



GRAFFITI LESSON PLAN

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GOALS

Thrive Collective provides project-based learning that teaches both art and life skills. To the extent possible, every lesson plan provides three clear goals—artistic learning, project participation and applicable life lesson. For this project, the goals include the following:

1. Artistic learning - This class will give students a foundation into the history and elements of hip hop as well as teach them how to create their own graffiti piece.
2. Project participation - By the end of the class, students will have a finished graffiti illustration.
3. Applicable life lesson - Students will be introduced to how the art skill relates to life outside the classroom by learning to take a structured form, like letters of the alphabet, and reinventing what is given to create a new piece of work illustrating their unique style. In doing so, students will explore the boundaries of rigid rules to see beyond pre-existing constraints.

MATERIALS

Pen
Pencil
Paper
Markers

EXPECTATIONS

Begin by listing which ideas need to be clearly explained in order for the lesson to be successful. Since students have various levels of interest in art, stimulating curiosity in the topic is paramount to achieving full participation. Engaging students in the process begins by showing them the media presentation and then allowing them to have creative discussion.

This project will not only take the students through a historical journey through Hip Hop culture (which affects much of our overall culture today) but will also show how art from ancient civilizations laid the foundation for today's graffiti. Beyond this, students will develop confidence in identity and creativity skills, learn multiple artistic styles and principles but more importantly, students will be encouraged to think critically and express themselves honestly.



WHAT TO SHOW

Step 1 Links:

[5 Elements of hip hop](#)

[Photo of Cornbread](#)

[Photo of TAKI 183](#)

[Cueva de las Manos](#)

[Zephyr](#)

Step 3 links:

[Ces](#)

[Saber](#)

[Ewok](#)

[Revok](#)

[Dondi](#)

[Totem](#)

[Tlok](#)

Not every student identifies as an artist or enthusiastically embraces an art project, so do not feel frustrated if students choose not to engage with a particular lesson. Hopefully, in time, you will be able to present less interested students with various opportunities to engage with the process and add value with their creative input. Many students will need a boost in confidence to feel like they have the ability to be creative and successful in conveying their thoughts through art. Showing a masterpiece beyond their skill level can be discouraging and convey the message that this level of finish is to be expected. Using simple drawings and shapes within their skill level to demonstrate work will benefit them more. Similarly, using examples that are too simple will fail to engage the student and result in losing their interest. Choose age-appropriate examples and demonstrations to use that meet them at their level.

WHAT TO TELL

Art takes on many forms, from a Picasso painting to a sculpture or even a written name. Graffiti is both an art form and a language. It can be a medium to express an idea, a specific statement or just show a bit of personal style. Graffiti encourages students to see beyond current shapes and push the limits of creativity to reimagine existing forms into new expressions.



CLASS OUTLINE (30-50 Minutes)

PROJECT: PIECING IT ALL TOGETHER

OBJECTIVE

Students will explore and experiment with one basic method of lettering in graffiti in order to start building an art piece.

- Introduce students to the elements and history of hip hop to have a greater understanding of how the culture is expressed in the community.
- Understand the background of graffiti, both its ancient foundations and current development.
- Students will learn to break down letters into skeleton form and add personal flare.

STEP 1 - INTRO TO HIP HOP AND GRAFFITI (5-10 minutes)

DEMO

Hip hop is a culture that started as an outlet for inner city youth to express themselves in a positive way and help build their community. Hip hop is composed of the following five basic elements as seen in the image below:

- Breakdancing - movement and dance
- Emceeing - called rapping now and serves as the voice of hip hop
- Djing - playing/creating the beats for the emcee & breakdancer
- Graffiti - the written word
- Community - brings it all together for a unified purpose



For this lesson, the focus will be on building a graffiti piece. Graffiti's goal is to express a story and show people's personality. Graffiti is said to have started in two places—Philadelphia from a man named Cornbread and in the Bronx from a man named TAKI 183.



However, the idea of telling your story through art on a wall has been around since cave drawings and can be seen in ancient civilizations like the Egyptians and the Romans. The image below shows a cave painting from thousands of years ago in Argentina.



Graffiti provides an outlet for the street artist to communicate their style and their thoughts on any subject. Examples of it can be found on almost any surface all around the world like building walls and even train cars like the image below. Trains at one point in NYC were the major outlet for graffiti artists. Though today we do not have graffiti on trains in NYC, trains in some parts of the USA and all over Europe continue this classic tradition.





CLASS WORK

Give time for students to engage with both the history and images presented. Encourage students to give their thoughts on the images as well as find aspects that pique their curiosity and creativity.

GROUP CHECK-IN / PRESENTATIONS

Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:

- What element of hip hop do you connect with most?
- Why do you think hip hop has become such a big influence around the world?
- What aspects of graffiti stand out to you (size, color, unique letter shape, etc.)?

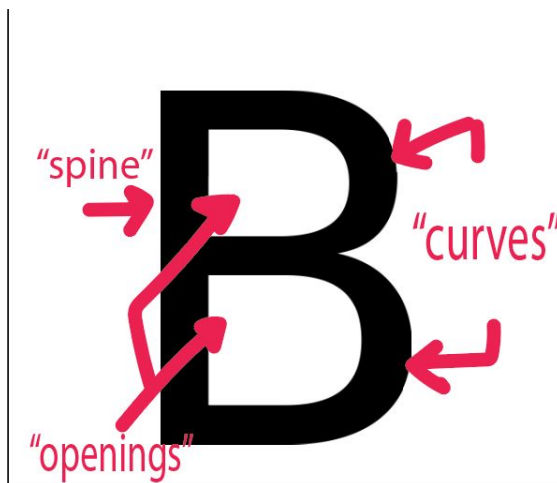
STEP 2 - LETTER STRUCTURE (10-20 minutes)

DEMO

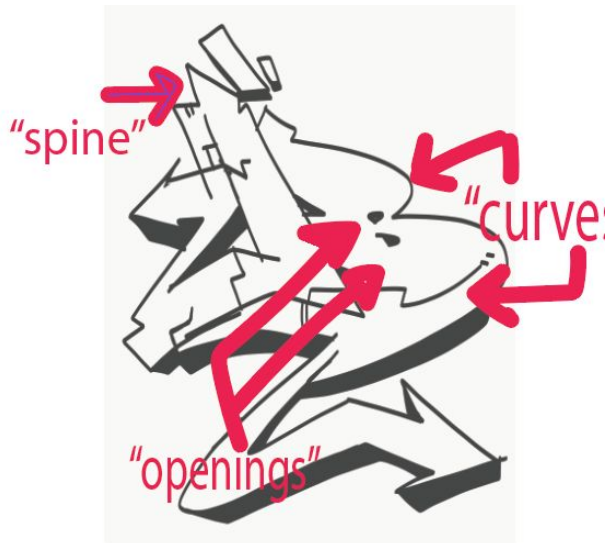
Students will look at the alphabet and learn how each letter has a “skeleton.” Lay the foundation for the student’s graffiti by showing them the following four principles:

1. Basic letter structure

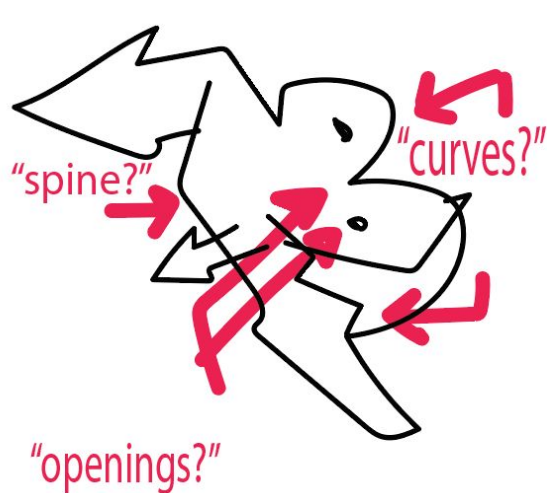
Letter structure is the skeleton of any letter. For example:



In the letter “B” there are three things that make up the structure—the spine, the curves and the openings. Every letter has a structure and even in letter manipulation, one can bend and twist the letter without breaking the skeleton. See Below:



As shown in the example above, the letter structure is manipulated and added upon but not broken. This is a good letter.



In this example of the letter B, the spine is not strong. The curves are there but the openings are not flowing or aligned in a way to show structure, which throws off the curves. The added arrows do not add to flow but seem to be coming out of nowhere in a rigid manner. This is a bad letter B. This skeleton is the cornerstone that helps the students build their letters. Respect the skeleton!

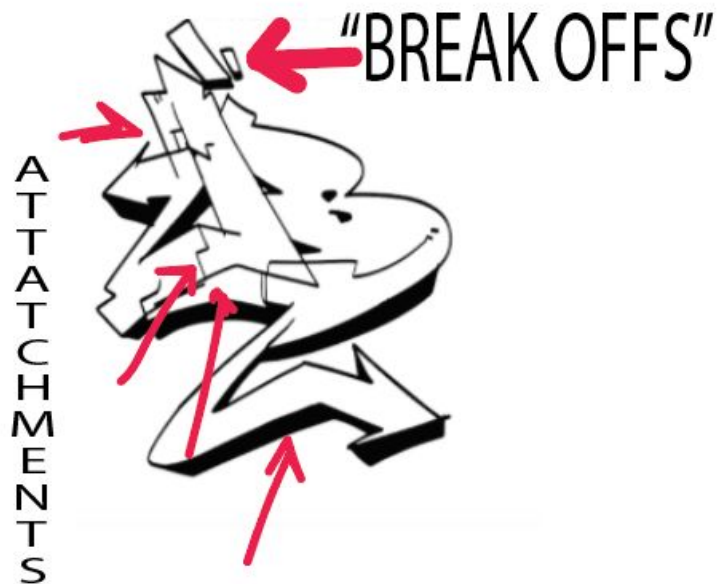
2. Connections:

They bring flow and life to the letter. Their purpose is to decorate and connect letters together in a way that makes sense.



The red lines show the flow of the letters and how the connections have a start and finish that adds style as well as connecting the letters in a harmonious way.

3. Attachments:



Attachments are added designs or elongations of the letter to give the overall piece more life. A variation of an attachment (shown above) is the break off. The break off gives texture to the letter and makes it look like a portion of the letter is breaking apart. Other attachments can be arrows or simply manipulated parts of the basic letter structure.



4. Shadowing:

Gives the letter a more 3D appeal and adds depth to the piece.

B



CLASS WORK

Have students break down each letter of their name into simple shapes such as boxes and circles to bring the letter down to its skeleton.

GROUP CHECK-IN / PRESENTATIONS

Have several students show their letter breakdown to the class. If students struggled with certain letters, ask the class for ideas on how to make it simpler or for examples from other students.

Note: This is just one of many different ways to start building lettering. Encourage students to feel free to experiment and put their own twist based on their own personal creativity and experience.



STEP 3 - LETTER FLARE (15-20 minutes)

DEMO

There's no one way of doing graffiti but it is helpful to be familiar with different styles that are out there. The following images show examples of different styles by artists:

1. Artist: Ces
Crews: TMT, FBA, TNB, FC
From: Bronx, NYC
Style: Sharp, thin lines classic NYC arrows and break offs



2. Artist: Saber
Crew: MSK
From: Los Angeles
Style: Sharp, classic Cali influenced letter style



3. Artist: Ewok
Crews: AWR, HM, MSK, The Seventh Letter
From: Unknown



Style: Bubbly, wavy lines



- Artist: Revok
Crews: MSK,AWR
From: Los Angeles
Style: Different textures, letter textures



- Artist: Dondi
Crews: CIA
From: Brooklyn, NYC
Style: Classic NYC style connections



- Artist: Totem
Crews: FBA
From: Atlanta
Style: Uses images as letters



- Artist: Tlok
Crews: TKO
From: Los Angeles
Style: West Coast Chicano type lettering





CLASS WORK

Students will take their straight letter broken down into simple shapes and start to curve the shapes to add flare to the letter form. Encourage them to try several different ways of twisting the letters according to their creativity and inspiration.

GROUP CHECK-IN / PRESENTATIONS

Have students point out the structure of their letter to see if they are keeping the skeleton intact while also encouraging them to keep twisting and manipulating the letter.

Ask students the following questions as they consider their drawings:

- What were some of the challenges?
- What parts of the letter look best?
- What style connected most with your personality and preferences?

Encourage students to continue to work through and experiment with different styles in order to go beyond their current ideas and limits.

Note: Graffiti is about self expression so this lesson should encourage students to learn the basic fundamentals and then start experimenting with styles that connect with their own personalities. In addition, this lesson provides an opportunity to reinforce to the class how important it is to respect different styles and expressions in the art world.