Juana D. Luna

The Art of Mehndi

Context: As a class, we have been discussing art from around the world. Students will learn about the art of Mehndi, most commonly known to be from India. This will be an introductory lesson to be continued in the student’s free time.

Objectives:
Students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of Mehndi by using henna ink to expressively make their own creations.

Benchmarks:
National Art Education Association standards-Visual Arts: Grade K-4 Visual Arts:
Content Standard: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
Achievement Standard:
c. Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

Content Standard: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
Achievement standard:
Students know that the visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures
Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places

Preparation:
Parental notes about students designing on themselves with the henna paint. Parents will sign a slip giving permission or rejecting permission. Some parents are opposed to body art so being aware of this is key.

20 Cones of henna ink, 1 for every student
Scissors
Books of Mehndi art
Pieces of paper
Napkins

Lesson Introduction/Set: (1 minute)
So we’re continuing our art from around the world and today we will talk about the art of Mehndi. Does anyone know what Mehndi is? (wait for response) Well has anyone heard of henna or henna tattoo? (Show pictures of Mehndi art) Well Henna tattoos you see in the fair or farmer’s market originated from the art of Mehndi.

Sharing Objectives: (5-10 minutes)
‘Mehndi is a common art from the former British India, which includes India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The word Mehndi comes from the Hindi words for Henna paint and the designs made
by this paint. Henna is a plant that is crushed up into powder and mixed with other ingredients used to temporarily stain one’s skin. It’s similar to the henna tattoos or stick on tattoo’s but people can make their own designs with the henna paint. For thousands of years, Indian people have adorned their bodies as an art form. Traditionally women have practiced it and women are usually the ones who are painted but this has been changing the past couple decades. The practice of Mehndi is most common in cultural celebrations such as Diwali, and Muslim holidays such as Eid ul Fitr, Eid ul Adha. Mehndi is most common in Indian weddings, where typically brides are adorned the night before in a “Mehndi celebration”. The designs on the bride, groom or other people contain symbols that mean different things. Today we will try to use symbols to make our designs and practice the art of henna.

Learning Activities:
(1-2 minutes) Dismiss students from group area to their seats
(1-2 minutes) You can use the cones of henna paint, to practice different designs on paper before trying it on your skin. If you don’t want it on your skin, you can make designs on paper.
(1-2 minutes) When you’re ready to start your design, use a clean piece of paper or start on you arms/hands.
(5-10 minutes) Students will explore and design their pictures on their hands or paper. I will walk around as needed to help students with their designs. I will look to see if students need more paper, prompts on what to draw.

1, 2, 3 eyes on ME

If you’re done with your designs, raise your hand so a teacher can take a picture of your designs (arm or paper)

Closure (see below)

Universal Design for Learning:

Representation: There will be examples within the books we have, and in front of the class I will show how to use the cones and the process of Mehndi.

Action and Expression: Student’s can create anything they want with the paint, including making their own symbols and designs on whatever they wish.

Engagement: Since the students will be using less frequently used materials, they will be fascinated with the cones as an instrument. They will be intrigued since they can design what they imagine, creatively problem solve to create the design they want. Also it will provide them with an art technique that’s interesting and different from what is done in the class and resemble what pastry chefs must do!

Content: The paint cones are larger and thicker than pencils and markers, so students will be able to hold onto them with ease.

Process: Asking students what they think they will design, what symbols will you use?

Product: Students will have a design/picture either on a paper or body part and I can ask how they feel to be a piece of art?
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Environment: Children can take the cones and choose to be anywhere they wish in the class. Floor space, table space, hallways space are all welcome to be used.

Extensions: Adding and expanding the Mehndi designs can be an option since it’s typically a complex design. Also students will all have a cone to themselves and most likely have extra to take home and continue where they would like.

Closure: (1-3 minutes)

How did you all feel while doing this artwork? (Wait for responses) While I was working, I felt like a baker who decorates cakes because they use frosting cones similar to what we used for our Mehndi. Well now you have some experience with Mehndi and can continue this at home with the cones. There are also recipes in the books provided if you would like to make your own with your parents.

Student Assessment: I will ask the students to see their designs and describe what they created. They will show me the designs they made. I will also ask students why they chose the design/pattern and if it had meaning to them.

Teacher Self-Reflection: (Before) I think some students will be hesitant to paint on their bodies because it’s so opposite of what adults say in our culture. NO DRAWING ON YOURSELF. Some students may not want to design on their bodies or not have consent, which might make them feel left out. They can still design on paper but does not have the same “wow” effect as on body. I have to be conscious of this as well.

(After)