

Forms of Expression

Grade level 3–5

Curricular Connections

English Language Arts / Visual Arts

Artist

Lars Fisk (American, 1970)

Born in Lebanon, NH

Works in Burlington, VT

Artwork

DeCordova Ball, 1998, brick, mortar, slate, copper, 8' in diameter, Collection of John Paluska and Cynthia Brown.



The *DeCordova Ball* was created by Lars Fisk specifically for deCordova's 1999 exhibition *On the Ball: The Sphere in Contemporary Sculpture*. The *DeCordova Ball* is one in a series of outdoor spheres created by Fisk. The artist sees the sphere as a "simple, seamless form expressing movement and the concept of endlessness and timelessness without a beginning, without an ending." The *DeCordova Ball* abstracts and complements the architecture of the Museum through the sculpture's red brick exterior, arched window form, and slate turret. The structure of the ball is comprised of a steel support skeleton which was filled with concrete and then coated in wet clay. Once dry, the clay was layered with bricks that were individually custom-cast by the artist.

Goals

1. Students will learn to carefully view and describe the sculpture.
2. Students will discuss Lars Fisk's artistic process of sculpting subjects as spheres.
3. Students will examine forms of creative expression by comparing poetry and sculpture
4. Students will learn about the cinquain form of poetry and will have the opportunity to write their own cinquains.

Vocabulary

Sphere: A three-dimensional form, shaped like a ball. Its surface consists of points that are the same distance from a center point.

Cinquain: A five line poem with a specific format (*see Cinquain Poem Chart)

Essence: The most important ingredient. The basic quality of a thing that makes it what it is.

Looking Questions

- What is the first thing you notice when you look at *DeCordova Ball*?
- What is this sculpture made of? How do you think these materials are assembled? Why do you think the artist used these materials to create the sculpture?
- How does the *DeCordova Ball* fit into the landscape? How would it be different if displayed inside the museum?

- Is this a real ball? How is it different from a ball? How is it similar to a ball?
- In what ways does the *DeCordova Ball* resemble deCordova's Museum? How do you think it captures the essence of deCordova's Museum?

Discussion Questions

"I hope that these sculptures capture something about their subjects that is beyond physical appearance...more like their essence." —Lars Fisk¹

- How might the sphere be a challenging form to work with?
- Why do you think the artist chose this size and shape?
- What would you have done differently if you were sculpting *DeCordova Ball*? What details and materials would you include? Why?
- The artist has created other sphere sculptures to represent other places and things, including *Street Ball*, *Barn Ball*, and *John Deere Ball*. What subject would you like to see next?

Activity: Artistic Limitations

"I wanted a system. I wanted to strip away the responsibilities of choosing a form each time, so that the form became uniform." —Lars Fisk²

- Students will write two poems, one in a form of their choice and one in a given form (cinquain). They will illustrate their cinquain poem.

Materials

Writing paper
Pencils
Drawing paper
Colored pencils

Directions

- Students will discuss different forms of poetry, including cinquain poems. The **Cinquain Chart** will aid in explanation.
- Ask your students to choose a subject and write about it in poetic verse, allowing them to decide what form of poetry to use. Offer them some suggested topics to get them started.
- Next, each student will write about the same subject using the cinquain poem structure.
- In small groups, student will read their cinquain poems aloud and fellow students will identify the subject matter.
- Drawing with colored pencil students will illustrate their poem.

Reflection Questions

- How did it feel to write a poem with a given form? How was this different from writing a poem with no limitations? Did you feel inhibited or inspired? Explain.

¹ An Interview with Lars Fisk

² Press Release: 08/29/02: deCordova Announces the Third Annual Rappaport Prize Winner: Lars Fisk

- How is writing a cinquain about a certain subject like sculpting a sphere about a certain subject?
- How did you capture the essence of your subject?
- Has your opinion of *DeCordova Ball* changed after writing your cinquain?
- Can you think of other forms of creative expression that follow certain rules?

Resources

Websites

How to Teach Poetry

<http://www.poetryteachers.com/>

Books

Love That Dog, Sharon Creech, Harper Trophy, 2003 (ISBN: 0064409597)

The New Kid on the Block, Jack Prelutsky, Greenwillow, 1984 (ISBN: 0688022715)

Extensions

- **Science:** Investigate the relationship between mass/distance traveled and weight/distance traveled by rolling small spherical objects down inclined ramps and measuring the distance traveled.
 - Standard Physical Science: B2. Position and motion of objects
- **Social Studies:** Discuss the globe as a sphere and identify the North and South Poles, the Equator, Tropic of Capricorn and Tropic of Cancer, lines of longitude and latitude. Then play a "Simon Says" game with students using their own body as the globe.
 - Standard III People, Places, and Environments
- **Math:** Working in small groups, each with a different spherical object, students will demonstrate an understanding of measurement attributes and types of unit for measuring each. Groups then exchange their objects and carry out simple unit conversions within the given system of measurement.
 - Standard Measurement: Understand measurable attributes of objects and the units, systems, and processes of measurement

Cinquain Poem Chart

A cinquain (pronounced "cin-kain") is a five-line poem with the following pattern:

Line 1: One word title—two (2) syllables

Line 2: Two describing words (adjectives or phrase)—four (4) syllables

