



# The Eclipse

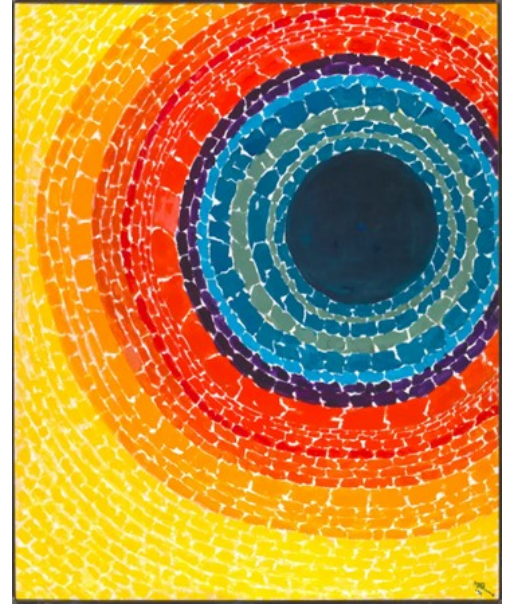
Art  
 Inspires  
 Art

ART DOCENT LESSON PLAN

# Alma Thomas

### ABOUT THE ART:

Alma Thomas’s early art was realistic, though her Howard professor James V. Herring and peer Lois Mailou Jones challenged her to experiment with abstraction. At age 70, when she retired from teaching and was able to concentrate on art full-time, Thomas finally developed her signature style. She debuted her abstract work in an exhibition at Howard 1966, at the age of 75. Thomas’ abstractions have been compared to Byzantine mosaics, the Pointillist technique of Georges Seurat, and the paintings of the Washington Color School, yet her work is quite distinctive. Thomas became an important role model for women, African Americans, and older artists. She was the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art, and she exhibited her paintings at the White House three times and this piece, Eclipse, is now part of the White house permanent art collection.

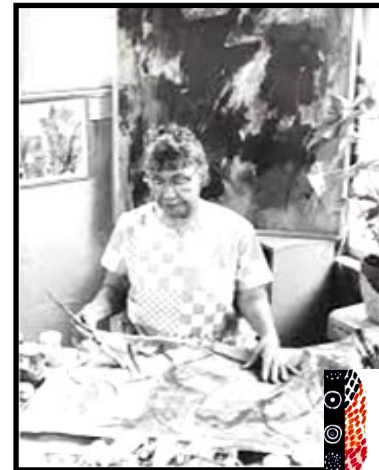


Guidance: allow enough time so that each student can comment on the artwork. Add art terms where appropriate.

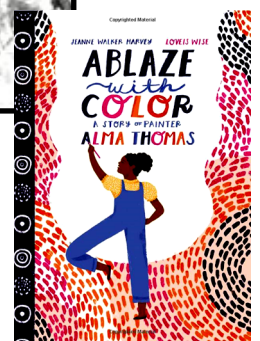
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### ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Alma Thomas was born in Columbus, Georgia, the oldest of four girls. As a girl, Thomas dreamed of being an architect and building bridges, but there were few women architects a century ago. Instead, she attended Howard University, becoming its first fine arts graduate in 1924. In 1924, Thomas began a 35 year career teaching art at a D.C. junior high school. She was devoted to her students and organized art clubs, lectures, and student exhibitions for them. Teaching allowed her to support herself while pursuing her own painting part-time. As a black woman artist, Thomas encountered many barriers; she did not, however, turn to racial or feminist issues in her art, believing rather that the creative spirit is independent of race or gender. Thomas frequently talked about "watching the leaves and flowers tossing in the wind as though they were singing and dancing.



\*Additional reading resource: **Ablaze with Color** (a story of Alma Thomas’ for children



**ART STYLE:** **Abstract art** is a **departure from reality**. It releases the creative energy of people and provides them with the freedom to explore their minds and emotions in a way that was impossible in traditional styles of art.

### RESOURCES:

<https://nmwa.org/art/artists/alma-woodsey-thomas/>

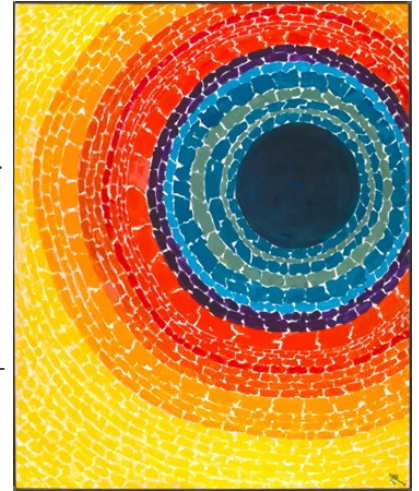
<https://www.virtosuart.com/blog/abstract-art-definition#:~:text=Abstract%20art%20is%20a%20departure%20from%20reality.%20It%20is%20an%20expression%20connecting%20the%20feelings%20and%20vibes.>

# Art Concepts and Lesson Goals

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## Art Concepts:

1. **Color:** identify color in this painting. –how is the use of primary colors and color proportion used to effect the over all feeling of an “Eclipse” in this painting?
2. **Line:** Identify different types of line. Identify line used to creating shape, pattern, and texture.
3. **Shape / Form:** Identify different shapes; positive/negative and geometric shape. Are these shapes real or unrealistic (abstract).
4. **Value:** Identify different types of color scale in this painting. –different values of blue and yellow for example.
5. **Space:** Positive is represented by the blue color or the “moon” and negative space is represented by the yellow colors which represent “space” in this painting.
6. **Texture:** identify different textures: are these shapes made to feel soft (fluid) or more rigid?



## Art Principals:

1. **Balance:** Radial balance; Color is focused in the center and moves outward in a radial “circular” motion.
2. **Emphasis / Focal Point:** varies with each viewer: in this case the color dark blue at the center of the radial pattern.
3. **Movement:** created by the eye moving from the focal point, in this case the color blue and then moving through to the least dominant color of yellow.
4. **Pattern / Repetition:** created by the repetition of the rectangular shape and colors in a linear manner (variety).
6. **Rhythm:** illustrated through the repetition of the rectangular shape in a linear and radial manner.
7. **Variety:** How are the elements of line, shape, and color used to guide the viewer’s eye through and around this art work?
8. **Unity:** discuss with the students what creates the feeling of harmony: Is it accomplished through Color balance and Radial balance. What makes this painting look or feel good to you?.

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## OVERVIEW:

**Practice Communicating:** *Discuss ideas and feelings illustrated through this art work*

**Learn & Recognize the Element of Art:** *Focus on grade level appropriate Elements and Principals listed above*

**Use tools:** *Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Using composition to tell a story in abstract art*

**Observe Common Core Standards:** *Recognize, create, & compose shapes (geometric) and imagery.*

**Assessment and Reflection:** *Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative art making goals.*

## Warm-up (optional)

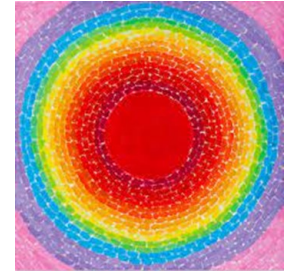
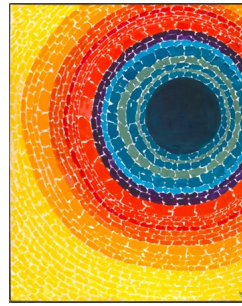
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**PRACTICE :** Think about the image you would like to create for this project. Remember that abstract art taps into the emotions of an idea and refines this down to basic shapes and colors. Think about the image you would like to create, mentally simplify this to its basic form; create some quick sketches if you need to. Think about the emotions different colors represent, how will you use these colors to express the “idea or feelings” you wish to portray in your completed work of art?



# Alma Thomas Art Project Materials

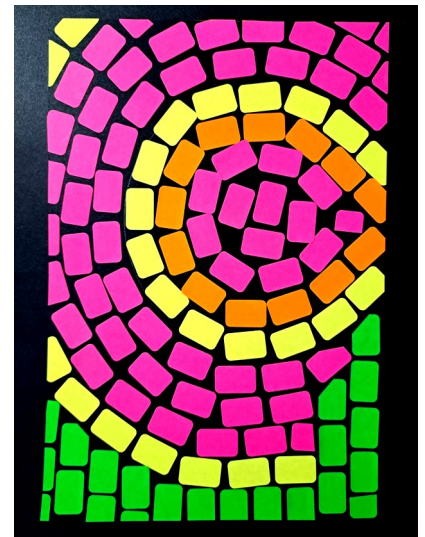
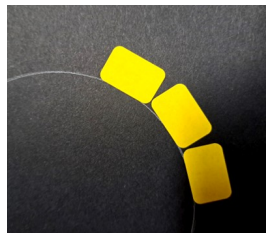
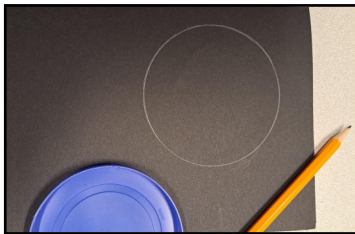
- 1/2 sheet black or white construction paper / cardstock.
- Pencil and eraser
- Scissors
- Multi colored adhesive squares or rectangles—no larger than 1”x1”
- Circle template (optional)



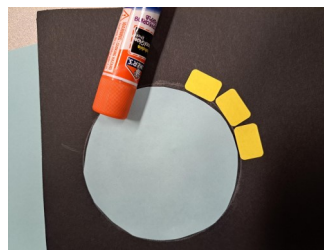
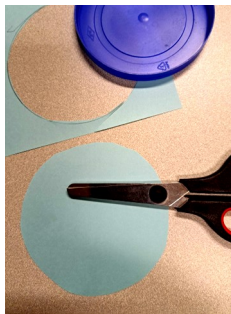
## Project Directions

1. In this example the students will create the radial balanced image as seen above in “Eclipse”
2. Using a circular template (lid or the bottom of a water glass) students will lightly trace a circle either in the center or slightly off to one side of their sheet of paper using a pencil.
3. **(Option 1)** Using this circle as a guide, students will begin to press the first color of adhesive shapes along the guiding edge of the circle drawn in pencil. The pencil can be erased later.
4. They will continue repeating this process building the circle outward and inward towards the center, to fill in the center the adhesive rectangles can be cut in half before sticking them down on the black construction paper. Remember to carefully plan your color patterns before putting the stickers on the black paper.
5. **(Option 2)** A circle can be cut out of colored paper and glued into place instead of using the stickers to fill in the center. See image to right.
6. As the circle becomes tighter towards the center, the adhesive pieces can be cut in half. This will make it easier to fill in the smaller spaces towards the center.

**Note:** As students put the adhesive pieces down near the edge of their paper, allow the pieces to extend off the edge of the paper. When they are done simply have the student flip the paper over and trim the overhanging pieces with scissors.

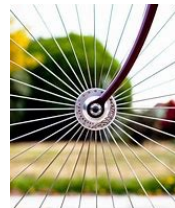
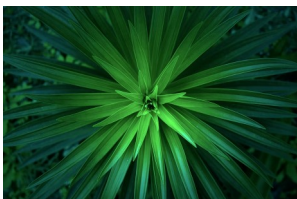


Option 2 sample



## Art Terms

**Radial Balance:** Radial balance, otherwise known as radial symmetry, is symmetry or balance in multiple directions and has a clear central focal point that extends outwards toward other elements.



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Green River College Foundation

<https://www.greenrivercollegefoundation.org/ica>

# Project Materials

Black or white construction paper / cardstock.  
Pencil and eraser  
Scissors

Acrylic paint (2nd variation)  
Sponge brushes or sponge cut into rectangles  
Paper plates

Colored Markers or oil pastels (3rd variation)



## Project Directions

Students will begin by thinking about the image they would like to create in its simplest shapes and colors. Think about the emotions different colors can represent. If needed students can draw a simple image in pencil lightly on their paper as a reference. These lines can be erased later.

### **Variation #1:**

1. Once students have drawn some basic lines of reference on their paper, they will select the first color of paint they want to use as part of their image and using the sponge/sponge brush they will lay down small strokes of that color moving from one edge of the paper to the other; following for example a horizon line if they are doing a landscape.
2. They will continue to repeat this process using the same or different colors as they build out their image. See examples to the right.
3. Allow paint to dry. Once paint is dry any pencil markers can be erased at this time.



Students will begin by thinking about the image they would like to create in the center of their drawing. This image should be something simple that they can draw by hand and should reflect something about that student. i.e. a soccer ball if they play soccer. Think about the emotions different colors can represent. If needed students can draw this simple image in pencil lightly on their paper as a reference. These lines can be erased later.

### **Variation #2**

1. Create a simple image of something that best represents you. This can be placed in the center of your paper or slightly off to one side of your paper.
2. Using colored markers or oil pastels begin making rows of colored dashes that encircle your image at the center.
3. Continue to build out these rows moving out towards the edges of your paper using various rows of colored marker or oil pastels. See image to the right.



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# Alma Thomas

Alma Woodsey Thomas was born in Georgia. At age 15, Thomas and her family moved to Washington, D.C., where she was able to take art classes for the first time. She later attended Howard University ( the composer Adolphus Hailstork attended Howard U. also), where she was convinced by another artist to change her major from home economics to art. She was the first woman to earn a degree in art from Howard. Alma taught art at Shaw junior high school for 35 years.



- ◆ In her spare time, Alma Thomas worked from her Washington, D.C. home—in her kitchen.
- ◆ Thomas’ abstract art uses color to express feelings and movement.
- ◆ Alma was always inspired by nature and some of the events occurring around her.
- ◆ She broke her subject down to its simplest forms and concentrated on using symbolism, refining her imagery to its most basic form to tell a story - her story. Similar to the black spirituals, which are very simple compositions using simple lyrics, African Americans expressed their spirituality, their stories and life experiences, as well as using these songs to build community.
- ◆ Like the spiritual you just heard, some of Thomas’ works have a spiritual feeling. For example, her piece called Resurrection. This piece is on display in the White House. The Obama’s added her painting to the White House permanent collection. Alma is the first black female artist to have this done.



- ◆ During her life Alma experienced events that became the subject of some of her artwork.
  - 1968 Civil Rights Movement
  - 1969 Man lands on the moon



Alma Thomas, *Blast Off*, 1970, Acrylic on Canvas, 188 x 137 cm, Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, Washington D.C.



Apollo 11 Liftoff 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1969



Additional Artwork by Alma Thomas





