



LESSON

2

Maya Lin

Memorials and Public Art

Verbal Directions

LESSON OVERVIEW

Maya Lin (Born 1959) is an American architect and sculptor best known for her design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Students will explore the meaning of veterans memorials in communities and brainstorm an idea for a work of public art using air dry clay.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

- Learn about Maya Lin.
- Learn about the process of creating public art.
- Explore the idea of a memorial (specifically veterans).
- Design a concept for a memorial.
- Use air dry clay to sculpt a maquette.

SUPPLIES

- Images of Maya Lin's Public Art and other Veterans Memorials in Utah
- Air Dry Clay (bronze color)
- Sculpting Tools.
- Pencils.
- Erasers.
- Rulers
- Copies of a photo of a local public site.

MAYA LIN



Maya Lin was born 1959 in Athens, Ohio. Her parents came to the United States from China. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, one of the most controversial works of the 1980s, was built on the northwest corner of the National Mall in Washington D.C. Two simple ten feet walls of polished granite meet at a 130-degree angle in a V-shape. Its ends point towards the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument. The names of over 58,000 soldiers who were killed or pronounced missing in action are listed, in the order of death or disappearance, rather than alphabetically because Lin wanted it to be read "like an epic Greek poem." A Vietnam veteran can go to Maya Lin's memorial and search for the names of his fallen comrades. In the process, he sees his own face reflected in the polished stone. [Learn More.](#)



LESSON PLAN

1. Introduce students to the life and work of Maya Lin. She was chosen out of 1421 artists to create the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Share about the process of making public art. A city will decide it wants to fund a memorial to commemorate an event or people (in this case, veterans). They hire an artist to come see the place where they want a sculpture. The artist comes up with an idea that has to be approved by the city and then the artist usually hires an architect and builders to create it. Discuss:

- Why do we build memorials (specifically to veterans)? What are they for?
- Have you seen a memorial before?
- Do you think they are important?
- Is Maya Lin still the artist if she didn't herself build the memorial?

Help students understand who veterans are. Talk about people students might know who are veterans. Discuss the job of a soldier and the things that soldiers sacrifice to keep our country safe. Talk about freedom, and heroes and what those words mean to students.

2. Show students many examples of Utah Veterans Memorials:

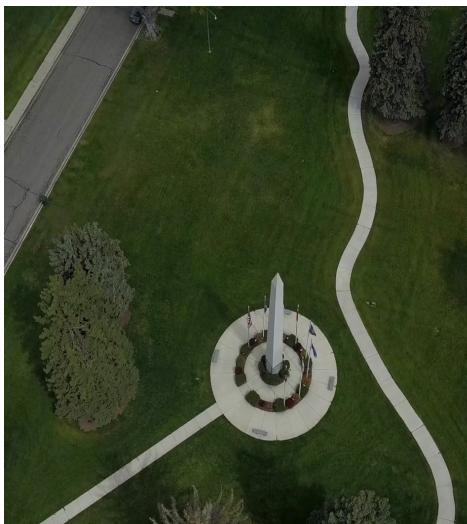
- What common elements do you see in all of these memorials?
- Who and how are people portrayed in these memorials?

3. Pass out copies of a possible site for public art in Park City. Let students know that they will be imagining a veterans memorial for this site. Students can sketch out their ideas on a separate piece of paper to brainstorm. Remind students of the variety of veterans memorials. Their memorials can be figurative or abstract. Talk about the ideas their sculptures should embody: they are meant to honor those who have risked and sacrificed their lives during a war. Talk about qualities and symbols they can use in their artwork (strength, heroism, memories,...) After students have brainstormed an idea pass out the air dry clay.

4. Students can work with the air dry clay to create maquettes of their memorials. Demonstrate how to pinch, attach and form their clay. (optional: students can also create a memorial to other heroes in our community).

4. Take photographs of the work. Work (and photographs of the work) will be on display for a local veterans day event.





KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements
(3rd Grade)

Standard 3.V.CR.1:

Elaborate on an imaginative idea and apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.

Standard 3.V.R.1:

Contemplate about the processes an artist uses to create a work of art, and determine messages communicated by an image.

Standard 3.V.CR.4:

Individually or collaboratively construct representations, diagrams, or maps of places that are part of everyday life.

Standard 3.V.P.3:

Identify and explain how and where different cultures record and illustrate stories and history of life through art.

STUDIO HABITS OF THE MIND:

Understand (Arts) Community: Learning to interact as an artist with other artists (i.e., in classrooms, in local arts organizations, and across the art field) and within the broader society. Arts is in parenthesis here as it can easily be switched with other disciplines, like science or history.



ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Click on links to learn more.

- <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/global-contemporary/v/mayalin-vietnamvetmem>
- https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/Creating_a_Memorial.pdf
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/thewall.html>
- <https://www.americanmemorialsdirectory.com/utah.html>

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