

Crossing Borders through Art: The Tortilla as Canvas

By Lynda Tredway

Lesson Outcomes and Suggested Processes

As with all lessons, you know your students and you will make adaptations connections you deem important to ensure background information. Choose introduction materials that may set the stage for the conversation. Some of those have been mentioned above and others are on the [Teaching for Change website](#).

Outcomes

Student Outcomes	Teacher Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can analyze the situation for children and young people coming to Central America as refugees to the United States using visual and written texts• I can participate equitably in analytical discussions with my classmates and teacher• Based on the learning, I can sketch a design for using the tortilla as a canvas and finalize that sketch in a completed drawing, painting or collage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can explore ideas via resources and colleagues so that I can successfully develop a lesson on this topic• I can take educational and personal risks to develop thoughtful and instructive lesson (s) that include visual art• I can inventory students to understand what background information may be necessary as introduction for art lesson• I can develop a gallery walk for students with completed images mounted and arranged on wall

Materials

- Sketch Paper
- Tortilla Canvases
- Water colors
- Colored Pencils, Crayons and Markers
- Magazines or other visual materials that can be cut up.
- Scissors
- Glue
- Index cards
- Background cardstock (paste images on)
- Post-its for gallery walk.

Activities

1. As teacher, you should prepare background activities for your students using any information in the lesson introduction, lessons on Teaching for Change website, or others you construct so that students have enough background information to engage in the Tortilla Art Project. With the poem and the Paula Nicho Cumez reproduction, there are opening questions for Socratic seminar. In *Putting the Movement Back in Civil*

Rights Teaching, there is a longer explanation of Socratic seminars using a Danny Lyons photo.

2. After the students and you have had discussions, based on news stories, photos, visual images, poetry, or other sources, construct a T-chart of themes and images. Brainstorm 5-6 common themes. This can be accomplished through full class discussion preceded by Think Pair Share or Think Write Pair Share. You could narrow the themes to nouns or adjectives, which evoke themes of feeling. Then ask the students to imagine what images might be connected to the each theme to “get the creative juices going”.
3. Prepare 1-2 examples of tortilla art images yourself (one might be drawing or painting and one might be a collage), prepare description card, and use the rubric (see below) to examine the image in pairs, trios or quartets (you could copy them for use by small groups). At least one of the examples should include words or phrases.
 - What theme (s) that we discussed are in the image?
 - How does this connect to our discussions?
 - What process do you imagine I used to do this?
 - What rubric rating would you give this image?
4. Prepare materials and position or divide in ways that are appropriate for the ways you organize your classroom. Divide class into peer groups or pairs. Pass out tortilla canvas when you have seen the sketch. Circulate in the room asking probing questions related to rubric guidelines? Make clear statements of praise related to rubric and suggestions if appropriate:
 - a. How would you....?
 - b. Consider this: _____
 - c. I am seeing ____ but I am not sure about _____
5. Provide directions about steps and have students repeat steps to each other.
 - a. Step One: Decide on theme and images to represent them.
 - b. Step Two: Sketch on scratch paper and check it out with a peer(s) to get feedback, using rubric.
 - c. Step Three: (a) Gather appropriate materials; (b) create image on tortilla; (c) prepare small index card with name, artist, medium and one sentence description of the image and meaning.

Artist: Lynda Tredway
Title: Crossing My Heart to Cross the Border
Medium: Collage and Colored Markers
The image represents how each person has to take a leap of faith and be true to his or her heart in order to make the difficult journey.

- d. Step Four: If time, meet in peer feedback pair or group to examine final image according to rubric.
- e. Step Five: Participate in gallery walk (the gallery walk can include comments on post-its using the rubric or can return to background preparation texts -- students can choose quotes from those readings to put with images.

f. Step Six: Debrief the process

6. Create gallery walk by posting tortilla art. You may want to do this in the thematic areas you had at start of lesson.
7. Debrief entire process using four square process (form attached in resources)

Rubric for Tortilla Art Project

Image = the tortilla drawing, painting or collage the student creates

	Above Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Below Expectations
Content	Content focus of image clearly connects to background reading and discussion	Content focus of image connects to background reading and discussion	Content focus of image to background reading and discussion is not fully clear
Process	Often connects ideas in discussion to the text and ideas of others Engages in artistic process to draft ideas	Connects ideas to readings in discussion, but does not always connect to others' ideas Engages in artistic process to draft ideas	Is not able to use readings to make connections to text or to ideas of others Artistic process is not fully clear
Product*	Tortilla image fully represents a concept Tortilla image exceeds successful completion of the task and uses artistic products in ways that communicate strongly to the observer	Tortilla image represents a concept Tortilla image is successfully completed with artistic tools provided	Tortilla image connection to concept is unclear Tortilla image is partially completed

* Some students are typically more adept at visual representations than others, but the criteria do not value artistic talent. All students who make a strong attempt and fully connect analysis to image and product can receive a high score.

Mending Wall

Robert Frost, 1874 – 1963

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

Opening Question for Socratic Seminar (or discussion)

Mending Wall

Below is a range of responses to the mending wall. How does Frost think of the wall? Find evidence in the poem to support your choice.

Strong Support-----Support-----Neutral-----Impediment-----Strong Impediment

Paula Nicho Cumez

[Paula Nicho Cumez](#), named by some as Guatemala's most important Maya woman living artist, provides images in her work that could be used in a discussion or Socratic seminar to "unpack" the feelings of leaving.



Opening Question for the image below:





Which adjective best describes the image of woman as angel leaving her country and going across *la frontera*? (might need to change adjectives to other synonyms words for K-3 or if you have other choice, substitute those)

- Resolute (showing determination and purpose)
- Ambivalent (not totally sure about her choice)
- Transported (being carried away)
- Nostalgic (yearning, homesick)



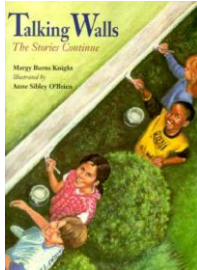
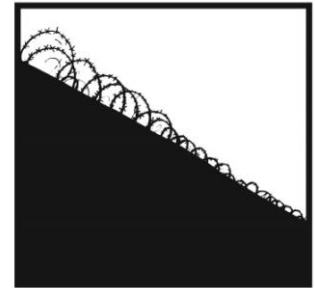
Four Square Debrief

+ = useful Δ = change that might be helpful

 <p>Content +/-Δ How content are you with content?</p>	 <p>Questions and Suggestions</p>
<p>Process +/-Δ</p> 	<p>Affirmations/Appreciations</p> 

Related Resources

Artist [Mary Franck](#) has created a logo of the border and speaks of crossing the border as a dehumanizing experience. Creating logos might be a way for students to “enter” this project differently.



Two books by Margy Burns Knight (author) and Anne Sibley O'Brien (illustrator) entitled [Talking Walls](#) and [Talking Walls: The Stories Continue](#), provide succinct and useful introductions to historical and current walls that tell the stories of many civilizations (great nonfiction reading text!).

News articles and images might provide a way to talk about the actual journey the children are taking to the border, such as [this one](#).



[John Moore /Getty Images](#)

[Here and Elsewhere exhibit at New Museum, NYC](#)

<http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/>

The New Museum in New York City exhibit, entitled “[Here and Elsewhere](#)”, asks us to examine our attitudes about where here is and references Edward Said’s notion of new critical attitudes toward art and images that encourage us to look “elsewhere” in order to understand our “here.” In particular two artists are relevant to the discussion of walls and boundaries, refugees and migration.

Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili traces the arduous journeys of African and South Asian migrants going to Europe through a series of eight videos using maps. Her exhibit in a Miami museum “investigates the experiences of identity, immigration, and transience. Working primarily in film and video, she reflects the nomadic and often transnational state of existence that defines life for many people throughout the world. Khalili uses a mode of poetic documentation to illuminate the lived realities of an increasingly mobilized world”

<http://www.pamm.org/exhibitions/project-gallery-bouchra-khalili> .

Another Moroccan artist, considered “outsider art” because of his medium choice and lack of formal training is Mohamed Larbi Rahali (Tétouan, Morocco, 1956). Mohamed Larbi Rahali collects the matchboxes thrown out by the customers of local cafes in his hometown of Tétouan and modifies them using a wide range of techniques to tell stories of his everyday life. He draws inspiration from sources such as television, overheard conversations and everyday life in this city in the Rif, and records them in these matchboxes that he always carries around in his

pocket. Filled with landscapes, portraits, geometric designs and collages, taken together they form a rich and varied journal. From Artist Bio: Museum of Contemporary Art Exhibit, Barcelona, 2014. See [matchbox art](#).

Omri means "my life" in Arabic. Oum Kalthoum's famous 1964 song Enta Omri (You are my life) made the meaning of this word more connected to passion than to any other in the Arabic language. [[Source](#)]

larbi rahali is an amateur fisherman and his passion is fishing in large seas. Omri presents extracts of the artist's "life" who considers his jacket pockets as his studio, the matchbox as his canvas, his hand as his easel, and the world as his model. rahali's matchboxes hold his observations, dreams and meaningful keepsakes. From daily life scenes and reproductions of classics to expressions and intimate notes, the artist has created within these boxes a collection of interior and exterior views. Rahali sails the Straits of Gibraltar, the closest passage between Europe and Africa, where ancient legend has it Heracles separated the two and where modern day legends tell of the many African children who are tempted to cross. The artist-fisherman is 'witness' to the stories he illustrates in his miniatures.

Before Our Eyes. Other Cartographies of the Rif (Barcelona Museum exhibit) "explores the tradition of expeditions in the complex region of the Rif to reflect on how this specific context can be translated into artistic production at the present time. Their works will question our perception of history, its meanings and the narratives that construct it in a very specific context"

Edward Said—than new critical attitudes toward art and images that encourage us to look "elsewhere" in order to understand our "here."