FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 6–8 / 36

Neighborhood Letterforms

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 6–8 | 5–7 sessions, 45–60 minutes

Media: drawing, print, collage or approved digital media

The artistic problem

Design an original alphabet fragment inspired by observed local forms.

Essential question: What makes letters feel connected to a place without copying its signage?

Place-based cultural lens: Look at architectural shapes, signs, hand lettering, and civic text in different settings.

Learning targets

- Investigate the question: What makes letters feel connected to a place without copying its signage?
- Apply letter anatomy, gridding, counterforms, contrast in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve letter anatomy and name one next step.

Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Design an original alphabet fragment inspired by observed local forms.
- Artwork includes five coordinated letterforms and a corrected legibility issue.
- Process evidence shows three different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate letter anatomy and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana 5–8 cluster: VA-CE-M1, VA-CE-M3, VA-CE-M5, VA-AP-M1

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Envision, Engage & Persist, Reflect, Understand Art Worlds. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Drawing paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- drawing, print, collage or approved digital media
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level
- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Present the artistic question: What makes letters feel connected to a place without copying its signage? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

02 / Investigate Look at architectural shapes, signs, hand lettering, and civic text in different settings. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

03 / Skill Studio Demonstrate letter anatomy, gridding, counterforms, contrast. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

04 / Generate Develop three possibilities for the challenge: Design an original alphabet fragment inspired by observed local forms. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

05 / Plan Compare sketches to the success check (five coordinated letterforms and a corrected legibility issue); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

06 / Produce Produce an original visual response using letter anatomy, gridding, counterforms, contrast; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

07 / Critique Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of letter anatomy in the work.

08 / Revise Revisit the specific checkpoint: Five coordinated letterforms and a corrected legibility issue. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

09 / Present Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

10 / Reflect Reflect: What evidence proves you improved letter anatomy? What will you try or investigate next?

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Frame the question** What makes letters feel connected to a place without copying its signage?; Look at architectural shapes, signs, hand lettering, and civic text in different settings.	Evidence/interpretation log.
Day 2	**Studio technique** Demonstrate letter anatomy, gridding, counterforms, contrast. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.	Practice sheet with labels about choices.
Day 3	**Generate + commit** Sketch three meaningfully different outcomes.	Three proposals and criteria-based choice.
Day 4–5	**Sustained production** Build the work and conference about letter anatomy.	Process photos and source annotations.
Day 6	**Interpret + revise** Peer feedback related to Five coordinated letterforms and a corrected legibility issue.	Annotated first and revised states.
Day 7	**Present + reflect** Curate the work with evidence and ethical source credits.	Final artifact, rubric and next-step statement.

Key technique to model

letter anatomy, gridding, counterforms, contrast

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Invite multilingual lettering traditions and language choice. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Do not copy existing logos or turn another language's script into decoration.

Stretch & explore

Design one sign using the new alphabet fragment.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.