



## **Jean-Michael Basquiat, Work Plan**

### **Description/Narrative**

To create is to cause something to come into being or existence. Artists, working in many styles or genres, practice creativity by coming up with new and unique styles or ways of making things using their intellectual inventiveness, imagination, intuition, and talent. The things these artists create may be unusual or one of a kind. They may also be the result of an unusual technique or an adaptation of a traditional method.

Whatever the result of this creative process, the created thing will probably be beyond expectations. The forms, ideas, or methods may transcend traditional rules or patterns and present a different perspective.

The following lessons will explore the works of three artists who practice creativity in three distinctive ways in the fields of visual and literary arts. The lessons will also provide opportunities for the teachers and learners to practice their own creativity.

### **MINNESOTA STATE STANDARDS**

#### **Language Arts**

##### **Reading and Literature Strand**

- Understand the meaning of texts using various strategies
- Demonstrate interpretive, inferential, and evaluative comprehension

##### **Writing Strand**

- Compose various pieces writing
- Write clearly and coherently for effective communication

##### **Speaking, Listening, and Viewing Strand**

- Demonstrate understanding and communicate effectively using active listening and dynamic speaking

#### **Arts - Theater Strand**

- Use movement, sound, and language to create and express ideas

#### **Arts - Visual Art Strand**

- create visual artwork from various materials

### **THEMATIC LEARNING GOALS**

- examine and learn about the life and work of three African American artists
- understand that everyday occurrences can serve as inspiration for creative expression
- find joy in creating visual and literary art

### **BASIC ACTIVITIES FOR EACH LESSON**

- read, listen to, and view artwork
- participate in discussion using ***critical response***
  - \* what did you *sense*? Describe in detail
  - \* what does it remind you of? Something heard, seen or felt before
  - \* feeling? What emotion or mood is communicated?
  - \* what questions would you ask the artist about the work?
  - \* what do you think this work is about? What observation/experience supports your idea? What evidence does the artist give to support your idea?
- creative time — focusing on your own ideas to create work
- sharing created works with the class or wider community

### **LESSON 3**

Jean-Michel Basquiat (December 22, 1960 - August 12, 1988), was a painter best known for his graffiti style and large-scale art works full of symbols, sayings, and crossed out words. He was encouraged by his mother and started drawing at an early age. The two of them often visited museums and galleries and drew together almost every day. She provided him with art supplies and his father who was also artistic, provided scrap paper from his job. He drew all of the time on whatever was available. While Jean-Michel was recuperating after an automobile accident, his mother gave him a copy of Gray's Anatomy which served as a reference and inspiration for many of the figures which appeared in his later works.

When he was seventeen years old, Jean-Michel left home and quit high school a year before he was to graduate. To make ends meet, he walked the streets of New York and sold T-shirts and postcards featuring his artwork.

Jean-Michel Basquiat first attracted the attention of the established art world for his graffiti under the name "SAMO" which he created with his close friend, Al Diaz. They tagged subway trains and Manhattan buildings with cryptic aphorisms.

In 1980, Mr. Basquiat participated in The Times Square Show. It was his first public exhibition. In 1981, he had a solo show in Italy and sold his first painting.

For the rest of his short life, Jean-Michel Basquiat created art that spoke in a voice that was uniquely his own. He often used a three-pointed crown symbol as a way of celebrating Black people as majestic, royal, and artistic. He established and then lost friendships, partied all the time, misused drugs, became a recluse from time to time, and created thousands of drawings and paintings some of which sell for millions of dollars in today's art markets.

This enigmatic and very creative artist burned as a bright flame for a short while and then was gone. We are left to gaze at his work and then fan our own creative flame.

There are many books written about his life and work. In 1996 a biographical indie film entitled *Basquiat* was released.

**Activity:** A 12" X 12" X 12" Artwork created from ~~nothing~~ **something**

**Text:** A list of 12 quotes that Jean-Michel Basquiat said about himself and his art

**Materials:** A small collection of materials and objects found around the house (be sure, you have permission to use them), perhaps things from the recycling, newspapers, magazines, toys, and other 'found' objects. Various art supplies (pens, pencils, crayons, paint, markers, etc).

1. using one or two of the quotes as inspiration, begin to assemble the found objects to make a 2D or 3D work of art. This may be assembled in any way you wish. It is your interpretation, your creative expression.
2. your artwork may **NOT be larger than 12" X 12" X 12"**
3. when complete, exhibit and share your art with classmates using **critical response questions** to start the conversations.

## **RESOURCES, REFERENCES, MATERIALS**

Stephoe, Javaka, Radiant Child: The Story of Young Artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, Little, Brown and Company, New York, Boston, 2016

**Jean-Michel Basquiat**, African American Registry®

MATERIALS FOR 12”X12”X12” ARTWORK Created from ~~NOTHING~~ **SOMETHING**  
collected/found objects/pictures and texts from newspapers and magazines  
various art supplies

***Quotes by Jean-Michel Basquiat***

1. Believe it or not, I can actually draw.
2. I am not a black artist; I am an artist.
3. I like kid's work more than real artists any day.
4. I cross out words so you will see them more; the fact that they are obscured makes you want to read them.
5. The black person is the protagonist in most of my paintings. I realized that I didn't see many paintings with black people in them.
6. I don't listen to what art critics say. I don't know anybody who needs a critic to find out what art is.
7. I start a picture and finish it. I don't think about art when I am working. I try to think about life.
8. The more I paint, the more I like everything.
9. I wanted to be a star, not a gallery mascot.
10. There is beauty in everything. Just not everybody sees it.
11. It's not who you are that holds you back, it's who you think you're not.
12. Happiness will find you when you stop hiding.
13. Your life is your message to the world. Make sure it is inspiring.
14. Art is how we decorate space; music is how we decorate time.
15. Every single line means something.
16. Fire will attract more attention than any other cry for help.
17. I had some money; I made the best paintings ever. I was completely reclusive, worked a lot, took a lot of drugs. I was awful to people.