



# Mixed-Up Mosaics

## Big Idea

Expressing emotion by making and deconstructing artwork

## Your students will:

- Create a work of art that they will then deconstruct and reassemble in a new way
- Share and combine parts of their artworks with their peers
- Experiment with shape, line and negative space



## Visit Philadelphia's Magic Gardens with Freddie

As a class, co-view the clip from the episode **"Mosaic & Wanda the Blob,"** in which Freddie explores Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, an art environment created by artist Isaiah Zagar that's covered with mosaics. Freddie discovers how art allows us to express emotions and can help people understand another person's point of view. Prompt a discussion about the episode. Conversations starters might include:

1. What did Freddie discover at the Magic Gardens about why and how it was created?
2. What did Freddie learn about having empathy? How did looking at the art at Magic Gardens help her understand another person's perspective?
3. What parts of the Magic Garden were most inspiring to you? What questions would you ask its creator, Isaiah Zagar?

## Materials

- 8.5 x 11 inch paper
- Colorful drawing and art supplies (markers, colored pencils, tempera sticks or watercolor paint)
- Magazines, newspaper or other scrap paper
- Scissors
- Gluestick
- Larger, thicker paper for the background (11x17 cardstock paper, pieces of poster board or something similar)



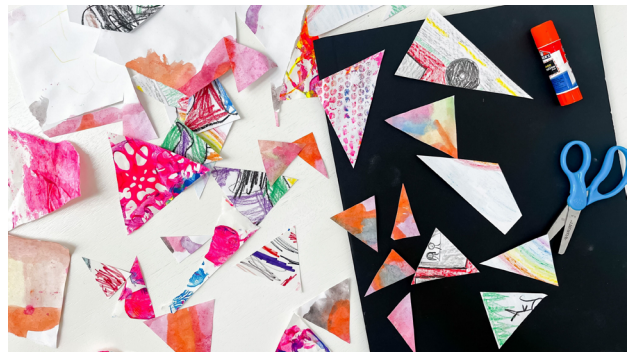
## Lesson Activity

### Teacher Prep:

1. It's important to prepare students that this project is about creating and deconstructing their own art. That means they will be making art and then cutting it up into lots of pieces! Consider demonstrating this for your class by creating your own artwork that you cut up while introducing the project.
2. Let your students know that once they cut up their artworks, they'll be combining them together with their classmates. This project is all about taking something apart and mixing it together with other artists' work to create something new.

### Instructions

1. Invite students to draw a picture on a blank piece of paper using art supplies of their choice, and tell them to try and cover every inch of their paper. Experiment with a prompt that you think would be inspiring to your students like:
  - Draw a picture of a feeling or emotion using just colors, shapes and lines.
  - Draw a picture of something that is upsetting or challenging to you. Remember you'll be cutting up the picture so draw something you'd want to destroy!
  - Let's put on some music. Draw a picture of the sounds you hear using patterns and lines.
2. When they've filled in their whole paper, hand out scissors and invite students to cut up their artworks. We recommend that students all cut their artworks into triangular shards, no smaller than three-inches long, which will help create a more cohesive design when the pieces are combined. Prompt students to reflect on how it feels to take apart their own artwork — it might be satisfying, upsetting, funny or frustrating. All are okay!
3. Invite students to dump all of their artwork fragments in one central space and mix them all up. These will be their mosaic pieces.
4. Hand out the larger pieces of paper to each student. This will be the substrate or base of their mosaic. Allow them to sort through and select fragments from the class's mosaic pieces, choosing enough to fill their paper. They can also add some more triangles cut from scrap paper, newspaper or magazines.
5. Place the selected fragments onto the paper and rearrange into a design or pattern. Consider leaving some negative space in between each shard to think of as grout, or the thick clay-like material that holds together the pieces of a mosaic.
6. Once students have settled on their mosaic design, glue the fragments to the paper.
7. Display the students' completed mosaics together and invite each student to share their reflections on the process of creating, deconstructing and combining their artworks into something new.





## Tips and Extensions

- Experiment with the shape students cut their artworks into. Instead of triangles, try two-inch squares to use as tiles or consider using all kinds of irregular shapes.
- Isaiah Zagar collects discarded objects to incorporate into his mosaics. Incorporate small recycled materials into your mosaics, like paper clips, bottle caps, soda can tabs or buttons.
- Zagar uses words and phrases in his artwork to express emotion. Cut letters out of magazines or write your own letters and add some expressive words.
- In the episode, Freddie creates what Zagar calls a “blob” mosaic, adding objects and tiles into grout. You can mimic this process by pressing and gluing objects into clay.



## School-to-Home Connection

- Students can recreate this project at home as a family, inviting each family member to contribute some fragments of their own artworks to a family mosaic.
- Notice tiled designs and mosaic patterns in your school and your home. Lots of bathrooms and kitchens have tiles laid in grout in different patterns. Subway stations have lots of tiles too.
- Zagar’s mosaics appear all around Philadelphia, not only in his Magic Gardens. Look around your community for pieces of public art, like murals, mosaics and sculptures.

### Vocabulary

**Mosaic:** An artwork made up of lots of pieces, often bits of ceramic tile

**Deconstruct:** To take apart

**Fragment:** A broken piece of something

**Collage:** Artwork made from pieces of cut or torn paper

**Negative space:** The empty space surrounding or left between materials

**Found object:** An item an artist finds, often in the trash or on the curb, that is used in a work of art.

**Grout:** The hardened material that holds pieces of tile or mosaic together

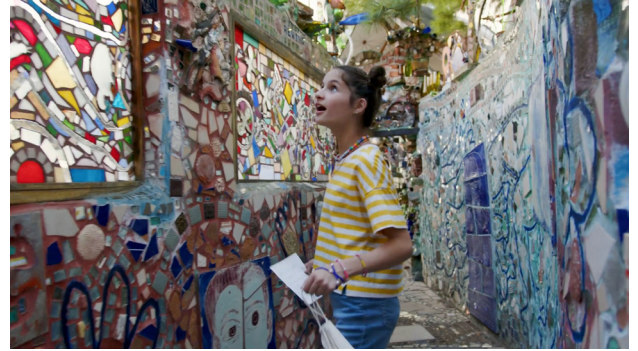




## Related Resources

### More about Magic Gardens

Philadelphia's Magic Gardens is an art environment created by the artist Isaiah Zagar out of objects he's found, ceramic tiles and pieces of his own artwork. The outdoor space is like a mosaic maze that you can walk through. He created Magic Gardens over thirty years and still adds to it today. Making art has been an important part of Zagar's mental health, and he thinks of creating and assembling as a form of therapy and self expression. Learn more about Isaiah Zagar and the themes explored in his work at the Magic Gardens' website, [phillymagicgardens.org](http://phillymagicgardens.org).



### More Classroom Activities

Visit PBS LearningMedia for more lesson plans like this inspired by *The Infinite Art Hunt*.

### Children's Books with Related Themes

Check out these children's books online or at your local library to continue exploring the concepts in this episode.

***The Curious Garden*** by Peter Brown

Liam is sad his city neighborhood doesn't have green space and starts planting a garden that takes on an enchanting life of its own.

***The Most Magnificent Thing*** by Ashley Spires

An innovative young artist tinkers, fiddles and gathers all kinds of objects and supplies using her creativity and perseverance to create the world's most magnificent thing.

***Pezzettino*** by Leo Lionni

Pezzettino is just "a little piece" and tries to find if he's a piece of something bigger. This mosaic-inspired picture book follows Pezzettino on his journey to understand where he belongs.