



Grade: Second

Artist: Alma Thomas

Preparation:

- There is a blue box labeled “Second Grade” in the supply closet on the 1st floor near the 4th & 5th grade classrooms with all the supplies needed for the presentation and project. The Awesome Art coordinator will go through the box to make sure that all materials are replenished. The Awesome Art coordinator will write down the questions listed in this lesson plan on post-its and place them in related pages within the book.

- Each classroom folder contains:

- ✓ a copy of *Ablaze with Color: A story of painter Alma Thomas*
- ✓ cardstock
- ✓ paint
- ✓ paintbrushes
- ✓ palettes
- ✓ paper towels
- ✓ post-its
- ✓ plain bulletin board border
- ✓ samples of the painting project
- ✓ baby wipes (to clean paint)

What do parents need to do to prepare?

- **A few days before the lesson**, stop by the main office to pick up a copy of *Ablaze with Color: A story of painter Alma Thomas*. Read through the book to make sure that you are comfortable reading it in an engaging way in front of the class. The book will also have post-its of questions to ask the children to encourage them to engage with the story in a meaningful manner. Go through the questions and make sure that you are comfortable with facilitating a brief discussion with each question.

- On the day of your lesson, make sure that you sign into the office and get there early so that you give yourself time to set up the materials, particularly pouring paint into the palettes.

Presentation Instructions:

Step 1: Make a personal connection to the story

- You will gather the students on the rug. You will ask the students - It is January. What month comes next? Then, ask - Does anyone know whose history we remember in a special way in February?

Step 2: Introduce the story; Give students an objective for reading

- After students establish that we celebrate Black History month in February, you will introduce the lesson by stating that today the class will learn about Alma Thomas, who is the first Black woman to have her very own exhibit at the Whitney Museum in New York City and the first Black woman to have her work displayed at the White House, the home of the President and his family.
- You will explain that the class will read a story about Alma Thomas. You will explain that the book will help us learn about the difficulties that Alma Thomas faced and what she did to make things better.

Step 3: Read the story and ask relevant questions

- As you read, follow the post-its in the book to ask the following questions:
 - After reading pages 1-2: Alma Thomas loved using bright colors in her paintings to create beauty and happiness. Do you see things or colors here that make you happy? If so, what are they?
 - After reading pages 3-4: What about here?
 - After reading pages 7-8: Why couldn't Alma Thomas attend school or go to the museum or to the library? (When answering this question, show students the timeline in the back of the book, pointing out how when Alma Thomas was young, there were laws or rules where she lived that separated people based on their skin color. Black Americans were excluded. These laws or rules did not change until 1954). Follow up with - How do you think these laws made Alma Thomas feel?
 - After reading pages 11-12: Why did Alma Thomas' family leave Georgia? (When answering this question, refer to the timeline in the back of the book and point out that between 1916-1970 6 million Black Americans headed North in search of a better life/a life with less separation.)
 - After reading pages 13-14: How is Alma's experience/life different at this point than at the beginning of the story? What is she doing to make a positive difference?
 - After reading pages 19-20: What do you notice about Alma Thomas' style of painting?
 - After reading pages 20-21: Why was painting special to Alma?

After reading pages 30-31: Remember that Alma Thomas used bright colors to create beauty and happiness. Do you see things or colors here that make you happy? If so, what are they?

Step 4: Loop back around to your objective

- After the story, ask - “What were some difficulties that Alma Thomas faced? What did she do to make things better?”
- After students share their answers, synthesize their responses: “These are all great points. Alma Thomas struggled because she lived during a difficult time when laws were not fair, segregating Black Americans from other people. Alma’s family moved North in search of a better life. She became a teacher. She taught students about art and also created art using bright colors. That was her way to create beauty and happiness in the world.”

Step 5: Introduce the activity

- Show students a sample painting and explain to them that, just as Alma Thomas, they will make their paintings using bright colors. They will paint using her style - using “dabs, ablaze with color.” Refer to pages 19-20, as well as 29-30 to discuss her style in a bit more detail before sending off students to paint. Explain that their goal is to make a painting by dabbing their paintbrushes and creating shapes and colors to bring beauty and happiness.

Step 6: Transition to tables

- While one parent finishes reading/introducing the activity, the others will set up the tables, ensuring that each group of children has palettes filled with paint to share. Each child will have cardstock, a paper towel, and a paintbrush.

Step 7: Students will write their names and class on the back

Step 8: Paint on cardstock and then make bulletin board border

- Leave the paintings to dry with the teacher.
- Students that finish early will use the dabbing method to decorate pieces of the bulletin board border. Leave the border pieces to dry with the teacher.

Step 8: Closure/Reflection

- Ask students what they learned today.

IMPORTANT:

- Please be sure to have the students write their name and grade/class on their artwork.

- Do not worry about hanging the artwork, as it needs time to dry. The Awesome Art coordinator will put up the art once the pieces dry.

Thank you for being awesome and volunteering for Awesome Art!