

Jasper Johns
Three Flags

Introductions:

Hello boys and girls! I am Mrs. Riesing, James's mom, and this is James's grandma who we like to call CC! We are so excited to be able to come in for an art lesson today.

James has been so excited about all that you have been learning about American symbols. He has been sharing lots of facts he has learned and even quizzing us on what we know!

Can anyone raise their hand and tell me some of the symbols you have been learning about?

Wow! You sure know a lot about these symbols!

Well, today I am so excited to share a piece of art that goes along with your study of American symbols.

Turn painting over.

Today we are going to learn about and discuss this painting called *Three Flags*.

It was painted by the American artist, Jasper Johns.

Jasper Johns was born in 1930 in Georgia.

In fact, he is still alive today! He is 84 years, which is about the age of any great grandparents you may have.

Even as a little boy, Jasper loved art. He started drawing when he was only 3 years old.

When he was older, he studied art at the University of South Carolina.

He also attended art school in New York, but he left because he was told his art wasn't good enough.

Oh my goodness! I can only imagine how that would make him feel. How do you think he felt when he was told that his art wasn't good enough?

Many people might give up at that point, but not Jasper Johns.

He kept making art, and he got a job at a big department store to decorate the window displays. Just like you might see in downtown Chicago during the holidays!

He didn't give up, and he kept painting. One day a man who owned a large art gallery in New York saw his work and bought four pieces of his art right away. From then on, Jasper Johns has been a very well-known and successful artist!

I think that teaches us a great lesson! What do you think? (never to give up)

Closer Look at the Painting

Let's take a closer look at Jasper Johns painting of *The Three Flags*.

The first thing we are going to look at is color.

(black gives it shadow and makes it look 3-D, like the flags are popping off the page)

What colors do you see in this painting?

Now let's look at the shapes we see. What shapes do you see in this painting?

And finally, let's look at the lines we see in his painting.

This painting is actually one of over 40 paintings he has done of the American flag. Why do you think he has painted so many flags?

He actually got the idea for this painting in a dream. When he was in his early 20's he served as a soldier in the Korean War, so he often had dreams about the flag.

It's hard to tell looking at the poster of Jasper Johns' painting, but this painting actually has a lot of texture to it.

That's a pretty big word. Does anyone know what texture means?

Here are a couple of examples of texture—smooth and soft (gingerbread men)

For this painting he used a technique called encaustic painting, which means he mixed melted wax with his paint to make a paint with a thicker and rougher texture. It's hard to see that texture here, but if you're ever in New York City, you could stop by the Whitney Museum of American Art to see the real painting up close!

One last interesting fact about this painting—the flag only has 48 stars. The flag we use and see today has 50 stars. Why do you think that might be?

Jasper painted this painting in 1958, but Alaska and Hawaii didn't become states until 1969.

48 stars on flag but 84 in total painting.

When you leave today and talk to you parents about what you learned in school today, you can tell them you learned these three things about Jasper Johns:

1. He didn't give up on his dream to become an artist
2. He loved to paint pictures of American flags
3. He is still alive today, and you can see many of his paintings at museums across the country---even at the Art Institute downtown.

One piece you may never be able to see at a museum though—bought by a couple who loves to collect. They bought it for 80 million dollars—making it the most expensive piece of art ever sold by a living artist! Wow! Good thing he never gave up on his dream!! 😊

Pass out picture of flag to color.

- Flag paintings were inspired by a dream of the American flag after he left the army
 - Over 40 of his works of art are paintings inspired by the American flag
-
- Color
 - Shapes
 - Lines