

## Lesson Plan: Taking Up Space

### Examining the Weightless Artistry of Ruth Asawa

Meets the learning standards for grades 4-5 (can be adapted)

Media Type: Fiber Art

Subject Integration: Fine Arts, English Language Arts, Social Studies



Description of the Activities/Workshop: Using Fine Arts and Social Studies lenses to explore the concept of location, residency, and space; Using fine motor skills, observation, form, and shape to create suspended string sculptures inspired by artist Ruth Asawa

Why am I teaching this: *Arts Integration Thread* (to catalyze the learning of content outside of art), *Art Skills Development Thread* (to deepen the development of art-making skills)

Materials: writing materials, school glue, yarn/twine/embroidery thread, balloons (various shapes and sizes)

Special Equipment: scissors, hot glue gun (optional)

TEKS: 110.6/110.7 knowledge and skills 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12

113.15 knowledge and skills 5, 21

113.16 knowledge and skills 5, 19, 20, 21, 23

117.114/117.117 knowledge and skills 1, 2, 3, 4

Lesson/Activity provides exposure and interaction to 10 New Vocabulary Words/Concepts:

Contour, Weight, Mass, Volume, Organic, Lobe, Timeless, Endurance, Internment, Residency

**Focus Question:** How do Ruth Asawa's suspended wire sculptures challenge our ideas of weight, mass, volume, confinement, and openness?

**Opening:**

Ask Learners if they have ever heard of the sculptor Ruth Asawa. Allow a few minutes of independent research for them to search online for pictures of her suspended wire sculptures.



**Activity 1:**

1. Present Learners with this article about Volume and Mass, and instruct them to read from the top of the article down to the section labeled "Implied Mass":  
<https://app.sophia.org/tutorials/elements-of-art-volume-mass-and-three-dimensional>
2. Lead Learners in a discussion of Ruth Asawa's sculptures and the concepts of **Volume**, **Mass**, and Visual **Weight**.

**Activity 2:**

3. Share this video, The Poetry of Ruth Asawa's Sculptures:

[The Poetry of Ruth Asawa's Sculptures](#)



4. Prompt Learners to use their social studies knowledge to examine the relationship between Ruth Asawa's time in an **internment** camp, and the materials and shapes that compose her sculptures. Prompt Learners to consider line, shadow, space, confinement, movement, stillness, **residency**, and repetition. What might the **lobes** represent? What might be the significance of open shapes? Discuss!
5. Instruct Learners to author a short essay incorporating all 10 vocabulary terms from the lesson, as they relate to Ruth Asawa's artwork. Encourage learners to use metaphor, analogy, simile, and poetic language in their essays.

**Activity 3:** (VIDEO) [A+ Lesson: Taking Up Space](#)

Special Instructions/Tips:

- Learners can work in teams or independently.
- Keep in mind the **organic contours** and **lobes** of Ruth Asawa's sculptures and choose balloons of a variety of sizes and shapes.
- This project is MESSY: thoroughly cover all work surface to protect from glue drips.
- Balloons will need to be suspended to dry but can be suspended at the beginning of the project for easier application.

6. Pre-cut your string/twine/yarn into pieces approximately 12 inches in length
7. Dip the String into the school glue and then pull the string through your fingers to remove the excess glue.
8. Wrap the string around the balloons in multiple layers in directions.
9. Suspend the balloons and allow them to completely dry.
10. After the string is completely dry, brush with another layer of glue and allow it to dry again.
11. After the string is dry, pop the balloon!
12. Now it is time for assemblage. You may choose to trim or modify some of the pieces to create more complex shapes. (Refer again to the sculptures of Ruth Asawa and some of the **timeless** shapes she used.)
13. Components can be joined with hot glue, or it can be tied together with string or wire.
14. Share... Reflect! How do Learners feel about the way their sculpture is Taking up Space?

**Review of Vocabulary for this Lesson:**

**Contour**- an outline, especially one representing or bounding the form of something

**Weight** (visual)- Visual weight is the term given to compositional elements within an image and how much visual impact they have. Some things will feel heavier or more present within the image in comparison to other elements.

**Mass**- a body of coherent matter, usually of indefinite shape and often of considerable size

**Volume**- the amount of space that a substance or object occupies, or that is enclosed within a container, especially when great.

**Organic**- relating to or derived from living matter

**Lobe**- a curved or rounded projection or division

**Timeless**- not affected by the passage of time or changes in fashion.

**Endurance**- the fact or power of enduring an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.

**Internment**- the state of being confined as a prisoner, especially for political or military reasons.

**Residency**- the fact of living in a place.