

# LOS TEJANOS A PLAZA IN TEXAS IN THE 1930'S

An Exploration of Culture through Art  
Based on Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills

Grades Four through Six



**UTSA** INSTITUTE OF  
**TEXAN CULTURES**  
*A Smithsonian Affiliate*

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# Introduction

Dear Educator,

Carmen Lomas Garza’s “A Plaza in Texas in the 1930’s”, currently on display in our *Los Tejanos* exhibit, offers a glimpse into the past and the details of a unique culture. This resource guide provides students with a visual way to connect with a previous era. Students will use critical thinking skills to analyze and make personal connections to “A Plaza in Texas in the 1930’s”. The contents of this guide are based on Art and English Language Arts TEKS for grades 4 through 6, but some activities may be modified for lower grades.

For additional resources and information on ITC exhibits and tours, please visit

<http://www.texancultures.com/resources/>

If you have any questions or would like more information on materials, resources and services for students and educators, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,

The Institute of Texan Cultures

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## Using This Educator Guide

*An Exploration of Culture through Art* includes a variety of activities for the classroom. Feel free to use some or all of the lessons included. Not all of the activities need to be completed for students to engage with the art. While all of the lessons are meant to meet the needs of grades 4-6, some lessons may need to be adapted for the learning levels of students.

### Background Information:

“A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's” by Carmen Lomas Garza is currently on display at the entrance to the newly installed *Los Tejanos* exhibit at UTSA’s Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, Texas. The exhibit explores 500 years of Tejano culture through major themes and life experiences, focusing on cultural encounters, foodways, ranching, education, and making a living.

Tejano cultural traditions are reflected throughout Texas. In architecture, music, and art, you can see and hear Tejano influence all around you. The plaza depicted in the mural is based on Spanish-influenced plazas throughout Texas.

According to Spanish tradition, the plaza was the starting point of a new town. It served as the social center of the community. Typically a church, *kiosco* or bandstand, walkways, and benches are major features of a plaza.

Traditionally the plaza was the site of *paseos*, or promenades, as well as vendors, musical performances, and *ferias*, or fairs.

Carmen Lomas Garza depicts the daily lives of Mexican Americans based on her experiences in Texas and California. Her paintings help create connections to the past and educate people that are unfamiliar with Mexican American culture.

### Goals & Objectives:

The following goals and objectives are woven throughout the lessons provided in this guide. These objectives help students identify and connect with important thematic concepts that will come up throughout their studies in art and culture.

- The analysis of art can result in developing a different perspective about a work of art.
- Viewing and analyzing a work of art from a different culture can highlight themes that connect to the viewer’s own life.
- The different elements of art and mood help the viewer develop a personal understanding of the work of art.

### Classroom Activities:

*See-Think-Wonder* – This activity allows the teacher to facilitate discussion on the painting. Includes an educator guide and a student handout that will allow students to keep notes on their learning. Adapted from Harvard Project Zero.

*Ask Questions, Seek Puzzles* – This activity helps students think about how to generate questions about a work of art through discussion. An educator copy and student handout are included.

*Thematic Investigators* – Students will look at the painting through different themes to gain a different perspective, analyze and infer about the artwork.

*Comparing and Contrasting Mood* – Students will use the current painting and a new painting, “Black Madonna”, to gain an understanding of how mood is created.

*Elements of Art* – Students will go over four important elements of art and see their connection to patterns in the painting.

*Create a Poem* – Students will create a poem and small work of artwork highlighting the important elements of the painting.



Carmen Lomas Garza. A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's. 2015. Acrylic and oil on birch plywood. 36 in. X 48 in. UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures. San Antonio, Texas. Reproduced and used by permission. ©2015 by Carmen Lomas Garza.

## See-Think-Wonder – Educator Copy

Begin by facilitating discussions of the selected work of art. This activity encourages looking at, thinking about, and extracting meaning from a work of art. This activity can be used flexibly and lends itself well to individual, small-group, or whole-class work.

Before you begin, instruct students to:

- Look carefully at the work of art.
- Talk about what they observe using descriptive language based on what they see.
- Back up their ideas with evidence (what makes you say that?).
- Listen to and consider the views of others (no talking while others are talking).
- Discuss many possible interpretations (all ideas are valid and should be considered with a positive attitude).

### Step 1: I see...

- A. Instruct students to look carefully at the artwork for a few moments. Ask them to quietly take in as many details as possible and let their eyes wander. Ask them to pay attention to the colors, types of lines, lights and darks, the activity that is being depicted, patterns, etc.
- B. Now begin to ask students to verbalize what they see. During this stage of the activity, students simply describe what they see in the work of art and should avoid making any inferences at this time. For example, encourage students to say “I see a yellow circle” instead of “I see a sun” or “I see a man wearing a blue shirt” instead of “I see a policeman”. This gets students to focus on their powers of observation and to take in as much information as possible prior to rendering any judgment. Documenting students’ responses is recommended.

### Step 2: I think...

During this step, students are encouraged to interpret what they are seeing and to make inferences. Ask students to explain what they think the work of art is about or is trying to tell its audience. Encourage students to speculate about the artist’s intention. Students may also evaluate the work and explain why they do or do not like the artwork. As always, ask students to support their ideas with evidence.

### Step 3: I wonder...

Finally, students formulate their own questions regarding the work. Ask the students to ask questions about things that are unclear, state things that they would like to explore about the artwork, or questions they have about the artist or the content. The question can take the form of what they would ask their own students if they were the teacher. No attempt to answer the questions should be made at this time. This will build curiosity and give them a basis for more exploration later.

### What Makes You Say That?

As part of this routine, ask students to support their ideas with evidence by asking “What makes you say that?” or “What do you see in the painting that makes you think that?” You may also say “What is another way you could say that?”, “Please tell me a little more” or “Please explain that a little further.” The idea is to keep the students thinking while making them feel safe and comfortable verbalizing their ideas. This gives students the opportunity to assess their own ideas and statements without feeling like their ideas are “wrong.”

**Here are a few more important tips and techniques for facilitation:**

- Ask open-ended questions. (Best questions require more than a “yes” or “no” response, may have more than one answer, and do not necessarily have a “right” or “wrong” answer.)
- Encourage students to use descriptive language based on what they see in the work of art.
- Require students to back up their ideas with evidence. (What do you see that makes you say that?)
- Summarize students’ comments and ideas.
- Paraphrase comments neutrally.
- Point at the area being discussed.
- Link and frame student comments.
- Provide information about the painting only after students have shared their careful observations, ideas and questions.
- When possible, document the students’ responses.

\*A variation of this activity would be to ask students to respond by using the three stems together at the same time, i.e., “I see..., I think..., I wonder...”. Have the students look carefully at the painting then instruct each of them to tell you one thing they see, one thing they think, and one thing they wonder.

The routine works well in a group discussion but in some cases you may want to ask students to try the routine individually on paper or in a group before sharing out as a class.

**Extension Activity:**

The Elaboration Game

Divide the students into teams of 3-5. Instruct the students to, as a team, identify a specific area of the painting to describe. The first student describes what s/he sees. The second student elaborates on the previous student’s observation by adding more details. The third elaborates on the second and so forth.

**On the next page you will find the questions and prompts without the educator directions.**

Adapted from Harvard Project Zero.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## See-Think-Wonder Visual Analysis

### Observe and Describe

- Take a quiet minute to look carefully at this work of art.
  - What do you see?
- Pay special attention to the elements of art used in the painting.
  - What kinds of lines do you see?
  - What kinds of shapes do you see?
  - What colors do you see?
  - What textures or patterns do you see?
- What is the focal point, or emphasis, of the painting?
  - What part of the painting is your eye most attracted to?
  - Which part of the painting has the most activity? Why?
  - What makes this the focal point?

### I See:

Now, look at the painting again. What is going on in the painting? What new things can you find? Write down at least 5 words or phrases that describe any aspect of the work. Include as many details as you can. Stick to what you see with your eyes. Don't make inferences or judgements yet.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### I Think:

What do you think this painting is about? List 3 things you think about the painting based on what you have observed.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### I Wonder:

Write down one question you have about the painting.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Thematic Investigators

## Directions:

Create eight groups to investigate one of four themes found throughout the painting. Students will be given a question card (below) with four questions to answer. Each question has a follow-up question that allows students to think about their connections to the theme or provide evidence for the main question. Students will answer the questions within their groups, and then meet with the group that has the same question card to discuss their answers. Finally, have students share some of their answers and realizations in a whole class discussion.

## Question Cards to cut out:

### Community

1. Why do you think people are coming to the plaza?
  - a. Would people come to the plaza if there were no events happening? Why or why not?
2. There are many things happening at the plaza. What types of activities do you see?
  - a. Where are these activities commonly seen today?
3. Where do you think the plaza is located in town?
  - a. What makes you think that?
4. What your definition of community?
  - a. How does this picture show examples of community?

### Music & Dance

1. What type of instruments do you see?
  - a. What type of music do you think the musicians are playing?
2. How are people reacting to the music?
  - a. What makes you think that?
3. Where would you expect to see a similar performance in the plaza today?
  - a. How would a performance today compare to the one in the painting?
4. Do you think it's common for a performance like this to be happening at a plaza?
  - a. Why do you think it's happening in the plaza?

### Time & Place

1. Analyze what year it is?
  - a. Other than the title, what evidence do you see of that time period?
2. What day of the week is it?
  - a. What makes you think that?
3. What time of day is it?
  - a. Why do you think so?
4. Where is it? Country? State? City? Region?
  - a. Other than the title, are there any other clues as to the place?

### People

1. Find three instances of adults interacting with children. How do you think the adults are related to the children?
  - a. Why do you think that?
2. Find and describe three people with flowers.
  - a. What are they doing with the flowers?
3. Find and describe the activities of three children.
  - a. Why do you think they are doing these activities?
4. In the top left corner of the painting, there is a priest coming out of a church. Why do you think he is going to the plaza?
  - a. If so, why would he be arriving late?

**Extension Activity:** Have students answer the following prompt for 5-10 minutes.

What do you think is the most interesting theme found throughout the painting? Why?  
Feel free to use one of the themes discussed in class or come up with your own.

# Comparing and Contrasting Mood – Educator Copy

## What is Mood?

### Directions:

- Discuss the definition of mood with students.
- *Mood* is the feeling of reader gets while reading a text, looking an image or watching a video.
- Create a giant T-chart and label one side positive words and the other side negative words. (Two pieces of poster/butcher paper can also be used.)
- Allow students a couple of minutes to create a list of positive and negative feeling (mood) words with a partner.
- Come back together as a class and have students call out positive and negative feeling words. Discuss why the words fit into their category.
- Now ask students to think about how to determine mood. Discuss what clues would be used to help determine mood. It may benefit students to record the discussed answers.

## Comparing and Contrasting Mood

### Directions:

- Ask students to think about how looking at the setting, colors, and people in an image can help determine mood.

### Guiding Questions:

- What types of settings would make the viewer choose a negative or positive word?
- What kind of mood would dark colors represent?
- How can the people in an image help determine mood?
- Look carefully at the painting *Our Lady of Czestochowa*, or the “Black Madonna” and the mother and child in “A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's”.
- Discuss the setting, colors and people in the painting. Select a few of the guiding questions to discuss as a class, or have students complete the *Comparing and Contrasting Mood* handout. The *Compare and Contrasting Mood* handout contains a limited number of guiding questions.

### Guiding Questions & Paintings:

#### Setting:

- I think the people are located...
- What do you see in the background?
- Is there anything special about the background?

#### Colors:

- Are the colors very dark or light?
- What colors do you see?
- Is there any special about the colors?

#### People:

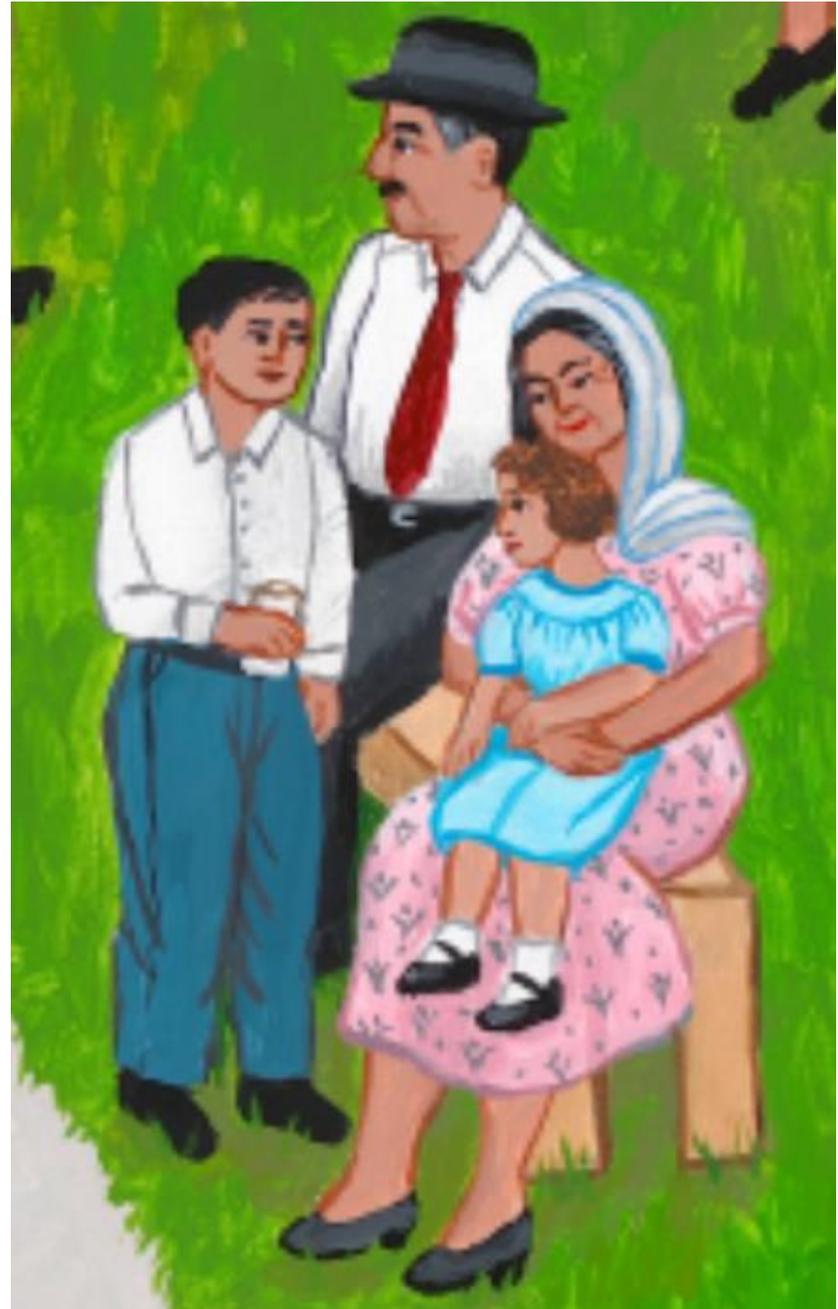
- Who is in the painting?
- What are their expressions?
- Are there any other important details about the people in the painting?

#### Mood:

- I think the mood is \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- Is this an example of a positive or negative mood?



Our Lady of Czestochowa, the “Black Madonna”



"A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's" by Carmen Lomas Garza

- Ask students to look at both paintings and think about how they are alike and how are they different.
- Compare and contrast the two paintings as a class. Look at setting, colors, people and overall mood.

**Guiding Questions:**

- How are the two paintings alike? Why?
- What makes the two paintings different? Why?
- Do the paintings have the same mood? Why or why not?

**Exit Ticket:**

- Have students take 3-5 minutes to answer the prompt:  
How do the painters create different moods in the two paintings?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Comparing and Contrasting Mood

Directions: Using the images to answer the questions below.



### Setting:

1. What do you see in the background?

Black Madonna: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's: \_\_\_\_\_

### Colors:

2. What colors do you see?

Black Madonna: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's: \_\_\_\_\_

### People:

3. What are their expressions? Are there any other important details about the people in the painting?

Black Madonna: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mood:

4. I think the mood for **Black Madonna** is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

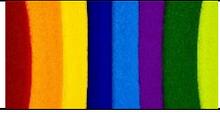
5. I think the mood for **A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's** is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Seeking Patterns

Allow students to identify four elements of art and see the connection to patterns.

Element	What does it look like?
Line	
Shape	
Form	
Color	

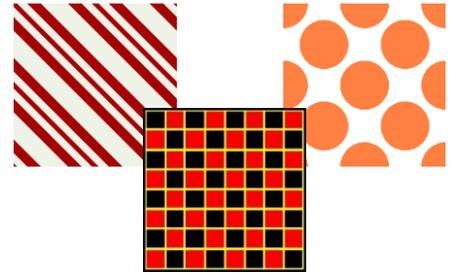
### Identify Elements of Art

As a class, identify the elements of art in the image.



## Connecting the Elements to Pattern

- Pattern is the repetition of similar lines, shapes or forms. Since patterns use the elements of art, it is considered a principle of art.
- There are patterns in nature as well as in man-made designs and may be organic or geometric. Some simple patterns are stripes, polka dots and a checker board.



- There are also more complex patterns. Patterns are very common in wall papers, quilts and clothing.



Wall frieze from the von Rosenberg House in Austin, Texas

- Patterns can also be found in nature, such as the spots on a leopard, the petals of a flower, or the diamonds on a rattlesnake. These types of patterns are called organic patterns.



Armadillo Shell

- Geometric patterns are usually made up of straight lines and perfect circles. Artists use pattern to create interest and texture. Pattern can be used in artwork to depict waves in water, blades of grass, a weave in a basket, or a fancy neck tie.



Baskets

### Pattern Search

**Directions:** Look at the pictures below. Can you find any patterns? How many can you find? Circle the patterns.



Mary Mika wearing a Polish Bonnet



Mosaic of Our Lady of Czestochowa (the Black Madonna), on side altar in Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary Catholic Church, Panna Maria, Texas

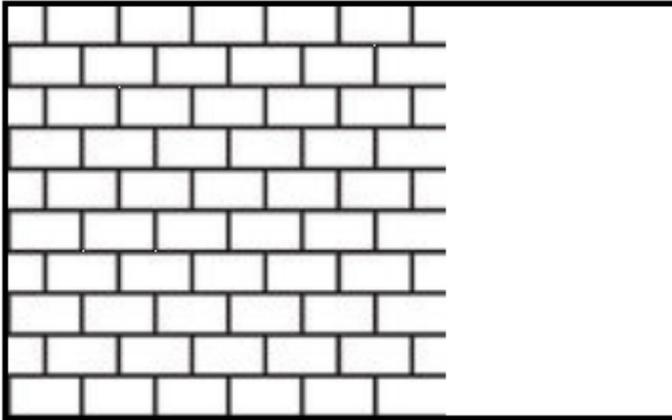


Aurora Apartment Hotel residents, stitching quilt for war relief, March 1942

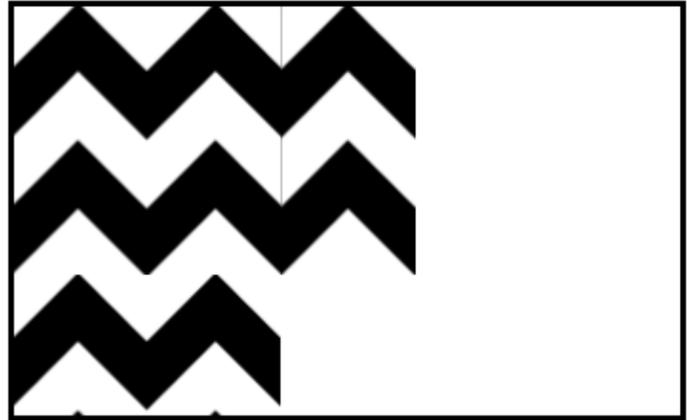


**Finish the Pattern**

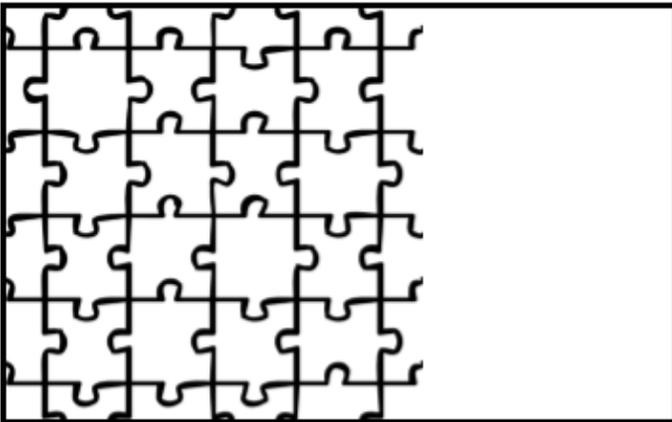
**Directions:** Complete each pattern in the boxes below.



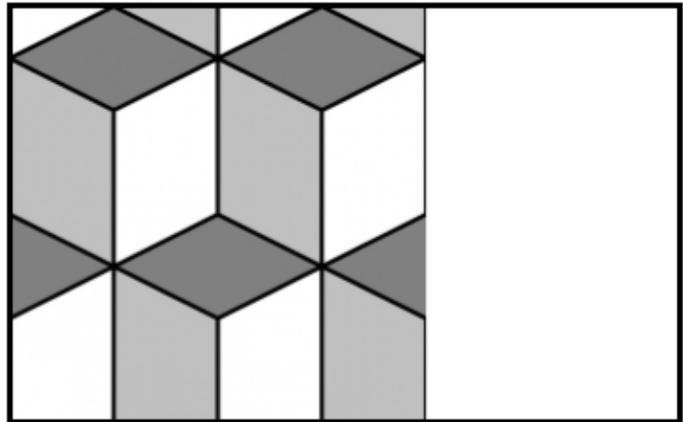
Brick Pattern



Shamrock Pattern



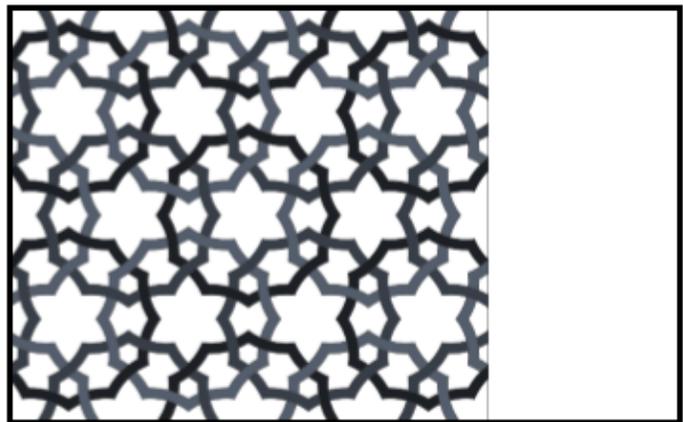
Puzzle Pattern



Q-Bert Pattern



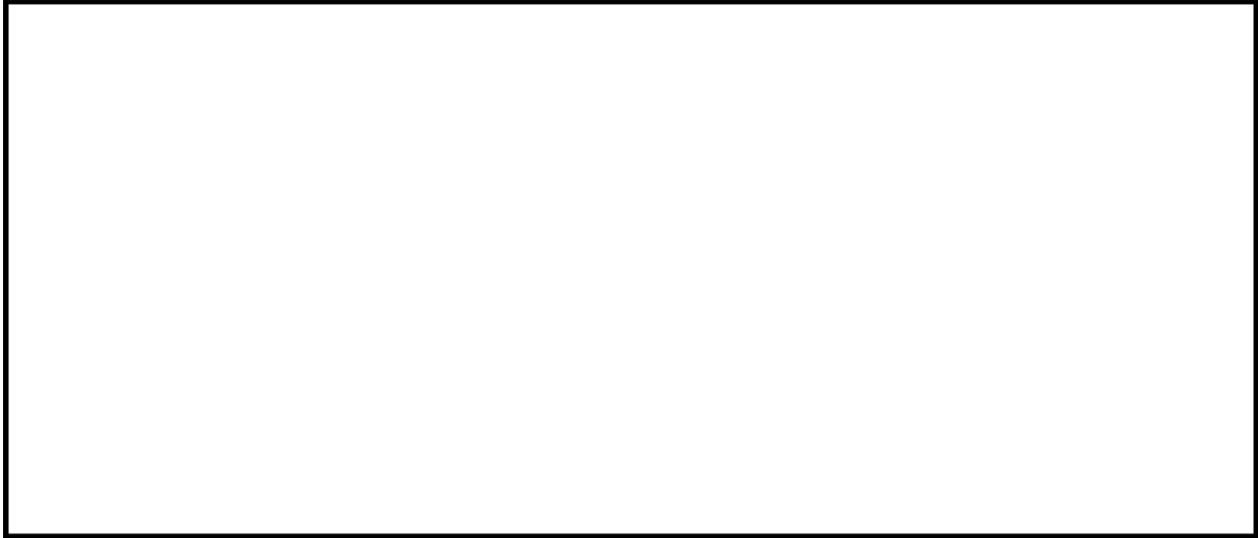
Victorian Pattern



Morocco Style Pattern

## Create Patterns

**Directions:** Create your own patterns in the space provided.



Create Your Own Organic Pattern



Create Your Own Geometric Pattern



Recreate a Pattern from the Painting

## Create a Poem

Have students build on their observations, questions, and ideas by writing a poem using the format below.

### Reflecting Time

#### Directions:

- Allow students a few minutes to look at the painting and reflect on the activities they have done.
- Have students discuss the following questions:
  - What are some elements of art found in the painting?
  - What did we learn about the painting?
  - What are some questions we were unable to answer about the painting?
  - What kind of mood words could be used to describe the painting? Why?
  - If you could create a new title for painting, what would it be?

### Create a Poem

#### Directions:

- Talk about elements of a good poem (connecting ideas, using descriptive language, making it interesting)
- If possible, read a teacher sample.
- Create a whole class sample poem using the format.
- Allow the students to individually use the format below to create a rough draft poem about the painting.

One-word title

Two action words

Three description words (Elements of Art)

A question you have about the work of art

Three descriptive words

Two feeling words (Mood)

One word that completes the statement "When I look at this painting, I think of..."

- Have students share their poem with another student or a small group and receive feedback.
- After sharing their poem, allow students time to edit and revise their poem.
- Have students rewrite their poem onto a piece of construction paper and draw something that connects their poem to the painting.
  - *For example:* If their action words are about dancing, they can draw people dancing. If their question is about the band, they can draw instruments.

## References

Garza, Carmen Lomas. *A Plaza in Texas in the 1930's*. 2015. Acrylic and oil on birch plywood. 36 in. X 48 in. UTSA Institute of Texan Cultures. San Antonio, Texas. Reproduced and used by permission. ©2015 by Carmen Lomas Garza.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. "Artist Comments". *Carmen Lomas Garza*. 2012. Accessed June 18, 2015.

<http://carmenlomasgarza.com/>.

## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Art

**§117.14. Art, Grade 4.** (b) Knowledge and skills. (1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. The student is expected to: (A) communicate ideas about self, family, school, and community, using sensory knowledge and life experiences; and (B) choose appropriate vocabulary to discuss the use of art elements such as color, texture, form, line, space, and value and art principles such as emphasis, pattern, rhythm, balance, proportion, and unity. (2) Creative expression/performance. The student expresses ideas through original artworks, using a variety of media with appropriate skill. The student is expected to: (B) design original artworks; (3) Historical/cultural heritage. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture as records of human achievement. The student is expected to: (A) identify simple main ideas expressed in art; (B) compare and contrast selected artworks from a variety of cultural settings.

**§117.17. Art, Grade 5.** (b) Knowledge and skills. (1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. The student is expected to: (A) communicate ideas about feelings, self, family, school, and community, using sensory knowledge and life experiences; and (B) identify in artworks that color, texture, form, line, space, and value are basic art elements and that the principles such as emphasis, pattern, rhythm, balance, proportion, and unity serve as organizers. (2) Creative expression/performance. The student expresses ideas through original artworks, using a variety of media with appropriate skill. The student is expected to: (B) compare relationships between design and everyday life; (3) Historical/cultural heritage. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture as records of human achievement. The student is expected to: (A) compare artworks from several national periods, identifying similarities and differences; (B) compare cultural themes honoring history and traditions in American and other artworks.

**§117.32. Art, Grade 6.** (c) Knowledge and skills. (1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. The student is expected to: (A) illustrate themes from direct observation, personal experience, and traditional events; and (B) analyze and form generalizations about the interdependence of the art elements such as color, texture, form, line, space, and value and principles such as emphasis, pattern, rhythm, balance, proportion, and unity, using art vocabulary appropriately. (3) Historical/cultural heritage. The student demonstrates an understanding of art history and culture as records of human achievement. The student is expected to: (B) compare specific artworks from a variety of cultures.

## Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for ELA

**§110.15. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 4.** (16) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to: (B) write poems that convey sensory details using the conventions of poetry (e.g., rhyme, meter, patterns of verse). (29) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in teacher- and student-led discussions by posing and answering questions with appropriate detail and by providing suggestions that build upon the ideas of others.

**§110.16. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 5.** (16) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to: (B) write poems using: (i) poetic techniques (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia); (ii) figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors); and (iii) graphic elements (e.g., capital letters, line length). (29) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work

productively with others in teams. Students continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in student-led discussions by eliciting and considering suggestions from other group members and by identifying points of agreement and disagreement.

**§110.18. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 6.** (13) Reading/Media Literacy. Students use comprehension skills to analyze how words, images, graphics, and sounds work together in various forms to impact meaning. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater depth in increasingly more complex texts. Students are expected to: (A) explain messages conveyed in various forms of media; (B) recognize how various techniques influence viewers' emotions; (15) Writing/Literary Texts. Students write literary texts to express their ideas and feelings about real or imagined people, events, and ideas. Students are expected to: (B) write poems using: (i) poetic techniques (e.g., alliteration, onomatopoeia); (ii) figurative language (e.g., similes, metaphors); and (iii) graphic elements (e.g., capital letters, line length). (28) Listening and Speaking/Teamwork. Students work productively with others in teams. Students will continue to apply earlier standards with greater complexity. Students are expected to participate in student-led discussions by eliciting and considering suggestions from other group members and by identifying points of agreement and disagreement.