



Lesson

# POWER UP! Art, Text, Action!

## The Power of Words in Art

Keri Farrow

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Subject Area

Social Studies or Media Studies

Grade Level

Grade 5  
*Can Be Adjusted to Any Grade*

Time

4–5 Days

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### Description

Students will create a 3-dimensional artwork using words or phrases to communicate their thoughts, hopes and dreams for a future world based on the artwork and life of Sister Corita Kent.

### Lesson Objective

- **Typography:** Language as a visual tool.
- **Creative Expression and Critical Thinking:** Using text as a visual tool to communicate meaning, influence and/or challenge audiences.
- **Interpret and Infer:** Analyze and discuss universal themes and context of the times.
- **Leadership:** Advocating for or speaking out about something that is important to you.
- **Art Activity:** Fine motor skills, spatial skills, composition with regard to shape, texture and color. Construction skills. Color as meaning.

### Big Idea

Global Citizenship, Text As Art, Leadership and Expression through Art and Advocacy

### Essential Questions

- Who Am I? What values are important to me?
- How does engaging in art have an impact or influence others to think, act, or change?
- What meaning or message do I want to impart on the world? WHAT WILL BE MY MESSAGE TO THE WORLD and why? Lyndon B. Johnson asked “what are your hopes and dreams for mankind?”

#### About Sister Corita Kent's Artwork

- How does her use of color affect mood or impact how one experiences the art work?
- How do her messages from the 1960's resonate with challenges today?
- How does her “Pop Art” style help make her serious messages accessible or attractive?
- How does her spiritual connection contribute to her work?

## C3 Framework Standards Addressed

Creating **AS2, AS3** | Performing, Presenting, Producing **AS6** | Responding **AS7, AS8** | Connecting **AS10, AS11**

\*AS stands for Anchor Standards

## Materials & Resources

### RESEARCH SOURCES

#### Introductory Slide Show

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### **The Corita Art Center**

[Corita.org](#), [video](#), and additional primary sources on this website: Newsweek cover, LA Times article, Ten Rules and current artist vocal recordings each offering a 1-2 minute commentary on the Ten Rules.

#### **Live Interview**

([GBH Archives](#)) with [Corita Kent](#)

**Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery** [Dolores Huerta's Story; Community Organizing, the Chicano Movement and Challenging Gender Norms](#)

#### **Congress.gov**

[The First Amendment in the Bill of Rights](#) (annotated)

#### **Article19.org**

What is freedom of expression?

#### **United Nations website**

[Declaration of Human Rights](#)

#### **United Nations website**

[Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 19](#)

#### **Library of Congress**

[Immigration Act of 1965](#) (a much forgotten achievement of the Civil Rights movement)  
[Legislation](#)

#### **The Civil Rights Movement**

Library of Congress: Artwork by Joseph Holston: "[Letter From a Birmingham Jail](#)".

Library of Congress: [Birmingham Campaign \(Summary\)](#).

Library of Congress: *The Evening Star/The Sunday Star* (Washington D.C.), June 16th, 1963, Newspaper article "[A Letter From a Birmingham City Jail; King's Explanation of Non-Violent Approach](#)".

Library of Congress: To further explore Subjects in [Civil Rights History Projects](#).

[Library of Congress: Audio — Langston Hughes reading his poems with comment.](#)

[Library of Congress: H.Res.1056 — 117th Congress \(2021-2022\); This resolution supports the designation of Dolores Huerta Day to honor Dolores Huerta's contributions to advancing civil rights and equality.](#)

[Library of Congress: S.Con. Res. 115 — 107th Congress \(2001-2002\). Expresses the sense of the Congress that all workers deserve fair treatment and safe working conditions. Honors Dolores Huerta for her commitment to the improvement of working conditions for children, women, and farm worker families.](#)

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## ADDITIONAL SOURCES FOR RESEARCH & SUPPORT

**Pbs.org:** [The Sixties: The Years That Shaped A Generation.](#)

**SmithsonianMagazine.com:** “[How Langston Hughes’s Dreams Inspired MLK’s](#)”.

**Careharder.com:** “[Sister Corita Kent: Painting the World With The Colors of Justice](#)”.

**Smithsonian.org:** [Americanart; Corita Kent.](#)

**Art Basel:** “[The Bold Spirit of Sister Corita Kent](#)”.

**Children’s Book:** [Signs of Hope; The Revolutionary Art of Sister Corita Kent \(Non-Fiction Picture Book/Biography\).](#)

## ART MATERIALS

1. Cardboard base for each student; Minimum size 12” x 18”. (*Size may vary with length of word or phrase.*)
2. Thin chipboard or cereal boxes cut into ½” strips.
3. Making Tape. (*Enough rolls for 2 students to share.*)
4. Ruler or T-Square Ruler
5. Pencils and Erasers
6. Mod Podge
7. Paint (*Tempera or Acrylic*)
8. Paint Brushes
9. Containers for Water and Paints

## Optional

### Graph Paper

Students might find it helpful to use graph paper to draw out their letters first.

### White Transfer Paper

To transfer the letters from graph paper place transfer paper chalky side down between cardboard and graph paper, retrace over the letters with pencil. Drawn lines will transfer onto the cardboard.

## Essential Vocabulary

### ART TERMS

#### **Pop Art**

A 1950's-60's art movement that challenged the traditional fine arts. Using bold and vibrant colors, subjects included everyday objects, celebrities, advertisements, comic books, and consumer products.

#### **Typography**

The art or process of arranging letters and words with regard to style and visual appearance. (shapes, sizes and spacing.)

#### **Seriography**

A type of printmaking where a stencil is placed on a mesh screen and the ink is pushed through using a squeegee. The ink comes through the non-stenciled part and onto paper or fabric. This art form was commonly used in the Pop Art movement.

### HISTORY TERMS

#### **Activist**

A person who works to improve their community.

#### **Declaration**

A statement.

#### **Global citizen**

Someone who supports equality for all people, including those beyond their community.

#### **Human rights**

A right that belongs to all people.

#### **Universal**

Something that affects all people in the world.

#### **United Nations**

An organization made up of many countries that works to keep peace around the world.

#### **First Amendment**

The right to free speech

## PROCEDURES

### Warm Up

1. Present **TEN RULES** for art and life. Have small groups of 3–4 create their own rules for art and life.
2. Read and discuss Langston Hughes Poem entitled *Dreaming*.
3. Slide show introduces Corita’s art and activist work, and provides context for the time period in which she worked.

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### Direct Instruction

**Discussion** about the context of the time and how this resonates today. In a time of massive change, how do history, pop culture, technological advancement, politics and art come together?

**Presentation** of Corita and her work. (Could discuss using homonyms, or how word meaning changes with addition of other letters for example, “Love” and “Loved” or just stick with messages of hope for the future.

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### Art Instruction

#### Project Summary

Students research ideas and come up with a word or phrase. Students can play with homonyms, phrasing and word or letter placement like Corita Kent. Students draw out horizontal guidelines on cardboard. Students may use graph paper and transfer the word or work directly on the cardboard. Students construct letters using either thin cardboard or choose a layered approach. Use Mod Podge on front and back to harden the piece and then paint as a final step.

## ART INSTRUCTION CONT.

### **Spacing out the letters will be important.**

Use a ruler or T-square ruler to draw 2 horizontal guide lines about 3 or 4 Inches apart. This will help align letters and keep them straight. Draw letters with the top of the letter touching the top line and the bottom of the letter touching the bottom line. Space the letters out with a little extra room (a fingers distance apart). This will help students fit hands in between letters to shape and tape the cardboard strips onto the board.

**Demonstration of how to draw out the letters.** (And/or how to use graph paper and then transfer the image from graph paper to the cardboard).

1. If using transfer paper, lay it soft side down in between the graph paper and the cardboard. Tape the top corners of both papers onto the cardboard so the papers do not move while transferring.
2. Retrace the letters on the graph paper using pencil. Leaving the bottom corners untaped allows students to lift the papers and check to make sure the letters are properly transferring.

**Demonstration of how to shape and tape the letters.**

**Demonstration of how to apply Mod Podge.**  
(The teacher can do this in their own).

**Demonstration or discussion about color as a tool for communicating messages.**

## Guided Practice

### Options

1. Read Corita Kent’s “Ten Rules”. Split students into groups and come up with their own ten rules of art and share with the class.
2. **Small Group Work:** Students read Langston Hughes “Dreams” and discuss meaning.
3. Demonstrate how to play with words and word meaning. Ex: Love vs Loved, or Eye and “I”. See Corita’s playful placement of words.
4. Gather poems, books, speeches, quotes that could be used for student inspiration. Students can take 20–30 minutes to research, read, and write sharing 5 ideas with peers in student groups or as a whole class.
5. Assist students in using the T-square ruler to fit, line up and center up the words.
6. Demonstrate attaching the cardboard strips sideways with masking tape.
7. Demonstrate application of Mod Podge if needed.

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## Independent Practice

1. Students work in groups to decide about **10 Rules**
2. Students conduct research in order to help select words or phrases they wish to express.
3. Students conduct research about the Sixties as a time period of massive change.
4. Students create their own art work. Students draw, construct and paint letters on cardboard.

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## Summarizer

Students will create a 3 dimensional piece of text as art to convey a thoughtful message posed to the viewer.

## ASSESSMENT & HOMEWORK

1. Gallery showing of student art work possibly including some primary resources students used and current photographs of students progress while working.
2. Recording of MLK’s speeches, Langston Hughes reading his poem.
3. Student recordings or videos can be included in the gallery exhibition.

## FURTHER RESEARCH & RESOURCES

### Project Options

Project A

#### **Magazine Collage**

1 Day

Create a collage of collected letters/words and add patterns and images that help describe the mood or tone of your message or make up your own style of letters and write your favorite word or phrase decorating with color.

#### Youngest Students

Trace Letters and letter styles as practice in learning to write the alphabet. Teachers can ask students to pick a special word or write a statement about what they wish or dream for the future and draw around the word.

## PROJECT OPTIONS CONT.

### Project B

#### **Printmaking**

2-3 Days

Students create a word or phrase by making a print of the letters/words. Colored foam is inexpensive and easy to cut. Cut letters should be glued backwards on cardboard or wood. Roll printmaking ink or paint with a brayer or paint stamps with a brush or foam brush and print letters like a stamp. Print on paper, fabric, t-shirts, etc. You could make a class banner or have small individual prints.

### Project C

#### **3-D Cardboard Construction and Painting\***

5-6 Days

4-5th Grade. Enhanced technical skills takes text art to a 3-dimensional level building words or phrases with pre-cut ½" in thin chip board or cereal box strips and masking tape. Letters are drawn onto a heavier flat piece of cardboard approximately 12" x 18". Holding strips of cardboard on their side, shape them on top of drawn letters, cut to fit and tape to secure. Mod Podge the finished constructions to harden and stabilize the letters. Students paint the whole piece (white is recommended first) and then add color to express mood or preferred style (4-5 days)

#### **\*Alternate Version of 3-D Project**

Students can shape letters with cut cardboard pieces laid flat. Building letters up with several layers gluing differently sized cardboard and/or corrugated pieces. This process is less time consuming, materials are easier to manipulate, and creates a more whimsical and playful look.

## Modifications

1. Students can make 3-D letters with clay, playdough, modeling clay, tin foil, pasta, etc.
2. Print on collaged paper, newspaper, burlap, or fabric. Letters can be created with colored foam, thick cardboard, or sheets of white styrofoam or recycled styrofoam from grocery products.
3. Instead of, or in addition to Mod Podge, you could use plaster gauze to cover the letters and the board.

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## Extension

### Listen

Students listen to the recordings/podcast of the ten artists who comment on Corita's Kent's Ten Rules. Students record a short voice recording discussing their own favorite of the Ten rules or select one of their own rules to talk about. ([Corita.org website](http://Corita.org))

### Record

Students record a small video explaining their art work with guided questions for students. What inspired them to choose that word. What was their favorite part of the process? Why is this kind of art work important? What are their hopes for the future?

### Research

Students can do extensive historical research on the sixties as an important time of change.

### Music

Play some music of the time; Supremes, Beatles, "[Put A Little Love In Your Heart](#)" 1969, Jackie DeShannon and other recordings from the time period to set the stage for context.

### Partner with the [Dreamline Project](#)

Dreamline's mission is to promote hope, connection and belonging by providing educators with resources to inspire, capture and share young people's dreams for the future on a global scale. Dreamline supports its mission with professional development, project materials, events, and a worldwide network of leaders and participants.

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## Reflection & Teacher Notes

### Curate a Gallery Walk

Set up an exhibition of student artwork, and videos or voice recordings.

### TAG

Hand out paper and pencil while students walk through the gallery. Ask students to pick one (or two) students' works they like.

For each, write the following **T = Tell** us something you like, **A = Ask** the artist a question, **G = Give** a compliment or a suggestion.

This can be shared as a class or handed in to the teacher as an exit ticket.