

## ***“Sculpting a Celebration of Everyday Life”***

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**Theme:** Using sculpture-building techniques to understand the human body and human activities.

**Grade Level:** Fourth grade, adaptable for elementary to high school

**Estimated Time:** Three to five class periods of 30 to 45 minutes

### **Indiana State Standards Addressed:**

- 4.3.1 Analyze sensory, formal, technical, and expressive properties in a work of art. (J.S.J.’s sculptures capture the spirit and emotion, texture, . . . )
- 4.3.2 Construct meaning based on properties found in the work, personal response, and research on the work and its context. (Student’s relation to everyday experiences, respond to J.S.J.’s sculptures)
- 4.3.3 Use appropriate art vocabulary.
- 4.5.1 Personally respond to a work of art and examine alternative responses from peers to form a logical hypothesis.
- 4.5.2 Discuss and raise questions about the nature of art, reflect on these discussions, defend personal viewpoints.
- 4.6.2 Understand that personal preference is one of many criteria used in making informed judgements. (Right to choose and have their own opinion, dislike things)
- 4.7.1 Demonstrate refined observational skills in their work.
- 4.7.2 Create a work that communicates personal ideas, experiences, or emotions.
- 4.8.1 Apply elements (line, shape, form, texture, color, and space) and principles (repetition, variety, rhythm, proportion, movement, balance, emphasis) in work that effectively communicates their ideas.
- 4.9.3 Demonstrate safe and proper use, care, and storage of media, materials, and equipment.
- 4.10.1 Demonstrate the ability to successfully generate an idea, select and refine an idea, and execute the idea.
- 4.10.2 Identify and apply criteria for assessment in their work, in peer critiques, and in self-assessment.
- 4.10.3 Demonstrate respect for their work and the work of others.

### **Objectives:**

In order to appreciate the beauty of ordinary life the fourth grade students will capture and create everyday school life activities while constructing a 3-D life-size human form with regard to general proportion and observation of detail.

**Materials:**

1. Images of human sculptures through art history (5-10 images)
2. Images of J. Seward Johnson, Jr. sculptures (5-10 images)
3. Video of J. Seward Johnson, Jr. and his sculptures
4. Example of wire-built sculpture for visual reference
5. Copies of general note home asking for materials Jennifer type this up!
6. Paper mache, and/or plaster-coated wrap, and/or decoupage  
\*water, plastic tubs
7. Wire (14 gauge may be too difficult for 4th graders, 16 g., or thinner)
8. Wire mesh – chicken wire, screen, etc.
9. Wooden base – approx. 2 x 2 foot or 2 x 4 foot if two sculptures are “interacting”
10. Clothes to dress sculpture: required: shoes, socks, long pants, shirt  
Optional: wig, book bag, belt, fake nails, watch, bracelet, plastic rings, handbag, books, cafeteria tray, pencil, fake ears, hat, glasses, lashes, hair accessories, yarn, raffia, pipe cleaners
11. Newspaper – lots and lots
12. Measuring tool(s) – yard stick, ruler, measuring tape (stiff or flexible), etc.
13. Duct tape
14. Masking tape
15. Wire cutters
16. Tin snips
17. Garbage / bread bag twist-ties
18. Latex gloves
19. Paint: acrylic or tempera in skin tones, lip, and eye colors.
20. Mask form
21. Hot glue gun, glue sticks
22. Cordless drill and drill bits
23. Scissors
24. Balloons
25. Digital camera

**Vocabulary:**

Armature: the frame or skeleton that holds up a sculpture

Three dimensional: an object that has height, width, and depth, unlike a painting or picture

Decoupage: watered down glue that makes flexible things hard such as fabric

Proportion: refers to one piece of an object in relation to the rest of the object

Balance: to be equal

Symmetry: sculpture will appear unbalanced if the length of arms, legs, evenness of eyes, ears, etc. are uneven

**Concepts:**

- \*The beauty of everyday life is observed
- \*Develop an awareness of own culture
- \*Develop a sense of human body proportion and observation of details
- \*Shape in three dimensions leads to form, balance, and symmetry
- \*The human form takes up space
- \*Variety adds to interest by varying size, shape, or pattern

**Skills:**

- \*Build an armature
- \*Handle and balance a three-dimensional form
- \*Paper mache or plaster techniques
- \*Render realistic details of the human form

**Teacher Preparation:**

1. If you are not familiar with building sculptures or armatures, it may be helpful to try this before hand in order to trouble-shoot problems. \*Refer to step-by-step images attached.
2. Prepare all materials and lay out “buffet style.”

**Activity Introduction / Motivation:****Day One**

1. Introduce the concept of sculpture to fourth grade students. Start with historical images of human sculpture from long ago until recently (some American figures, others from different cultures).
2. Discuss different materials used.
3. Get more specific into J. Seward Johnson, Jr.’s work (5-10 images).
4. Explain that his works are coming to Auburn (they will be able to see, touch, etc.).
5. Tell children they will get to be involved by participating in this art project (it is a great experience, learning activity, etc.).
6. “Unveil” the example sculpture. If there is time, allow small groups to circle the piece; allow them to touch it, peek under clothing to see the structure, examine face, etc.
7. Share that the art class will get to create one or two sculptures (depending on class size) in order to celebrate the coming of the famous sculptures. \*For every 12-15 students one sculpture will be built.

**Activity Procedure:****Day One Participation Time:**

1. Brainstorm ideas for poses: discuss what everyday life / school activities are (lunch line, reading, raising your hand, etc.). Write all ideas on the board.
2. Devise a voting system (slips of paper, heads down vote, etc.). If two sculptures are being built in one class, you might want to sort groups and let each group vote on a pose.

3. Ask for volunteers to “freeze” in the pose they have voted on. After three or so, ask which one has the most interest (consider difficulty of creating this pose in wire).

If there is time . . . or “homework,” or in math class, or next class:

4. Each student should be measured for height. This will get a class average height and subsequent height for sculpture. \*Fastest way: tape a measuring tape to a free wall or door frame; each child stands straight against it; one person holds a book on their head; another copies down the height. Find the average. Jennifer, draw a visual image of measurements!

### **Day Two**

1. Once the average height is found, find a willing student closest to that height. Measure him or her for length of arms, legs, torso, hips, and head.

2. Begin to frame up armature. Each sculpture group is divided into “appendage groups” of two to three students (four gets messy). Six groups: 2 legs, 2 arms, torso, and head group.

Division of Labor Order of Operations:

\*Leg groups (2):

1. Take leg measurement, add 8-10 inches for foot, and five inches for hip / connection.

2. Loop six strands of continuous wire (back and forth). Cut with wire cutters. Duct tape together in spots.

3. Bend foot into 90 degree angle, curve hip a little.

4. From ankle to knee, crumple and tape newspaper to wire in shape of child’s leg (a little wide at the knee).

5. Stuff sock with newspaper. Slide onto wire foot. Tape to leg.

6. When both leg groups are ready, take turns “dressing” the legs. When both legs are in, use the oval (made by the torso group) to hold the waistband of the pants and connect the hips to waist (wrap wire around other wire, tape if needed).

7. Stuff the thighs with crumpled newspaper up to the waist.

\*Torso Group:

1. Use measurements of the hip (or the waist line of the pants to be used) to make two identical circles of wire. Six continuous loops each. Cut with wire cutters. Tape in spots. Set one aside for “leg group to use.”

2. Make a third circle the same way based on the chest measurement (should be a little bigger). Set aside.

3. Take the measurement for the shoulder and measure it out on the flat screen (height and circumference; add three inches to height measurement). Cut with tin snips.

4. Use second circle as a base for a cylinder of wire mesh or screen to go around. Use twist-ties to connect wire to screen and screen edge to screen edge.

5. Connect the third circle to torso (three inches from the top) using twist-ties.

6. With the teacher’s help, use tin snips to cut four lines down the top three inches (like the corners of a box).

7. Fold flaps down like a box lid. Use a few twist ties to seal.
8. Dress the shirt into the torso.

\*Arm group:

1. Trace a hand on a piece of paper. Use this as a pattern for bending the wire into a hand shape. \*There should be five extra inches on the beginning and end of the bent wire for connecting.
2. Slip a latex glove over the wire hand.
3. Fill the glove with small crumples of newspaper to fill out fingers and palm.
4. Take measurements of the arm. Add 8 inches to shoulder for connecting. Make six continuous loops of wire. Cut with wire cutters, Tape in spots.
5. Crumple newspaper and tape to the arm in the shape of an arm. \*If the final pose has very bent arms, bend the wire first.

\*Head group:

1. }
2. }
3. } Not yet known; not yet tested.
4. }

### **Day Three**

1. Plaster or paper mache all visible skin (arms and head). Allow to dry.
2. Connect the feet and shoes to the base with wire through drilled holes the teacher makes.

### **Day Four**

1. Connect all pieces of body into one sculpture. Use any means necessary: small wraps of wire, twist-ties, duct tape, etc.
2. Paint all skin tones. \*Mix one batch of the same tone so the sculpture matches.
3. When that dries, paint details of eyes, mouth, and other details.
4. Connect "hair" (wig, yarn, rafia, etc.).
5. Add accessories: belt, watch, hair accessories, eye lashes, etc.

### **Activity Closure/Evaluation:**

**Students (in groups):** *Why are you writing this?* Answer questions that will come together to form an "artist's statement" that will describe students' inspiration and details about making a sculpture. \*This could be part of the display when the statues go on exhibition.

- 1) Title of work
- 2) Why did your group choose this pose? Why is it meaningful?
- 3) If you did this again, what would you change?
- 4) What was your favorite part of the project? Least?
- 5) What skills did you learn?

### **Extension Activity:**

\*Write stories about the events and activities of the "people" you have

created. Do the sculptures interact with each other? Create names and personalities. Post these stories at the exhibition.

\*You could possibly integrate with math and language arts in the general education classroom through measurement and writing aspects.

**Resources Used:**

- Celebrating the Everyday, book on J. Seward Johnson, Jr.'s sculptures.
- Helpful Books and Technology
- Video on Johnson's sculptures