

## WISH WALL MURAL

### Day 2: Urban Wall Painting

#### The Connection:

Hello fourth graders. I'm back again this week to talk with you about art. Remember how last week we talked about Conceptual Art? We learned how an idea is a thought that exists in your mind and we learned how art can be about ideas.

#### The Teaching:

Today I want to show you images of different kinds of paintings that you might see outside around the city. To start, I'd like everyone to think about the buildings and walls that you walk by every day. Think to yourself: Are the walls you walk by bright? Colorful? Boring? Dirty? Do they tell stories? Do they have art on them?

At the end of our lesson last week, I told you to keep an eye out for paintings or wall murals as you went around the city. I'm going to show you a few pictures of wall murals just in case you're not sure what one is.

*Show images of mural Cambridge.*

Usually murals are painted by groups of people to decorate a boring wall or to honor a particular person, like this one honoring Martin Luther King Jr.

*Show images of MLK mural in Cambridge.*

Often kids and adults make murals together, and they always do it with the permission of the person who owns the wall. These are all in Cambridge and if you pay attention, you'll start to notice them everywhere. Does anyone know of a wall mural in Cambridge?

*Students share familiar wall murals — encourage them to describe what they like about the particular murals.*

That's great. You're really paying attention to your surroundings.

Now, let's think about what other kinds of paintings are on the walls we walk by every day.

*Show images of graffiti tags.*

What about this image? Does this look familiar? Is this a wall mural? No. This is graffiti. Sometimes people paint on a wall without getting permission from the owner of the wall. That is called graffiti. Even though you might see it in a lot of places, it is against the law to write or draw on a wall without permission. It makes people very upset to have something on their wall that they do not want. It can be a very mean thing to do. Yet many of the people doing graffiti think that they are being interesting or funny, or that they are making art. A lot of times, they don't care that it might be mean.

Sometimes though, graffiti artists will find a wall that they don't think anyone cares about to make their paintings. They may even spend a lot of time on their paintings as if they were making a mural. And sometimes, what they make can look very interesting and can even look a lot like a mural.

*Show images of graffiti art.*

Even though it may seem that no one cares about the wall, if you don't get permission to paint on it, it is always a mean thing to do. In fact there are people in every city whose job it is to go around and clean up all the walls that people painted on without permission.

*Show images of graffiti being cleaned.*

It can be very hard to take the paint off of walls. The city and building owners have to buy special equipment and hire people in order to get the walls back to the way they were originally. Here you can see the people hard at work cleaning up paint. In order to clean up, they sometimes wash off the wall, and sometimes they paint on the wall. And if you think about it, this is ANOTHER kind of wall painting! These graffiti removers are painting lots of walls too and I see their paintings all over the city.

*Show images of cleaned graffiti.*

These blocks of paint are where someone cleaned up after a graffiti writer. They painted over the graffiti with their own paint. Sometimes they do a good job of making the wall look the way it did originally but sometimes it looks like a whole new kind of mural, with pretty colors and interesting patterns.

So now you have a good idea of a few different kinds of wall painting that you might see when you walk around the city. You might see wall murals. You might see graffiti and graffiti that LOOKS like wall murals. And you might see the blocks of paint where graffiti has been removed or painted over. These are some good examples of wall painting that you might see in a city.

### **Active Engagement:**

All these kinds of painting have some things in common and some major differences. Can anyone tell me what some of the differences are?

*Students share ideas about the differences between types of wall paintings.*

Yes. Those are all good points.

There are two interesting differences I noticed: #1. Some people had permission to paint on the wall and some didn't. Who didn't get permission before painting on the wall?

*Students share.*

Right. The people making graffiti. Even though there is some graffiti that looks like murals, and murals that look like graffiti, mural artists always get permission and graffiti artists don't.

The second interesting difference I noticed was: #2: Some people were expressing an idea they had and some were just doing their job. Can anyone tell me which paintings were made because someone had an idea?

*Students share.*

Right. Everyone except for the graffiti removers. They didn't have an idea for a painting, they just were trying to clean up the wall.

I have another question about the graffiti that has been painted over. Just because it is covered up, is it really gone? Are there some ways in which the graffiti is still there, even though it has been covered up?

*Students share.*

Interesting. We know the graffiti was once there because we see the painting that is meant to hide it. Rectangular paintings that don't come from anyone's idea but just serve the purpose of hiding the graffiti. Or maybe we know it is there because we saw it there before it was painted out. Maybe you walked by graffiti one day and the next day there was a square of paint hiding it. Or maybe we know it was there because someone told us about it. Those are all ways in which the graffiti still exists even though we cannot see it anymore.

Now, let's think all the way back to last week and remember one of the artworks we discussed, titled "Erased deKooning Drawing."

*Show image of Rauschenburg's "Erased deKooning Drawing."*

If you remember, this artwork was made by one artist who ERASED another artist's drawing in order to make his own NEW artwork. He had the IDEA that he could make a new artwork by erasing another artist's drawing. I'm going to give you note cards and I want you to think about the following questions: In what ways are the wall paintings we've talked about similar to this artwork? In what ways are they different? Please write your responses on the note cards and then we can think about these questions together.

*Students write responses to questions and share ideas.*

Very interesting connections you all make. Excellent. Let's start at the top. Rauschenburg had an IDEA for what he wanted to make just like the muralists and the graffiti writers had an idea for what they were making.

Also, Rauschenburg made his artwork on top of something that that wasn't his, the same way that muralists and graffiti writers paint on top of walls that aren't theirs. And graffiti removers too!

What else? Rauschenburg got permission before making his artwork just like muralists and graffiti removers get permission before they paint.

What else? Rauschenburg erased someone else's artwork to make his own, just like the graffiti removers are erasing someone else's painting with their painting. And when we see the graffiti removers' blocks of painting, we know that there is graffiti underneath it. Just like how we know that before Rauschenburg made his artwork there was a different artwork there first.

**The Link:**

Well, we've covered a lot of ground here. You've learned about the different kinds of wall paintings that you'll see around the city. You've also made some extremely interesting connections between these kinds of paintings and Robert Rauschenburg's artwork.

Next week we'll do a similar thing: we will ask interesting questions, think about ideas, and make connections between what we've already talked about and some new ideas. The new topic for next week is secrets. So if you want something extra to think about this weekend, you can think about secrets for when we meet next week.