creative thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving processes.

### **Outcome: Critical/Responsive**

#### **CR6.1 Create personal responses to a variety of arts expressions.**

- Discuss interpretations of arts expressions and create own expressions in response to the original work.
- Describe how personal response and own arts expression connects to the original work.

#### **CR6.2 Investigate and identify ways that the arts can express ideas about identity.**

- Reflect on and discuss the intentions, problem-solving processes, and interpretations of own and others' arts expressions including how they relate to the concept of identity.
- Demonstrate awareness that artists are curious about their world and explore significant questions and concepts such as identity.

### **Outcome: Cultural/Historical**

#### **CH6.3 Investigate arts expressions from a range of cultures and countries, and analyze how cultural identity is reflected in the work.**

- Use the Internet, and other sources such as community resource people, to help identify, discuss, and analyze traditional and contemporary arts expressions from specific cultural groups.



## II. Overview

### Students will know:

- Artists express ideas in many ways
- How other artists and cultures have used symbol to express identity
- How symbols can be used to communicate personal meaning
- Reflection on critical and creative thinking process will influence the work
- How to use papier maché materials and sculpting techniques
- How to apply the elements of art into their work to meet intended effect
- How to apply the principles of design as they plan their sculpture.

### Students will do:

- Research, using the internet, how various artists and cultures use symbolic imagery
- Analyze various artworks and respond to them by discussing how the artists manipulated the elements of art and principles of design
- Brainstorm components of their identity (strengths, weaknesses, personality, likes, dislikes, values, beliefs, etc.)
- Create a symbolic papier maché sculpture that represents their identities.
- Use the materials and techniques appropriately
- Document and reflect on their process of creating a symbolic sculpture.

### Questions for Deeper Understanding

Do we all “read” symbols the same way?

Are symbols understood universally?

How many ways can we express the same idea?

How can we express ideas through colour, line, and shape?

What is identity? Does it change?



### III. Assessment Plan

<b>Assessment Evidence</b>	<b>Formative</b>	<b>Assessment Task</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anecdotal record - observation of prior knowledge</li><li>• Visual symbols representation</li><li>• Peer and self-assessment records</li><li>• Mind map</li><li>• Anecdotal notes</li><li>• Learning log</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group discussion about symbolism</li><li>• Research: visually represent understanding of how artists and cultures convey meaning through symbols (appendix, student sample)</li><li>• Co-construct mind map criteria</li><li>• Mind map peer conversation (appendix)</li><li>• Student-teacher conference</li><li>• Record activities and describe the learning (i.e., research, mind map, tableaux, interpret music) (appendix)</li><li>• Reflect on learning and what to do next</li></ul>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b>	<b>Summative</b>	<b>Assessment Task</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflective notes</li><li>• Outcomes Rubrics</li><li>• Peer critiques</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respond to guided questions (appendix)</li><li>• Create symbolic sculpture (appendix)</li><li>• Peer critique of sculpture (appendix)</li></ul>



## IV. Learning Plan

### Lesson One: Research Symbolism

**Time frame:** approximately 3 hours

- **Introduction:** Through discussion, assess students' prior understanding of how artists create and use symbols in their work.
- **Brainstorm:** Brainstorm symbols with which they are familiar. Guide students to move beyond obvious symbols, such as a red octagon for 'stop' or skull and crossbones for 'poison', towards symbols that may have multiple meanings.
- **Research:** Use the internet to research how artists and cultures use symbols to convey meaning. Do we all "read" symbols the same way? How many ways can we express the same idea? Create a visual representation of their learnings about their research (appendix).
- **Whole Group:** Engage in conversations and share understanding of symbolism with one another.

Discuss how symbols are used in artworks to illustrate there are many ways to interpret ideas.

See resource list for potential online sites.

### Lesson Two: Create and Interpret Symbols

**Time frame:** approximately 2 hours

- **Introduction:** Complete the Symbol Association exercise (appendix) and discuss how symbols can be interpreted in many different ways. Discuss the question: Are symbols understood universally (e.g., cultural differences, personal experience and associations)?
- **Mind Map:** Introduce the concept of identity and the big ideas of the unit. Brainstorm components that can make up one's identity (e.g., strengths, values, family, emotions, etc.). Show exemplars of mind maps, and co-construct assessment criteria for high quality mind maps. Represent personal ideas about identity using paint, pencil crayons, graffiti lettering, etc. (appendix). Discuss the extent to which each student's mind map meets the identified assessment criteria and record in the learning log.
- **Partner Tableau:** Find a partner with similar ideas represented on the mind map. Select one common word or idea from the mind map such as imagination or strength and represent it physically using a tableau (appendix). Share the

tableaux with the class and analyze and discuss how symbols can be communicated through the body. Describe the experience in the learning log.

A tableau is a still image, a frozen moment, or “a photograph” created by taking a pose that communicates a living representation of an event, idea, or a feeling.  
Source: Saskatchewan Curriculum

### Lesson Three: Research - Art Expresses Ideas

**Time frame:** approximately 1 hour

- **Introduction:** Review how artists express ideas by using elements of art and principles of design. Have students find interesting examples of artists whose ideas about identity may be reflected in their work (including photographs and sculptures) .
- **Small Group Inquiry:** Use inquiry to investigate the art works. How do visual artists manipulate the elements of art and principles of design to achieve intentions? How is identity reflected in the work? How has culture influenced some of the artists?
- **Reflection:** How will this new understanding influence students' plans for their own work on identity? Use the learning log to document understanding.

Focus on only a few of the elements and principles, such as colour, shape, form, and line (elements), and balance, proportion, and contrast

### Lesson Four: Art Creates Mood

**Time frame:** approximately 1 hour

- **Introduction:** Explore the relationship between mood, emotions and identity in art works. How do artists represent mood and emotion?
- **Interpret Music:** Play music that evokes various moods (e.g., happy, sad, angry). Represent the mood using art materials, with a focus on how the elements and principles can be manipulated to achieve intentions (appendix).
- **Whole Group:** Share visual interpretations with the class and discuss how each represents the mood of the music. Repeat with one or more songs that each represent a different mood and identify the change in how elements were used to create mood.

- **Reflection:** How will this new understanding influence students' plans for their own work on identity? Use the learning log to document understanding.

## Lesson Five: Plan My Sculpture

**Time frame:** approximately 1 hour

- **Introduction:** Review learning logs and reflect on plans to represent identity using symbolism, principles of design, and elements of art. What impacts identity?
- **Draw:** Create a sketch and apply prior learning (e.g., culture, family, personal experience) for a proposed sculpture to represent own identity through symbols.
- **Critique:** Share sketches with small groups, and critique using a viewing process, as described in the Responding to Arts Expressions document on the Ministry of Education website.
- **Reflection:** How will this new understanding influence students' plans for their own work on identity? What is identity? Does it change?

Tell students that they will share the meaning behind 2 or 3 images or symbols, and the rest can be kept private.

## Lesson Six: Create my Sculpture

**Time frame:** approximately 6 hours

- **Introduction:** Demonstrate how to use papier maché materials and techniques.
- **Criteria:** Co-construct a rubric for symbolic sculpture on identity. Discuss potential criteria and desired qualities.
- **Sculpt:** Create a sculpture to make a statement about own identity using symbols. Demonstrate self-awareness in decision making about own choices of media, techniques, and subject matter (appendix).
- **Reflect:** Review how problem solving influences process and product. Reflect on how images, elements of art, and principles of composition are organized to convey meaning and express identity.

There is a visual how-to papier maché guide in the appendix.

## Lesson Seven: Reflections

**Time frame:** approximately 1 hour

- **Journal:** Reflect on the following questions: (appendix)
  - What did you learn about how artists use symbols in their work?
  - How were you thinking and planning like an artist?
  - How well do you think your sculpture actually expressed your identity?
  - If you were to do this project again, what might you do differently?
- **Critique:** Use rubric from previous lesson to discuss and critique student work. In partners, show sculptures and discuss the degree to which intentions were achieved. A peer critique form is found in the appendix.

It may be necessary to discuss how to critique respectfully. A critique is not a “I did or didn’t like it” statement. Rather it is a discussion of agreed upon criteria using a common language.



Good practice: Portfolios demonstrate students' growth, accomplishments and reflection about their learning. Portfolios are useful tools for parent-teacher-student conferences.

## V. Appendix

### **Student Samples**

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### **Assessment Samples**

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## Lesson One - Research Symbolism (drawing)

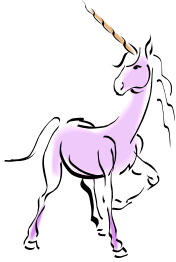
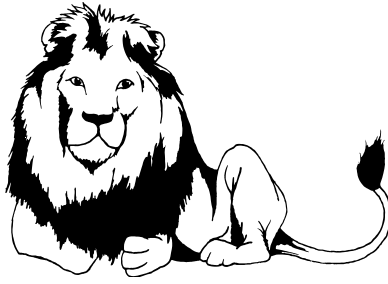


Students created visuals to represent what they learned about symbols used by other artists and cultures.



**Lesson Two - Symbol Association Exercise**

**BLUE**



**RED**

Honesty

Transformation

Protection

Beauty

Energy

Freedom

Calmness

Peace

Love

Imagination

Strength

Courage

Escape



**YELLOW**



Draw a line to connect each image to a word. You may associate more than one word to an image, or more than one image to a word. There may be words left over.







## Lesson Two - Create and Interpret Symbols (tableaux)



Students created tableaux to represent imagination,



love,



and hunting.

They created tableaux by using interesting body shapes, facial expressions, and by varying their levels.

## Lesson Four – Art Creates Mood (paint to music)



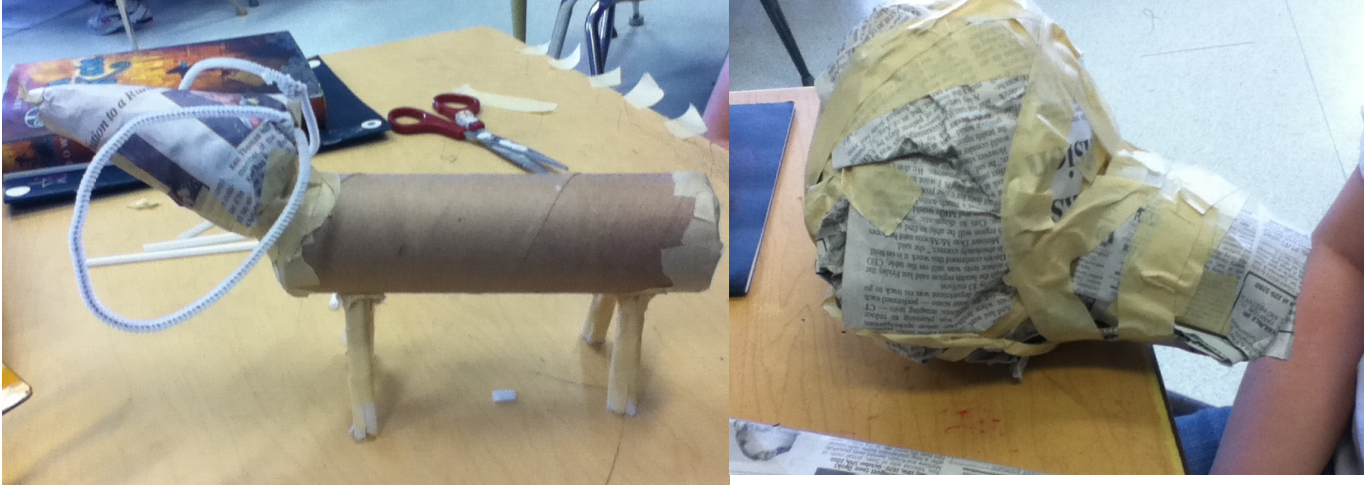
Students created the feeling of movement to represent *The Carnival of the Animals: The Aquarium* by Camille Saint-Saëns.



Students created a busy and chaotic mood to represent *The Flight of the Bumble Bee* by Rimsky-Korsakov.



## Lesson Six – Create My Sculpture (papier maché procedure)



First the students created armatures using all sorts of materials, such as crumpled-up newspaper, paper cups, paper rolls, cardboard, pipe cleaners, and wooden pieces. They attached the pieces together using masking tape or hot glue. Before they covered their armature with papier maché, all exposed pieces had to be paper or masking tape as papier maché will not stick to plastic or other materials, such as pipe cleaners.



Once they had created the basic shape of their sculpture, the students added strength using papier maché. They dipped pieces of ripped newspaper in a 50:50 mixed water and glue solution. As they removed the newspaper from the solution, they pulled the piece of newspaper between their fingers to remove some of the excess papier maché. Then they placed the pieces of newspaper onto their sculpture. They pressed them down to lay them flat. When the sculpture was covered, they set it to dry on top of garbage bags so the glue wouldn't dry to a surface. Then they covered it in two or three more layers until the piece was strong.





By painting the sculpture with Gesso, the students prepared the surface for painting.



They painted their sculptures using acrylic paint, but other paint types would work as well.

Lastly, the students used various materials to finish their sculpture, such as aluminum wire, heavy aluminum and copper foil, beads, and feathers.







In the sculpture above, the student represented her artistic side by displaying her sculpture pieces on a painting pallet. The yellow skateboard represented bravery and the heart, kindness; however, she chose to keep the symbolism of the cracked silver rock personal.



The sculpture to the right represents his life on the farm and freedom.



## Mind Map: Conversations about Symbols and Identity

Student Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

How well did I represent myself through my identity mind map?

What did you notice about things that are important to me?

Did you learn anything new about me?

I noticed ...

I wonder about ...

I really liked ...

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

# Symbolic Sculpture: Peer Critique

Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

I noticed your sculpture shows .....  
(elements of art)

I can also see ..... (principles of design)

I especially like the way you ....

I found it difficult to ...

I really like the way my  
sculpture .....

Student Artist: \_\_\_\_\_



## Learning Log

<b>Describe the Activity: "What did I do?"</b>	<b>Reflective Journal: "What did I learn?"</b>
Research: Art Expresses Ideas	
Identity Mind Maps	
Tableaux	
Interpret Music Visually	

## Symbolic Sculpture Criteria

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Level Criteria	<b>4</b> exceeding expectations	<b>3</b> meeting expectations	<b>2</b> beginning to meet expectations	<b>1</b> not yet meeting expectations
<b>Expresses identity through the manipulation of symbols</b>	Use of symbolism is insightful.	Use of symbolism is effective.	Use of symbolism is simplistic.	Use of symbolism is not yet apparent.
<b>Uses papier maché techniques to create a sculpture</b>	Work is fully developed and demonstrates age-appropriate skills and expressive techniques.	Work is adequately developed and attempts are made to improve skills and techniques.	Work is somewhat developed but skills and techniques are lacking in major areas.	Regard for development or application of skills or techniques not yet apparent.
<b>Manipulates elements of art (colour, form, shape, and line) and principles of design (balance, proportion, and contrast) to create impact</b>	Manipulates the elements and principles in innovative ways.	Manipulates the elements and principles effectively.	Manipulates the elements and principles in simplistic ways.	Not yet manipulating the elements and principles effectively.

## **Guiding Questions for Reflection**

### **Big Ideas about Symbols and Identity:**

What did you learn about how artists use symbols in their work?

How were you thinking and planning like an artist?

How well do you think your sculpture actually expressed your identity?

If you were to do this project again, what might you do differently?

## Resources

### Various Symbols

<http://www.umich.edu/~umfandsf/symbolismproject/symbolism.html/>

<http://www.fleurdelis.com/meanings.htm>

### Colour Symbolism

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/color2.htm#culture>

[http://www.voiceofcolor.com/en/aboutcolor/color\\_theory/symbolique/index.asp](http://www.voiceofcolor.com/en/aboutcolor/color_theory/symbolique/index.asp)

[https://oncourse.iu.edu/access/content/user/rreagan/Filemanager\\_Public\\_Files/meaningofcolors.htm](https://oncourse.iu.edu/access/content/user/rreagan/Filemanager_Public_Files/meaningofcolors.htm)

### Artists Who Use Symbols

<http://www.josephcusimano.com/glossary/index.htm>

[http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom\\_resources/curricula/shaping\\_symbols/](http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/shaping_symbols/)

<http://www.sayakaganz.com/Portfolio.html>

<http://www.dittwald.com/torontosculpture/>

*The Persistence of Memory* by Salvador Dali (painting)

*The Great Family* by Rene Margritte (painting)

### Cultural Symbols

China

[http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/outreach/pdfs/chinese\\_folk\\_art.pdf](http://hearstmuseum.berkeley.edu/outreach/pdfs/chinese_folk_art.pdf)

Animal Symbolism in Many Cultures

<http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/animals2.htm>

Northwest Totem Poles Animal Symbolism

<http://www.manataka.org/page30.html>

West African Wisdom: Adrinka Symbols and Meaning

<http://adinkra.org/>

## Outcomes Rubrics

Use the outcome-based rubrics to create a rubric specific to the performance task. Invite students to examine the outcomes and identify key criteria that should be considered.

### Outcome CH 6.3 Investigate arts expressions from a range of cultures and countries, and analyze how cultural identity is reflected in the work.

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling – 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can research how various cultures reflect their identity in their arts expressions.	I can research how various cultures reflect their identity in their arts expressions.	I can investigate arts expressions from around the world and analyze how cultural identity is reflected in their arts expressions.	I can analyze how cultural identity can over time.

- Research on symbols; conversations; Mind Maps; Learning log

### Outcome CR 6.1 Create personal responses to a variety of arts expressions (e.g., respond to music using poetry, or respond to visual art using music).

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling – 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can respond to arts expressions.	I can respond to arts expressions.	I can create personal responses to music. I can describe how personal response and own arts expression connects to the original work.	I can discuss interpretations of music, recognizing that cultural background and experiences affect those interpretations.

- Drawing to music with contrasting moods

### Outcome CR 6.2 Investigate and identify ways that the arts can express ideas about identity.

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling – 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can describe how identity can be expressed through the arts.	I can describe how identity can be expressed through the arts.	I can investigate and identify ways that the arts can express ideas about identity.	I can reflect on and discuss the intentions, problem-solving processes, and interpretations of own and others' arts expressions including how they relate to the concept of identity.

- Understanding symbols; personal symbols; Learning log of ideas

**Outcome CP 6.10 Create visual art works that express ideas about identity and how it is influenced (e.g., factors such as pop culture, cultural heritage, peer groups, personal and family interests, gender).**

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling – 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can recreate visual art works that express ideas about identity.	I can recreate visual art works that express ideas about identity.	I can create visual art works that express ideas about identity and how it is influenced.	I can reflect upon and analyze the choices I have made in creating my visual art work. I can use these suggestions to improve how I have expressed ideas about identity.

- Papier mache sculpture; conversations and explanations; Learning log

**Outcome CP 6.11 Investigate and use various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about identity.**

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling – 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can experiment with various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes.	I can experiment with various visual art forms, images, and art-making processes.	I can investigate and use various art forms, images, and art-making processes to express ideas about identity. I can apply what I have learned in my investigations to my own work.	I can analyze my skills and choice of forms, images, and processes. I can use this analysis to refine and improve my work.

- Peer conversations and feedback; conversations; reflections about meaning of sculpture

**Outcome CP 6.12 Demonstrate increased skills and problem-solving abilities in a variety of visual art media.**

<b>Beginning – 1</b> I need help.	<b>Approaching – 2</b> I have a basic understanding.	<b>Meeting – 3</b> My work consistently meets expectations.	<b>Excelling– 4</b> I have a deeper understanding.
With assistance, I can use art-making tools, technology, materials, and techniques.	I can use art-making tools, technology, materials, and techniques.	I can improve my art-making skills and increase my problem-solving abilities through the exploration of a variety of visual art media.	I can evaluate my art-making skills and problem-solving abilities. I can use these evaluations to improve my skills and abilities.

- Papier mache; sculpture; mixed media; painting; observational checklists