

LESTER FIZZ, Bubble-Gum Artist

Written by Ruth Spiro

Illustrated by Thor Wickstrom

Activity Guide

About the Book

Born into a family of artists, Lester Fizz feels he doesn't fit in... until he discovers his own unique talent in an unexpected medium – bubble gum! Lester Fizz and his family are influenced by many well-known artists, whose paintings, sculptures and photographs are referenced throughout the text and illustrations. Readers will recognize works inspired by Edgar Degas, Winslow Homer, Frida Kahlo, Dorothea Lange, Henri Matisse, Georgia O'Keeffe, Pablo Picasso, Georges Seurat, Vincent Van Gogh and more. Surrounded by these works of artistic genius, Lester Fizz finds his own hilarious path to creative expression.

Standards

Lester Fizz, Bubble-Gum Artist is ideal for classroom use and offers many curriculum connections:

IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts
Standards 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

National Standards for Arts Education
Content Standards # 2, # 5, # 6

Discussion Questions

1. Which of Lester's bubbles is your favorite? Why?
2. Have you ever felt that your work wasn't good enough? What did you do about it?
3. Uncle Edgar asks Lester, "*What do you want to see?*" What do you think this means?
4. Do you have a special talent?

Writing Activities

1. Provide images of the original paintings listed in the art glossary at the back of the book. (Older students can do this research as part of the activity.) Ask students to choose a painting and write a story about what happened before, during, and after the scene depicted.
2. Write a letter from Lester to another character in the story. What would he say to Uncle Edgar? Cousin Cornell? His art teacher? How would that character reply?
3. What other materials could Lester have used to make art? Choose one and describe what his final masterpiece would look like.

Vocabulary

Using clues from the context of the story, ask students to write a definition for each word. Then, ask students to find the definition in a dictionary. How does context help convey meaning?

colossal
flabbergasted
fuchsia
dabbled

inspiration
restraint
consider
spectacular

stupendous
flair
drab
unique

Extensions: Write an original sentence using each word, or draw a picture that illustrates the meaning.

Art Activities

Create a “Cornell Collection”

Joseph Cornell collected materials such as keys, buttons, springs, and scraps of sheet music, then arranged them in display boxes, usually centered around a theme. Have students create their own “Me” assemblage in a shoebox (cut the lid to create dividers), or as a two-dimensional collage using images from magazines.

“Most Spectacular Bubble Ever”

Have students create their own “most spectacular bubble ever,” either as a line drawing like in the book, or using other materials, such as modeling compound or papier maché.

Illustration Critique

Choose an illustration from Lester Fizz, Bubble-Gum Artist to practice the four main areas of art criticism:

1. What is taking place? What colors, lines, shapes, and movement do you see? (Description)
2. What do you think is most important in the work? Why? (Analysis)
3. How does this work make you feel? Does it remind you of anything else? (Interpretation)
4. Do you think this work has succeeded in communicating an idea? (Evaluation)

Artist Word Search

Available as a reproducible handout

Resources

NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts
(www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm)

National Standards for Arts Education
(artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm)

Joseph Cornell – Navigating the Imagination
Peabody Essex Museum
(www.pem.org/cornell/#)

ARTCYCLOPEDIA
(www.artcyclopedia.com)

About the Author

Ruth Spiro had **dabbled** in writing, but didn’t **consider** writing a children’s book until she found the **inspiration** for this **unique** story in a comment by her daughter. She usually exercises **restraint** in her work, but this **spectacular** idea would have made a **drab** tale, had she not written it with **flair**. Ruth is **flabbergasted** by the **stupendous** response to *Lester Fizz*, and her face turned **fuchsia** upon learning it recently appeared on a Chicago Bestseller list – a **colossal** achievement for *Lester Fizz*, and for Ruth!