

# PUBLICS

**ASAP Curriculum derived from arts investigations commemorating and contextualizing Kerry James Marshall's A Monumental Journey (2018), by the Backyard Boyz and Whyld Girls of Children Family Urban Movement with help from artists Jordan Weber, Mat Greiner, and Lee Heinemann.**

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

*Course is assumed to last 60–90 minutes per class with one class per week. It is designed for a classroom of less than 20 students. It will work better with students between the 3rd and 5th grades, but plans and tone could be adapted for younger students.*

This class uses an instrument, participation, and games to describe different ideas of public, with a touchstone of Kerry James Marshall's A Monumental Journey (2018) and work done to investigate and contextualize it

## **WEEK #1**

Ask students to start tapping out three beat rhythms with their fingers, trying different beats. Ask them to tell stories about a time they went to a library or a pool, or times when they yelled outside.

Introduce the talking drum. Discuss how African griots (“gree-oh”) are traveling story tellers. They save and share news and stories across villages and generations. They use a talking drum to help tell their stories. The talking drum makes different pitches by squeezing its middle cords. It can be made to sound like talking, but not like words or sentences.

Have each student take a turn using the talking drum to repeat their three beat composition as a rhythm. Ask them to use it to “say something” to another student. Ask them to pretend they have different emotions when they drum.

#### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Talking Drum

## **WEEK #2**

Discussion: What does “public” mean? Ask students to articulate what they know about the word, ‘public,’ and steer towards areas that intersect schools, parks, swimming pools, speech, libraries, and other services. It can be interesting to also discuss ideas of human rights, and ask the students to consider whether publics have an obligation to rights. Public spaces and services such as parks, city plazas, and libraries have a close affinity to freedom of speech, for example. It is worth considering a right to an education, or to health and freedom from harm.

This is a big topic, but discussion should be limited to ten minutes or less. You can return to it later.

Some things a public is:

- a place where everyone can say what they want and expect to be heard.
- a group of people - a neighborhood or community
- a service provided freely to that community
- a shared resource that everyone is equally in charge of and responsible to

Activity: Ask students to each act out what they would normally do in their favorite public places. They might want to work in groups to pretend. On three sheets of paper, ask students to draw themselves in their three favorite public places.

#### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Sheets of 9x12 drawing or watercolor paper
2. Markers, paints, brushes, pencils, etc.

## **WEEK #3**

Show GDMPAF short video: A Monumental Journey.

Discuss the way the sculpture is made from 13,000 unique bricks. Every brick is different. Have students use black markers to make a 4x4 grid on three sheets of 9x12 paper. They should make variations of rectangles in these grids. No one rectangular shape should be like any others by that student. They might make them big, small, curved, cut off corners, etc. Have the students cut out their bricks and glue them into the silhouette for a public sculpture on a 18x24 sheet of paper.

### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Sheets of 9x12 drawing or watercolor paper
2. Sheets of 18x24 watercolor paper
3. Black markers
4. Scissors
5. Glue sticks

## **WEEK #4**

Show GDMPAF short video: Founding the National Bar Association.

This video discusses the importance of civil liberties. Talk (briefly) about the importance of standing up to make your own opportunities and do what's right. Demonstrate basic cardboard construction techniques (roll the cardboard into cylinders or fold it for strength, make simple angles, show how to tape the seams. Ask the students to use cardboard boxes to make obstacles and string them all together so the students can run the obstacle course.

### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Video display technology
2. Empty boxes
3. Scissors
4. Masking tape, duct tape
5. Hot glue

## **WEEK #5**

Show GDMPAF short video: CFUM Youth Art Response.

Talk about how the artwork made by CFUM students relates to a talking drum.

Who is it for? Who is talking and who is hearing? Is there room for others to talk there? Ask the same questions about A Monumental Journey.

Ask students to draw on and make a megaphone by drawing on a sheet of paper with only black marker and taping the paper into a cone shape. Ask each student to say something important to them through their megaphones.

### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Video display technology
2. Sheets of heavy 9x12 paper
3. Black markers, various widths
4. tape/staples/gluesticks

## **WEEK #6**

Show GDMPAF short video: Kerry James Marshall. This video discusses the artist's work and career. What obstacles did he overcome? Rotate students through teams of three. For each turn, two students draw in secret. One student will draw an obstacle (flat tires, rivers to cross, etc.), a second student will draw a "tool" (which can be anything from a kite to a monkey), and the third student must imagine and describe a way to use the tool to overcome the obstacle.

### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Video display technology
2. Paper
3. Pens, markers, pencils, etc.

## **WEEK #7 (OPTIONAL)**

Students make small cardboard models of the sculptures they designed in week 3 and describe where they would put them.

### *SUPPLIES & RESOURCES*

1. Cardboard, mat board, cardstock, watercolor paper
2. Scissors (X-Actos or utility knives if students are old enough to be safe)
3. Masking tape, duct tape
4. Hot glue