

Taka – The Art of Paper Mache

NOTE: You will need at least two pieces of newspaper for this lesson.

TEACHER: *What do you see in this photo?*

STUDENTS: **A bowl of fruits and vegetables**

Name some of the fruits and vegetables that you see.

Bananas, an apple, garlic, etc.

You recognized a lot of the fruits and vegetables in the bowl. Some of them you might not know, because they don't grow where you live. These fruits and vegetables are grown in the Philippines. The Philippines is a country in Southeast Asia that is made up of many islands. It is warm and sunny there most of the year, so different fruits and vegetables can grow. Look closely. Do you think this fruit is real or fake? Put your thumb up if you think it is real and put your thumb down if you think it is fake.

(Allow children a chance to put their thumbs up or down.)

Well...if you thought it was fake, you are right! This is not real fruit. But if it isn't real, what do you think it is made from?

Wood, paper, plastic, metal, Styrofoam, etc.

It is hard to tell, but this fruit is made from paper! Each piece has been hand-molded from something called, paper mache. The paper mache used to make this fruit comes from old strips of newspaper. People in the Philippines make many different things from paper mache, including statues of people, animals, masks, bowls, decorations and ornaments. Objects made from paper mache are hard, but usually very light, because they are hollow. What does hollow mean?

Nothing is inside of it

The fruits and vegetables are empty on the inside. The paper mache is kind of like a shell on an egg. But, if you were to crack it open, there would be nothing inside.

(Hold up a piece of newspaper.)

Raise your hand if you think you can tear this piece of newspaper.

(Have one of the kids demonstrate how easy it is to tear.)

Wow...that seemed pretty easy. I guess newspaper is not very strong. Raise your hand if you think you can shape this piece of newspaper into the shape of a banana.

(Again, call on a volunteer to come up and try to make a banana. When they are finished ask the following questions.)

Was it easy or hard to shape the paper?

Easy

It did seem easy for you to shape the paper, but what problems did you have once it was finished?

It wouldn't keep its shape. It was bumpy. It had holes in it. It wasn't hollow.

We know that newspaper is soft, flexible and easy to tear and shape. It seems like a good material to use for making sculptures. But the bananas we see in the photo look very different than the banana we tried to make. How did the artist in the Philippines get the newspaper to become hard, smooth and hollow?

They painted it; dipped it in glue; put the newspaper strips in paste; etc.

The fruit in the photo looks different from our paper fruit, because the artist added a secret ingredient to the paper. Before shaping the fruit, the artist cut the newspaper into strips and dipped the strips into a special paste made from rice flour. The paste makes the newspaper slimy, and helps the paper strips to stick together and stay smooth when shaping the fruit. Once the artist is finished shaping the fruit, the paste will make it hard when it dries, so it isn't easy to tear and won't fall apart.

We learned that the paper mache fruit and vegetables in the photo are hollow. How does the artist make the banana empty on the inside?

Once it is hard he/she cuts a hole and pulls out the paper in the middle; she wraps the paper strips around a balloon, and pops the balloon when it is hard; etc.

The fruit and vegetables are hollow, because the paper strips are formed around a wooden mold, called a "takaan." In Paete, Philippines, people have been carving wood for hundreds of years. A long time ago, someone had the idea to cover wooden sculptures with paper mache. They put a thin coating of wax on the wood before they wrapped the sticky newspaper around it. When the paper mache dried, they took a small knife, and carefully cut a line right down the center of the mold. Then, they pulled the hardened paper off of the mold, just like you would peel the shell off of a hardboiled egg. Once the paper was released in two pieces, they added more paste to the outside, and carefully glued the pieces back together.

Now that we know how the artists made the fruit and vegetables hard, smooth and hollow, what do you think the last step is to making a paper mache sculpture?

Painting the sculptures

When I first showed you this photo, many of you thought that the fruit and vegetables were real. They look real, because after the paper mache artist finished molding them, he painted them too. Paper mache artists like to decorate their sculptures. They use paint to make them colorful, lacquer to make them shiny, and sometimes they even glue on beads, gems, sequins, glitter or ribbons to make them fancy. Especially when they make paper mache masks and ornaments for the holidays.

Paper mache is a popular art in the Philippines, and all over the world. (In fact, the first paper mache was made in China. The same place where paper was invented.)

Now that you know the secrets of paper mache, you can make it too!

Kindergarten Standards:

NYS Common Core Kindergarten Social Studies Standards

- K.2.b Cultures include traditions, beliefs, and shared values and ideas generally accepted by a particular group of people.
- K.2.c Children, families, and communities from different cultures all share some common characteristics, but also have specific differences which make them unique.
- K.9.a Children, families, and communities of today can be compared with those in the past.

Kindergarten ELA Power NYSCCLS (ICSD Power Standards in Bold)

Reading Standards for Informational Text: Kindergarten

- **Integration and Knowledge of Ideas**
 - 7. With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).**

Speaking and Listening Standards: Kindergarten

- **Comprehension and Collaboration**
 - 1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.**
 - a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion).**
 - b. Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges.**
 - c. Seek to understand and communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.**
 2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.
 - 3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.**
- **Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas**
 - 6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.**

Language Standards: Kindergarten

- **Vocabulary Acquisition and Use**
 - 6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.**