

Mandalas

Objective: Students will learn about symmetry and contemplation through the practice of designing and coloring mandalas.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion: Texture, pattern, horizontal, vertical.

Materials: paper, straight edge/rulers, large circle for tracing (roll of tape or plate), pencils, markers.

Opening activity: introduce the word mandala to students. Mandala is a Sanskrit word that means both Circle and the whole world. Sanskrit is an ancient language spoken by people who lived in the Himalayan Mountains, some of the highest mountain peaks in the world. A mandala is both a tool for communicating and sharing one's perspective of the universe and a tool for contemplation. Contemplation means to think deeply on a subject. Ancient Tibetans used mandalas to share the imagery and symbols that are important to their culture. One practice that remains important to people from this region is meditation. Meditation is a practice in stillness and breathing; meditators try to clear their mind of conscious and unconscious thoughts. Tell students that you are going to time them to see if they can meditate for 20 seconds. Have them close their eyes set up straight breathe normally but remain silent and see if they can meditate for 20 seconds!

Core Activity: Students will trace a circular shape to draw the frame for their mandala. They should also use a straight edge to draw vertical and horizontal lines intersecting at the center of their circle, this will support them in creating symmetry from right to left and top to bottom throughout their design. Have them think of symbols that they would use to illustrate their daily lives or the world that they live in. Have them use the symbols and expand on these symbols within their mandala. When they are done designing their mandala with pencil, they may begin to color them with markers. Have them choose just two colors of markers so that they can maintain intricacy within their design. When they are complete, they can retrace some of the major lines of their model of with black marker to make them stand out if they choose.

Reflection: Students should display their completed work for each other, and share about some of their artistic choices in choosing pattern elements.

What is a Mandala???



A mandala is a geometric design meant to symbolize the universe and our connection to it. It is an art form that is found in many cultures around the world. The word mandala is rooted in Sanskrit, and means “healing circle” or “whole world”, and can be seen as a model for the organizational structure of life and the universe.



