

# Old-Sch

**H**ave you ever felt so inspired by an emerging artist that you jump right into creating a lesson plan for your students because you want to share your excitement with them?

That is how I felt when I recently saw the work of the contemporary street artist, WRDSMTH. I instantly fell in love with the artwork, the concept behind it and, also, the mysterious nature of the artist himself.

**WRDSMTH FIRST APPEARED** on the art scene in November 2013 and since then has been “tattooing” his conceptual artwork mostly in Los Angeles, but has also marked Chicago,



**Art by WRDSMTH. Photo by Dimitri Lorin. Reproduced with permission from the artist.**

New Orleans, New York, West Palm Beach and a handful of other places around the world. His popularity continues to grow.

Like a superhero, he works under the mask of night and secretly installs his messages on public spaces such as vacant building walls, electrical control boxes and telephone poles. These messages can be whimsical, motivational and/or about love and relationships. WRDSMTH hopes to create an impact on (and per-

haps even inspire) those individuals who come across his work wherever they may come upon it. I was so inspired myself by WRDSMTH’s artwork that I developed my own lesson plan to share with children.

**DAY 1** To begin this lesson about WRDSMTH, I showed my fifth-graders a presentation that I created. During the slideshow, some of the things we discussed were: different types of street art; why an artist would choose not to use his real name or be recognized in public; why he uses the typewriter image (symbolism); and which part of WRDSMTH’s art is most important—his message or image? One of my students shared how she could feel that WRDSMTH’s messages “really came from his heart.”

After our group discussion, students went back to their tables to brainstorm their own message ideas in their sketchbooks, and to practice using letter stencils. My students were excited to come up with their own messages and my heart melted at how incredibly inspirational they were!



▲ **Lucy, who had felt that WRDSMTH’s messages truly came from his heart, reflected that same sentiment in her own piece.**

< **Even though Maxwell’s gold Sharpie bled a little when he moved his plastic letter stencil, he kept the “mistake” to reinforce his message.**

**DAY 2** Once the students decided on which messages they were going to use, they stenciled them onto white drawing paper using Sharpies. The children had to ensure that their words fit within the six-inch space width of the paper and that they were spelled correctly. I offered a couple of different letter stencil sizes: shorter messages required the larger stencils while longer, wordier messages required smaller stencils.

During this class period I also handed out to each student a photocopy of a drawing that I made of WRDSMTH’s typewriter image, which students cut out, careful to leave a little white space around the entire image. Some children also had time to begin to enhance the image using Sharp-

# School Inspiration

by Anne Hoffman

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Upper-elementary students will ...

- learn about the street artist WRDSMTH.
- brainstorm, research and create their own positive messages.
- learn how to use letter stencils, focusing on how to neatly fill in and align letters.

## NATIONAL ART STANDARDS

- **CREATING:** Organizing, developing, refining and completing artwork.
- **CONNECTING:** Synthesizing and relating knowledge and personal experiences to make art.
- **RESPONDING:** Perceiving, analyzing and interpreting artistic work.

ies and/or opaque paint markers.

### DAYS 3, 4 AND 5

When my students had completed designing their messages and typewriters, they used glue sticks to adhere the paper to mat boards. We were fortunate to have a local frame shop donate a stack of 16" x 20" mat boards for this project. The mat boards came in a variety of both visual and actual textures, as well as colors, which made it fun for the children to pick out the one that "spoke" to them and created unity with their artwork.

My fifth-graders were then able to further embellish their mat boards by using sequins, shape stencils and shapes punches. One creative boy even used paper clips along the border to show his individuality and to make his work feel more "old school"!

During the entire span of this project my students felt so happy to be creating work that would be displayed throughout our school, which would inspire, motivate and simply make everyone feel good.

This lesson is also highly versatile in that it can be taught anytime during the school year and to a wide variety of grade levels, and it benefits both the artist and viewer! ■

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## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What kind of things have you seen or heard that have inspired you in the past?
- How has WRDSMTH impacted people's lives by creating his artwork in public spaces?
- How can we promote the same positivity here within our school?

## MATERIALS

- Typewriter handout
- Scissors
- Mat board with visual or actual textures
- Glue sticks and/or glue dots
- 1-inch letter stencils
- Fine-point and extra fine-point Sharpie® markers, opaque paint markers
- 6" x 12" white paper
- Variety of media to embellish artwork



Go to [artsandactivities.com](http://artsandactivities.com) and click on this button for resources related to this article.

- < Grant felt that attaching paper clips to the border would make his artwork look more "old school."
- ✓ Brianna chose a simple, yet bold design using a limited color palette and sequins.

