

Title: Inside the Labyrinth

Grade Ranges:

 K-4
 5-8
 X 9-12

Subject Tag:

Arts and Music: Visual Arts
Family and Consumer Sciences

Synopsis:

This lesson plan combines artistic expression with self-analysis and investigation. After studying labyrinths and mazes from various cultures, students will choose whether to create a diagram of a labyrinth or a maze that breaks down their lives into a series of turning points. Students will need to understand the difference between labyrinths and mazes in order to decide which to create. A labyrinth has one path that is usually used for meditative purposes while a maze has many divergent paths and traps and one must work to find the way out. Using images along the path to signify various stages of their lives, students will use their chosen structure to examine their own lives. They will look back at turning points of the past and then create paths to their desired futures.

Keywords:

mazes, labyrinths, paths, routes, life history, plans, exploration, future, past, self investigation, self-analysis

Body:

1. Students should be encouraged ahead of time to bring copies (not originals) of images that are significant to them. These images might be of places they have been, awards they have won, or of people they have known. They can also be more abstract in their significance, like an image of a seed to represent the beginning of a life. Keep these images small in size so they will fit along the path of a labyrinth/maze.
2. Give students at least half an hour to review the Web sites on labyrinths and mazes listed under Related Links.
3. Discuss:
 - What is the difference between a labyrinth and a maze?
 - What did you learn about the cultural history of the labyrinth by looking at these sites?
 - What is the difference in appearance between a maze and a labyrinth?
 - Which one do you consider more like the path of your life?
4. Ask students to choose between a labyrinth or maze to represent the path of their lives so far. Have them draw that path freehand on inexpensive paper. Have them draw it three to five times to get a feeling for the rhythm of the path. This labyrinth or maze need not look like any of the images they looked at on the Web as long as it maintains the main elements — i.e., for labyrinths there should be one continuous path, and mazes should have many divergent paths with one that goes to the end.

5. Hand out reasonably-sized sheets of card stock (approximately 12" x 12") to each student. Have them create light drawings of their mazes and labyrinths.
6. These drawings will become the templates for students to look at their lives. At this point they can also think of their projects as being like game boards — these are the games of their lives with all the twists and turns and snags. Students should find where they are on their labyrinth or maze and chart backwards to the beginning in loose chronological order. Students should divide their lives into the number of paths they have made in their drawings. Wherever there is a turning point or a split between paths, students should count it as a place where their lives makes some sort of change. (It is too late at this point to come up with new drawings of their paths.) Encourage students to look at events that might not have seemed dramatic or significant at the time, for instance: meeting someone for the first time, trying new food, or choosing to play one instrument over another. In addition, encourage students to think abstractly.
7. Have students draw, collage, and apply text to their page to tell stories of their lives so far.
8. Once they have investigated their pasts, students will project themselves forward into the future. They should come up with a goal (this could be as far in the future as retirement or the end of their lives or as near as college) and illustrate the path to this goal in the same way that they displayed their pasts.
9. Before they finish their work, students should darken the lines of their mazes/labyrinths. The final product should look unified and fill up the page.
10. Have students share their work with their classmates. Discuss how the works are similar or different and how the paths compare to each other. Be careful not to allow students to make value judgments. Have students give feedback on the overall aesthetic qualities of the various artworks. Ask students whether it was easy to look at their pasts and their futures this way.
11. Display the works where others can see them.

Related Links:

Yahoo! Directory Religion and Spirituality Symbols: Labyrinths

http://dir.yahoo.com/society_and_culture/religion_and_spirituality/symbols/labyrinths/

Yahoo! provides a great list of links on labyrinths as religious and spiritual symbols. Nearly all the links have brief descriptions about their different features such as the labyrinth locator on the World Wide Labyrinth Project site. Through these sites students can find out about the history of ancient and modern labyrinths and their significance. Students can also find tips on building a temporary or permanent labyrinth, comparisons of labyrinths and mazes, and photographs and drawings of different labyrinths.

Labyrinths Around the World

<http://www.ashlandweb.com/labyrinth/>

This informative site has images and notes about labyrinths as they are found in various cultures, including European and Egyptian. The site features an extensive article on labyrinths in Native American art and history.

Mid-Atlantic Geomancy

<http://www.geomancy.org/labyrinths/index.html>

This site covers all kinds of information about labyrinths and mazes, including how to draw them, information on their purposes and history, and images.

Features:

- Contains special education tips
- Quick Activity (less than 30 minutes; story starter)
- Requires Internet access for students to complete

Objectives:

Students investigate their own paths, understanding that there are different ways to look at the concept of getting somewhere in life. Students develop ways to use metaphors and images to tell their stories. Students share their stories with one another to create a sense of common effort.

Standards:

NY: 1: Creating, Performing and Participating in the Arts. Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts. **2:** Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources. Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles. **4:** Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts. Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

NYC: A1a. Design a Product, Service, or System: Identify needs that could be met by new products, services, or systems and create solutions for meeting them. **A2a.** Make an oral presentation of project plans or findings to an audience with expertise in the relevant subject matter. **A4a.** Learn from models.

CT: 5. Analysis, Interpretation And Evaluation Students will reflect upon, describe, analyze, interpret and evaluate their own and others' work. **6.** Connections Students will make connections between the visual arts, other disciplines and daily life.

NJ: 1.3: All students will utilize arts elements and arts media to produce artistic products and performances. **1.6:** All students will develop design skills for planning the form and function of space, structures, objects, sound, and events.

Prerequisite Skills:

1. Students should be open to self investigation.

Time Required:

Four to five hours

Technology and Materials Needed:

1. images brought in from home by students that represent something about where they have been or what they have done in their lives. They will use these images as collage materials in their work so they should be encouraged to bring photocopies rather than originals.
2. Internet access to review mazes and labyrinths
3. collage materials
4. glue
5. paints and brushes
6. markers
7. scissors
8. inexpensive paper
9. card stock
10. pencils

Assessment Criteria:

1. Is the overall piece unified and aesthetically pleasing?
2. Are students able to illustrate events in their lives abstractly?
3. Are students able to see the seemingly less dramatic moments as worthy of documenting?
4. Do students use appropriate materials to present their ideas?

Recommended Lesson Plan Review Date:

Review Comments:

Check Web sites.