



The Great Wall of Los Angeles Chicanx/Latinx History Creative Resistance Project

Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is for students to learn about the distinct characteristics of public art (murals) through the analysis of portions of “The Great Wall of Los Angeles” that capture Chicanx/Latinx history. Students will research the history of their assigned portion of the mural to share with their scholar peers. Students will explore contemporary connections, as well as other ethnic histories captured in the mile-long mural.

Enduring Understandings:

- We understand that our roots and indigeneity were established prior to colonization and that they are a source of knowledge, connection and healing.
- We understand and embrace the historical contributions, intellectual knowledge and cultural wealth of our people.
- We understand and place a high value on the stories of resilience, survival and resistance of our people.

Essential Questions:

- How are murals powerful for storytelling?
- How are muralists accountable to the community where they paint?
- How do muralists use iconography to create powerful calls to action or lessons of history?
- How does the Great Wall of Los Angeles capture history that is usually excluded from history courses?

CCSS :

- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7

Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

Cultural and Community Knowledge ([Link to Yosso, p. 78](#)):

- **Social capital** can be understood as “networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions... Mutualistas or mutual aid societies are an example of how historically, immigrants to the US and indeed, African Americans even while enslaved, created and maintained social networks... This tradition of ‘lifting as we climb’ has remained the motto of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs since their organization in 1896” (p. 79-80).
- **Resistant capital** refers to “those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality... This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Communities of Color... Furthermore, maintaining and passing on the multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth is also part of the knowledge base of resistant capital” (p. 80)

Ethnic Studies Principles Alignment ([Link to LESMC Guiding Principles](#)):

- Connect ourselves to past and contemporary resistance movements that struggle for social justice on the global and local levels to ensure a truer democracy.
- Conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for post-imperial life that promotes solidarity and collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

Materials:

PowerPoint that aligns to this lesson plan.	Additional photos of the Great Wall of Los Angeles photographed by Adrian Alvarez.
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Modifications, Accommodations, Resources for Multilingual Students :

The visual photographs allow for visual interpretations.	Use of sentence stems in order to respond to the analysis questions on the worksheets.
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Critical Concepts:

CRITICAL VOCABULARY	Definition and Rationale for choosing this word, phrase, or concept
Mural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Murals are large artistic public expressions.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Murals are often forms of storytelling.● Muralists are accountable to the community where the mural is

	<p>located.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicano muralists like Judy Baca, Los Cuatro and others used murals to describe the Chicano experience much like the Mexican muralist Siqueiros, Orozco and Rivera (Los Tres Grandes). • Iconography is the study or analysis of the mural's message, symbols, forms, etc.
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C1: Cultural Ritual and/or Energizer

Cultural Ritual/Energizer: Land acknowledgement, ancestor acknowledgement and opening activity, sets the stage.

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
Slide 1/2/3/ 4	Opening slide:	
Step 1 SLIDE 5	<p>Land Acknowledgement</p> <p>Take a minute to name the native lands that you occupy and describe one gift you will leave to improve the land you are a guest upon.</p>	5 min
Step 2 SLIDE 6	<p>Ancestor Acknowledgement: Carlos Almaraz</p> <p>Born in Mexico City, Carlos Almaraz soon moved with his family to the United States, settling eventually in East Los Angeles. Almaraz was aware from an early age of a “bifurcation” in his surroundings. He studied at California State College at Los Angeles, and spent a few years in New York before returning to California. In the 1970s he became involved with César Chávez’s farm workers’ movement, Luis Valdez’s Teatro Campesino, and Mechanicano, a cooperative gallery in East Los Angeles. Almaraz was one of the founding members of the Chicano art collective Los Four, whose other members included Gilbert “Magu” Luján, Roberto de la Rocha, and Frank Romero.</p> <p>He graduated from Garfield High School in 1959 and attended Los Angeles City College, studying under David Ramirez, and took summer classes at Loyola Marymount University. Loyola offered him a full scholarship, but he declined it in protest of the university's support of the Vietnam War and stopped professing the Catholic faith altogether. He attended California State University, Los Angeles (CalState LA), where he befriended Frank Romero.</p> <p>He became discouraged by the structure of the art department at CalState LA. Almaraz began attending night courses at the Otis College of Art and Design (then known as Otis Art Institute), studying under Joe Mugnaini and there In 1974, he earned an MFA degree.</p>	5 mins


	<p>By 1972, he was involved with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) dedicating a lot of his artwork to the movement.</p> <p>In 1973, he was one of four artists who formed the influential artist collective known as Los Four. In 1974, Judithe Hernández, who was a friend and classmate from graduate school at Otis Art Institute became the fifth member and the only woman in Los Four. With the addition of Hernández, the collective exhibited and created public art together for the next decade and have been credited with bringing Chicano art to the attention of mainstream American art institutions. He also painted for Luis Valdez's Teatro Campesino.[6] Some of his murals are heavily influenced by the actos from Teatro Campesino.[12]</p> <p>His "Echo Park" series of paintings, named after a Los Angeles park of the same name, became known worldwide and have been displayed in many museums internationally. On November 12, 1978, Almaraz wrote "Because love is not found in Echo Park, I'll go where it is found". While Almaraz may not have found love at Echo Park, he certainly found inspiration to produce paintings there: he lived close to the park, having a clear view of the park from his apartment's window.</p> <p>Another of Almaraz's works, named "Boycott Gallo", became a cultural landmark in the community of East Los Angeles. During the late 1980s, however, "Boycott Gallo" was brought down.</p> <p>Almaraz was public about being queer, and it was documented in his journals (which were later made public). In 1981, Almaraz married Elsa Flores, a Chicana artist. They had one daughter.</p> <p>Carlos Almaraz died on December 11, 1989, of AIDS-related causes at the Sherman Oaks Community Hospital.</p>	
<p>Step 3 SLIDE 7</p>	<p>Cultural Energizer:</p>	<p>10 mins</p>



This tribute to Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara was painted in 1978 by the same artists engaged in the Chicano Park struggle in San Diego.

It was restored in 1995 by the Mural Conservancy of Los Angeles. The original artists were Mario Torero, Rocky, El Lion, and Zade.

C2: Critical Concepts

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
SLIDE 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Murals are large artistic public expressions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Murals are often forms of storytelling. ● Muralists are accountable to the community where the mural is located. ● Chicano muralists like Judy Baca, Los Cuatro and others used murals to describe the Chicano experience much like the Mexican muralist Siqueiros, Orozco and Rivera (Los Tres Grandes). ● Iconography is the study or analysis of the mural's message, symbols, forms, etc. 	5-10 mins
SLIDE 9	<p>Worksheet One: Watch the video of The Great Wall of Los Angeles and use the worksheet to analyze the video.</p> <p> The Great Wall of LA</p> <p>History of Ethnic People</p>	15-20 mins

What is the Great Wall of Los Angeles? Who was the artistic creator? What did she mean by collaboration? Who were among the collaborators?

Public Space: What is the meaning of public space and why are murals in public spaces?

Personal Narrative: How was personal narrative used in the creation of the mural?

What were some of the challenges faced by the artists?

[Worksheet Two](#)

SLIDE 10

Example:

Walk students through the analysis of a mural.

15-20 mins



Step 1 Look at the mural for color, space, symbolism, textures, objects.

Step 2 What is the artist trying to say? Who is the intended audience?

Step 3 What questions do you have?

Step 4

What period of Chicanx history is this?

Who are the people in the mural? What are the symbols in the mural? What's happening in the mural?

What is the story behind the mural? What message is the mural trying to convey?

What is the social, cultural and political significance of the mural?

Assume the role of a character in the mural. In 100 words or less, tell the story in first person.

C3: Community Collaboration and/or Critical Cultural Production

Title of Main Activity(ies):

STEP	DESCRIPTION	TIME
<p>SLIDES 11-17 are the pictures of 6 distinct parts of the mural and the title pages.</p>	<p>Community Collaboration: Students will be split up into 6 groups. Each group has a handout/mural picture that they are assigned to. The links below are to each handout.</p> <p>Handout 1 Handout 2 Handout 3 Handout 4 Handout 5 Handout 6</p> <p>Each worksheet will facilitate the following:</p> <p>Analysis Step 1 Look at the mural for color, space, symbolism, textures, objects. Step 2 What is the artist trying to say? Who is the intended audience? Step 3 What questions do you have?</p> <p>Research What period of Chicax history is this? Who are the people in the mural? What did they do? What is the story behind the mural? What message is the mural trying to convey? What is the social, cultural and political significance of the mural</p> <p>Assume the role of a character in the mural. In 100 words or less, tell the story in first person.</p>	<p>A total of 15-20 mins in a collaborative group</p>
<p>SLIDE 18-21</p>	<p>These slides have four pictures of non-Chicax parts of the mural. You can choose to show them to the students so that they are aware of the robustness of the mural. OR you can have them do similar research and analysis as was done for the 6 Chicax portions of the mural. This could be assigned as extra work as well.</p>	<p>5-60 mins depending on how you choose to facilitate this portion.</p>

SLIDE 22	<p>Critical Cultural Production: Mural Making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Select a period of time not on the mural and design a mural on a canvas, wall and/or paper. ● Tell a story about the period in first person ● Who are you talking to... ● What do you want them to know... ● Who are the people, images and symbols that tell the story? ● What colors and shapes do you want to include? 	
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C4: Conclusive Dialogue/Critical Circular Exchange

SLIDE 23	<p>You should create a conclusive dialogue that is as elaborate as your Critical Cultural Production.</p> <p>Slide 23 has some potential conclusive dialogue questions for a closing community circle.</p> <p>Conclusive dialogue question: How did it feel to create a mural that shares a story that is meaningful to you and your peers?</p>	
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RESOURCES AND NOTES

Resources: [Additional photos of the Great Wall of Los Angeles](#) photographed by Adrian Alvarez.

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