

# Jacob Lawrence: Brownstones, 1958

## Planning Session for a Visual Arts Unit of Study

Michal Bixon  
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### BRAINSTORMING:

Neighborhood; houses; stoops; entrances; many people; adults, children, babies; black; African American; activity; motion / movement; postures; gestures; busy vs. leisure; colorful; shapes; inside vs. outside; people in windows; dog; eye level; relationships; repetition; alone vs. together; different emotions; commotion; people in different sizes; games.

### THEMES:

- Emotions
- Movement
- Placement
- Shared Space / Community

### VISUAL ELEMENTS:

- Body Gestures
- Point of View
- Shape
- Color
- Size

### PEDAGOGICAL LINE OF INQUIRY:

- Where is the scene happening?
- Who are the people? What are they doing?
- What are the relationships between the people?
- What can you see through the windows?
- What is the difference between the people inside and outside?
- How do you know who is close to you and who is far away?
- What kind of emotions do you see? Who do you know they feel that way?

### ARTISTIC LINE OF INQUIRY:

- How do the people's gestures imply motion? How do they imply emotion?
- How does the size of the people show the distance away from you?
- How does the placement of the people show the general mood?
- What kind of shapes do you see and how do they help depict motion and the general mood?
- How does color affect the mood and emotions?

**ACTIVITIES:** For a visual arts unit of study targeted for first grade students.

### SKILLS ACTIVITY:

Volunteer student gets a card specifying an emotion and an activity that implies motion. The student performs a gesture according to the card and the students guess the activity and feelings of the student. The students then sketch the performing students using pencils. They could use the butterfly or shapes technique or any method they choose.





### **CREATIVE ACTIVITY:**

The students observe the school yard at recess time and discuss what types of gestures they see that depict activities and feeling. They use sketching to remember what they saw. They then create their own school yard with student at recess using their sketches as a reference. They can use paint, crayons, or collage as their medium.

### **FOLLOWUP ACTIVITY:**

Look out your own window at your neighborhood and its people. Create your own neighborhood painting / collage using gestures of people you see depicting activities and emotions. How many people did you see on the street? What were they doing? What was the general mood?



### **CONTEXT:**

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#### **SOCIAL SCIENCES:**

My Neighborhood. Interview people in the neighborhood, examine types of houses, compare neighborhoods between students.

#### **LANGUAGE ARTS:**

Write a story based on Lawrence's Brownstones painting. Read books telling stories about special neighborhoods.

#### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CONTEXT:**

Discuss Jacob Lawrence and his work as related to African American history. Look at more of Lawrence's Harlem paintings and discuss the relation to the students' neighborhoods and in context of Harlem history.