

MARK MULHERN: EXPLORING MEMORY AND CELEBRATION



Mark Mulhern, *October Gathering*, 2021 (detail)

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Students will view Mark Mulhern's *October Gathering*. Following a discussion, students will create their own Mulhern-inspired art depicting a memory from a celebration in their lives.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Examine and discuss defining features of Mark Mulhern's artistic style
- Identify elements or "clues" within Mulhern's work that tell a story about a celebration
- Reflect upon a personal memory of a celebration and identify imagery that tells a story about their unique memory
- Incorporate layering and visual movement in an original drawing or painting

MATERIALS LIST

- Image of *October Gathering* by Mark Mulhern (digital or printed)
- Paper or canvas
- Painting or drawing materials



Learn more about
Mark Mulhern's
October Gathering

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SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Mark Mulhern often creates large paintings depicting celebratory gatherings. What do you see in *October Gathering* that tells you it is a celebration? What type of celebration might it be?
- What celebrations have been significant in your life? Consider holidays, cultural ceremonies, and other special days.
- If you were to create a drawing or painting of your favorite cultural celebration, what would be important to include? Consider the setting, people, food, decorations, mood, and important moments.
- Mulhern's paintings are often fluid. Figures and objects may appear hazy like distant memories while other elements are defined. Look closely at which parts of *October Gathering* are clear and which disappear. What do you notice? What do you think this means?

ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Begin by showing students an image of *October Gathering*. Follow with context and suggested discussion questions. Scan the QR code (see page one) to access more information to guide your discussion.
2. Next, students will identify three memories from a single celebration in their lives. It may be helpful for students to make a list of what they remember from the celebration. This could include food, clothing, people, decorations, conversations, or how they felt.
3. Students will now create a sketch of this memory. Students may consider including greater detail to parts of the memory they remember vividly. There may be memories that are not clear. Students may seek inspiration from Mulhern by abstracting these areas with fewer details.
4. Consider exploring materials by layering paint or incorporating mixed media elements as appropriate for your classroom space, learning goals, and supplies.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

- Consider asking students to write a brief story or poem to accompany their artwork.
- What important visual clues did you include to tell a story about this memory?
- What were you thinking of as you created your art? Did you remember new details from your memory as you created your art?
- In what ways is your art similar to Mulhern's *October Gathering*? In which ways is it different?
- After viewing Mulhern's work and creating your own, why do you believe it is important for artists to capture scenes from their lives?



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