FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 9–12 / 07

Public Space, Public Voice

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 9–12 | 6–8 studio sessions of 50–70 min

Media: Poster, wayfinding design, collage, digital graphics or mixed media

The artistic problem

Research a public space in Louisiana and propose an original visual redesign, wayfinding system, or public-art concept that communicates better with at least two distinct user groups.

Essential question: Whose point of view gets centered when we design a public place?

Place-based cultural lens: Historical buildings and public spaces are preserved and reinterpreted in New Orleans. Design choices may include visual accessibility, multilingual clarity, youth participation, mobility and public history.

Learning targets

- Document at least two evidence-based user perspectives.
- Design an original visual solution with clear hierarchy, contrast and access considerations.
- Test, critique and refine a prototype using feedback.

Student-visible success criteria

- A research brief with source/context details.
- Three distinct design proposals.
- A legible design prototype showing hierarchy and intended users.
- An annotated revision based on accessibility or audience feedback.
- An ethical presentation that distinguishes research from inference.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana 9–12 cluster: VA-CE-H2, VA-CE-H3, VA-CE-H6, VA-HP-H1, VA-AP-H6

Studio Habits of Mind: Envision, Develop Craft, Understand Art Worlds, Reflect. 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

- Public-space photos or sketches gathered legally
- Paper, markers, collage or vector software

- Rulers, grid sheets, color contrast checker (optional)
- Permission/consent information
- Design brief and critique form

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Compare two views of the same public place; discuss whose perspective each privileges.

02 / Investigate Observe a site safely or use open public documentation; identify users, histories and access barriers.

03 / Skill Studio Model visual hierarchy, legibility at distance, cropping, viewpoint and basic wayfinding systems.

04 / Generate Develop three concepts with audience, hierarchy and access notes.

05 / Plan Choose a concept using evidence, constraints and affected-community questions.

06 / Produce Create a poster, public-art proposal or wayfinding prototype with supporting mock-up.

07 / Critique Peer role-play tests readability and social meaning; label assumptions as assumptions.

08 / Revise Redesign typography, route, imagery or language choice in response to evidence.

09 / Present Present proposal with context, limitations, potential users and a consultation plan.

10 / Reflect Identify what needs authentic community consultation before any real installation.

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Perspective audit** Compare public-space viewpoints and research questions.	Initial observation/context log.
Day 2	**Community context** Source evidence and map possible user needs.	Annotated brief; claims and uncertainties.
Day 3	**Skill + concepts** Visual hierarchy demonstration; three sketches.	Design checkpoints.
Day 4–6	**Prototype + test** Create proposal and peer test at intended viewing distance.	Iteration log and accessibility notes.
Day 7	**Critique + refine** Use audience simulation and feedback.	Before/after prototype.
Day 8	**Public presentation** Present with evidence and limitations.	Rubric, artist/designer statement.

Key technique to model

Visual hierarchy, poster design, viewpoint, type as image, scale, user-centered prototyping.

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Offer accessible site photos, remote observation instead of travel, alternative output formats, accessible type and contrast checkers, oral prototyping conferences.

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

A classroom design exercise is not community consent. Do not place art in public spaces or claim to represent a community without permission and appropriate public processes.

Stretch & explore

Design a paired proposal comparing resident and visitor experiences, using verified rather than invented user testimony.

Design provenance: High-school extension of source investigation 2, Extreme Viewpoints, and the source's design-for-diverse-users standard.