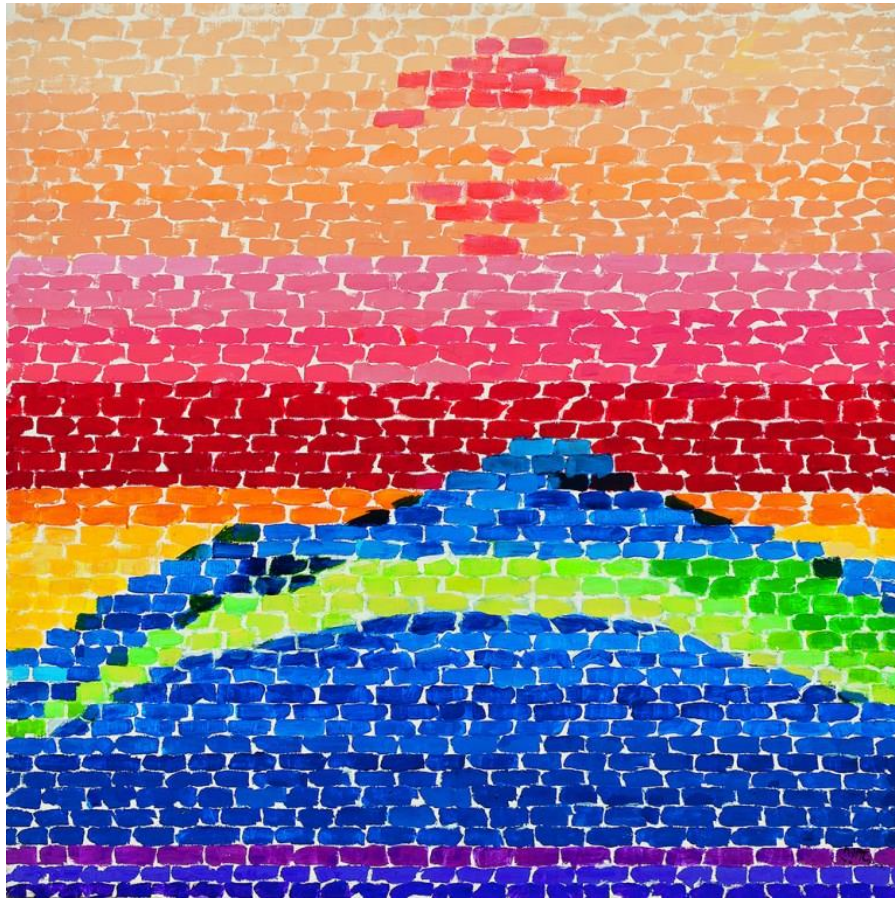


# Expressive Abstraction

## Lesson Plan

Suggested for 2<sup>nd</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grades

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**Alma Woodsey Thomas (born in 1891) was a, expressionist abstraction painter and an art educator. Her work focused on colorful abstracting shapes and patterns varying from the flowers in her garden, outer space and trees.**

*"Apollo 12 Splash Down," 1970*  
Alma Thomas

Acrylic and graphite on canvas  
Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld  
Gallery, New York.

Courtesy Studio Museum in Harlem.

While watching the televised July 20, 1969 lunar space mission, Alma Thomas was immediately fascinated and intrigued by what she witnessed. She began to channel her interest in the Space launch into her work. She created a series of space-themed abstract paintings that depicted the moon walk, views of the Earth's surface from outer Space, and Apollo's water landing. The painting *Apollo 12 Splash Down*

was created in 1970. The abstract mosaic-like mountain shapes is a representation of the moon from Neil Armstrong's Apollo 12 mission. Thomas used wide brushstrokes and warm colors to create the horizon line and background. She then used a cool color palette to symbolize the abstract shape and surface of the moon. Thomas would go on to create an entire body of rhythmic, vibrant Space-themed work.

## **Objective**

Students will investigate composition and color theory using abstraction. They will create a 2-D work of art that explores mood and identity.

## **Essential Question**

How might you create an abstract piece of art that encompasses something about yourself or your personality?

## **Vocabulary**

### *Composition*

The arrangement of elements in an artwork.

### *Abstraction*

Does not depict a person, place or thing in the natural world.

### *Color Theory*

The science and art of using color.

### *Identity*

The fact of being who or what a person is.

## **Materials**

Watercolor paper (base)

Acrylic paint

Paint brushes

Tissue paper

Construction paper

Scissors

Glue

String and thread (optional)

## **Preparations**

1. Display images of Alma Thomas' abstract paintings in the classroom.
2. Introduce vocabulary and discuss the meaning of composition, abstract art, color theory and identity.

## **Preparations Cont.**

3. Share abstract paintings with Space as the subject matter.
4. Handout watercolor paper to students.
5. Set up paints, paintbrushes, and other mixed media materials.

## **Methods**

1. Using Visual Thinking Strategies to discuss possible connections between imagery and outer space in Thomas' work, reflect on the choice of color, shape and composition.
2. Share essential questions with students.
3. Have students select a few colors based on the mood to get started.
4. Have students reflect on the colors they have chosen and share how the colors relate to identity and self-expression.
5. Encourage students to consider their choices carefully. Explain that the assignment and materials should speak to them and their personalities.
6. After the colors and materials have been selected, have students create abstract, mixed media paintings.

## **Reflection**

1. Organize a gallery show in the classroom, displaying the students' artwork.
2. Invite students to share.
3. Discuss how color can change your mood and be used as a form of self-expression.



ALMA THOMAS, "Apollo 12 Splash Down," 1970 (acrylic and graphite on canvas). | Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York. Courtesy Studio Museum in Harlem  
<https://www.culturetype.com/2019/07/16/50-years-ago-alma-thomas-made-space-paintings-that-imagined-the-moon-and-mars/>