



## YES-NO-MAYBE: LGBTQIA+ MURALS & ACTIVISM



Gay Pride Mural in Florence, Alabama.

### *Is public art is activism?*

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**Rationale:** In this lesson, students will learn how to take a stance by answering “yes”, “no” or “maybe” to a statement about public murals and their potential impact on raising public consciousness and activism. This lesson will explore LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and Questioning) murals painted across cities in the United States. This lesson will enable students to further develop the fundamental habits for respectful listening, engaged dialogue, and peer opinion sharing, which are the foundations of democratic action.

**Objective(s):** Students will express their opinions related to the impact of the artistic display of LGBTQIA+ murals in city land spaces and their impact on public consciousness. Also, students

will discuss current public perceptions of the LGBTQIA+ community and how art contributes to political discourse and action.

**Target Grade Levels:** 5-8; 9-12

**Visual and Performing Arts, Social Studies & ELA Standards:**

- NJSLS - Visual & Performing Arts: 1.2.8.A.3 - Analyze the social, historical, and political impact of artists on culture and the impact of culture on the arts.
- NJSLS - Social Studies: 6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.c: Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts.
- NJSLS - English Language Arts: A.SL1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas, and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Focal SEL Skill(s):** Social Awareness

- Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others.

**Materials & Resources:**

- Signs that indicate “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe” (posted in corners of the room)
- Pencils
- Highlighters
- Notebook
- See the attached images of murals 1-5.
- Video: [PRIDE 2019: Chicago artists aim to paint LGBTQ murals across the city, spark conversations about culture](#)
- Article with embedded video: [Muralist Sam Kirk Explores Identity, Culture through Public Art](#)
- [Student Lesson Reflection](#)

**Timing:** Two, forty-five minute periods

**Lesson Procedure:**

**Part I: Introduction (20 minutes)**

1. Do Now: Print out and display the images of the murals around the classroom (included at the end of the lesson plan). Alternatively, you may also post them in your digital classroom. Ask students to take 15 minutes to silently observe the images, subjects, locations, and colors of the public murals and make notes in their journal as they walk around touring the display of murals/view them in their digital classroom. Convey to students that at this point they will not discuss their observations, but will have the opportunity to during the lesson.
2. ***“Today, we are going to examine your views on public art and the LGBTQIA movement by engaging in a peer opinion sharing and listening activity with your classmates. We will then explore several statements related to public art the LGBTQIA movement and have the opportunity to take a stance on each.”***
3. Explain that students will first engage in free writing related to the following prompts. First, they will record the statements as they are presented below on their worksheet. Then, given a statement, the students will write a few sentences explaining their thoughts. ***“For each statement, write whatever comes to your mind and do not focus on the structure or conventions. The intent is to help you sort out your thinking and respond thoughtfully, so do not feel pressured to answer all of them.”***
  - ***A: What we see in a community is a representation of who we are.***
  - ***B: Public art is meant to provoke conversation.***
  - ***C: The location of a mural is insignificant.***
  - ***D: The images featured in murals are intentional.***
  - ***E: Art is a two-way conversation between the artist and the audience.***

## **Part II: Yes-No-Maybe Round I (25-30 minutes)**

1. Tell students: ***“Today, we are going to start learning some skills that you will need, now and as you get older, to be effective and involved citizens of your classrooms, your school, your community, and the wider world. It involves thinking about our own opinion on issues and considering others’ opinions as well.”***
2. Designate 3 separate spaces/areas in the room, one for “Yes”, “No”, and “Maybe”.
3. Tell students: ***“I am going to read a sentence and when I am done, you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes=agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). If you agree and move to ‘Yes’, you have to share one***

*reason why you agree. If you move to 'No', you have to say why you do not agree. If you pick 'Maybe,' you have to share both something you agree with and something you disagree with about the statement. Then, we will have a spokesperson from each of the areas summarize the main points of your discussion with the whole class."*

4. Have students return to their seats and reflect in their journals: "What surprised you about the activity? Did your opinion(s) change at all? If so, how?"

### **Part III: Reading about Artist & Public Art (15-20 minutes)**

1. Have the students read the article about Sam Kirk and her contributions to public art in the city of Chicago. As they are reading, encourage students to annotate the article related to the five statements (either display them on the board or have the students refer to them in their notebooks). Students can annotate by assigning a color for each statement or using the letters they are assigned when writing notes in the margin.
2. Then, in your notebook, respond to: "What is the argument the author is trying to make? What evidence does he have to support the argument?"

### **Part IV: Yes-No-Maybe Round II (10-12 minutes)**

1. Tell students: "*I will read the same statements from before, and you will move to the Yes, No, or Maybe spot of the room depending on if you agree or not (Yes = agree, No=disagree, Maybe=not sure). We will briefly share out after each YES-NO-MAYBE round. Then, reflect on this experience when you're back to your seat."*

### **Part V: Reflection & Assessment (5 minutes)**

1. In your notebook, please respond to each of the following reflection prompts. (If you prefer for students to have a copy of a worksheet with reflection questions, please refer to the Materials & Resources section.):
  - a. **Reflection 1:** Did your responses to any of the prompts change during this round? If you did experience changes, explain why that occurred as best as you can.
  - b. **Reflection 2:** What did you learn? What did you learn about yourself? How did you feel while engaged in this activity?
2. As a whole class, debrief how their perspectives on the topic of public art and activism changed from the beginning to the end of the activity.

**Formative Assessment:** The reflection questions in Part IV can be presented as an “exit slip” or in an interactive format, using Mentimeter, pallet, or as a post in your digital classroom discussion board. You can also have students create a Flipgrid video presenting their answers orally as another alternative.

**Lesson Extension:** Have students visit [Sam Kirk's website](#) to learn more about her work. Point out to students to click on her bio and c.v. (black boxes at the bottom of her page. Print out the three coloring pages. Have students color the page of their choice and write a reflective response to how the art that you and Sam have created reflects one of the five statements featured in the yes-no-maybe lesson. As Sam has requested, take a picture of your coloring page and tag her @iamsamkirk.

For students interested in elevating this conversation about art and activism encourage them to work with the student art club and student council/government to propose a mural that reflects the inclusivity and voices of the students to be painted on a wall in the school. Propose your plan to the school administration for approval.

## **LGBTQIA+ MURALS FROM AMERICAN URBAN LANDSCAPES**

### **Mural #1 - San Francisco, California**



*Gay Pride Mural 2017 San Francisco, California by Artist Artist: J Manuel Carmona*

**Mural #2 - Chicago, Illinois**



*Mural in Boystown, Chicago, Illinois outside the Howard Brown Health Center 2018  
honoring gender nonbinary community members.*

**Mural #3: New York City, New York**



***“We are Orlando” August 2016 Mural, Greenwich Village, New York City, New York in response to the Pulse Nightclub Shooting in Orlando, Florida June 12, 2016***

**Mural #4: New York City, New York**





*Mural of Drag Queen Activist, Peppermint, World Pride Day 2019, New York City by David Puck.*

**Mural #5: New York City, New York**



*Emma Blake public mural of artist Keith Hering in August 2020, on 66th Street, New York City, NY*