

“Personality Preserves”

— Sharon Richards

Arts Education, Grades 8–9

Design rationale

One of the key understandings that this project elicited was that the visual arts can be a really powerful way for students to share their learning in a way that may not be possible in other disciplines.

Big Ideas

- Individual and collective expression can be achieved through the arts.
- The visual arts use a unique sensory language for creating and communicating.

Curriculum Competencies (What students will **DO**)

- Intentionally select and apply materials, movements, technologies, environments, tools, and techniques by combining and arranging artistic elements, processes, and principles in art making
- Demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of personal, social, cultural, historical, and environmental contexts in relation to the arts
- Take creative risks to express feelings, ideas, and experiences
- Describe, interpret, and respond to works of art

Content (What students will **KNOW**)

- Manipulation of elements, principles, and design strategies to create mood and convey ideas in the arts
- Processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, strategies, and techniques to support creative works

Core Competencies

Creative Thinking

- Novelty and value

Personal Awareness and Responsibility

- Self-determination

First Peoples Principles of Learning

- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one’s actions.
- Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.
- Learning requires exploration of one’s identity.

Materials and technologies

- Glass paints or other paints suitable for decorating on canning jars and lids
- Canning jars, canner, single burner, lids, and so on for waterbath canning
- A variety of materials chosen by students to decorate the jars
- An assortment of “found objects” and other materials collected by students to fill their jars

Pre-class preparation

- Create a slideshow presentation to showcase Aganetha Dyck and her work to the class. (You may need to refer to *Copyright Matters: Some Key Questions and Answers for Teachers*.)
- Research proper waterbath canning methods if necessary.

Resources and references

- <http://www.aganethadyck.ca/>
- <http://www.gibsongallery.com/artists/aganetha-dyck>

Lesson

1. Introduce the class to the work of Aganetha Dyck, and generate a discussion about how or why she chose to create the work as she did. Students may notice that her work comes from her background as a homemaker on the Prairies, or you may need to draw it to their attention. Although it is her work with canning jars that relates most directly to this unit, you might wish to show your students her other work, involving shrinking woollen clothing and collaborating with honeybees, not only because they will likely find it intriguing, but also because that work emerges from a domestic context too.
2. Students will be preserving in a canning jar an aspect of their life. It could be a memory, an important event, a stage in their life, an important relationship, or their values, hobbies, and interests — whatever they feel represents something about who they are. They need to choose what aspect of themselves and their experiences they wish to preserve in the jar. Have them brainstorm a list of possible directions in which this project could go.
3. Once they have decided on the specific subject matter for their jar, they will need to select an assortment of objects that help convey their message. The objects must be able to fit in a canning jar, and they must be prepared for them to undergo a change when they are canned. They might even include objects *because* they have the power to change (e.g., wax crayons will melt and change the colour of the water, and some objects will dissolve, expand, and so on). Please note that nothing too precious should be included, as it may corrode over time.
4. Once the students have filled the jars with their chosen objects, they will be pouring boiling water over and heat-processing their jar and contents in a traditional canner. Review safe and correct procedures for canning in a water bath.
5. When the jars have cooled, students should decorate their jar in a manner that further conveys a sense of who they are, and enhance the message conveyed by the objects inside it. Options include paint, Mod Podge, dipping in wax, attaching other objects, and wrapping with wire and beads.
6. When the jar has been filled, canned, and decorated, have the students complete an artist statement, explaining their choices and showing how the materials and design elements work together to convey an aspect of who they are as unique individuals. Have them reflect on the transformation of their objects through the whole process and determine whether or not the work still reflects who they are.



Assessment/evaluation

- **Choice and voice** — choosing objects, materials, and techniques that represent who you are, and effectively defending your choices
- **Design elements** — how effectively the design elements work together for overall impact
- **Technical proficiency** — how skillfully the jar has been decorated, given the constraints of the materials used
- **Evidence of deeper understanding** — how well the artwork (including the title and artist statement) reveals thoughtful insights about who you are and what's important to you

An example of evidence of deeper understanding was where one of my students placed all of her chosen items in her jar and completed the waterbath processing. She covered the entire thing with torn tissue paper of various colours (absolutely beautifully), using gel medium. When it was dry, she took an X-acto knife and cut small windows out of the paper; in her artist statement, she explained that her reason for doing so was that there are parts of you that even those who know you best don't ever discover and it's only when they really take the time to look that they can get glimpses into who you really are.

She demonstrated a level of cognitive thought that was beyond the other students in the class. All she needed was alternative ways to demonstrate her learning.

Adaptations/modifications

The project is open-ended enough that adaptations and modifications are unlikely to be needed. (There are multiple levels of entry.)

Extensions/possible cross-curricular connections

- The science of home canning
- Environmental stewardship and reducing waste through food preservation
- The changing roles of homemakers over time
- Social Studies and the early life of pioneers

Food Studies 8:

- Social factors that affect food choices, including eating practices (Content)
- Local food systems (processing, preserving, and packaging) (Content)
- First Peoples food use and how that use has changed over time (Content)

Social Studies 8:

- Changing ideas about the world created tension between people wanting to adopt new ideas and those wanting to preserve established traditions. (Big Idea)
- Changes in population and living standards (Content)

Social Studies 5:

- Natural resources continue to shape the economy and identity of different regions of Canada. (Big Idea)
- Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity. (Big Idea)