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**Positive Futures Network**  
P.O. Box 10818  
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-0818  
206/842-0216  
www.yesmagazine.org

FAX: 206/842-5208  
subscriptions: 800/937-4451  
email: yes@yesmagazine.org

***Building a Just and Sustainable World***

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**EDUCATION CONNECTION | VISUAL LEARNING**

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Images, photos, and pictures stimulate the mind. For the viewer, they offer a chance to connect and question. They also offer potential for play and imagination, and pull the observer toward purposeful messages.

Most often, newspaper and magazine readers quickly glance at photos and their captions. With this YES! lesson plan, you and your students can pause and try to understand an image, its message, and why it's interesting (or not).

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### Lost Your Marbles?

#### Step One: What do you notice? (before the facts)

Ask your students to make sense of the photograph by trusting their instincts of observation and inference. In doing so, the photograph offers possibilities and interpretations beyond a typical reading where the reader glances at the picture to reinforce their interpretation of the picture's title or caption. Do not introduce any facts, captions, or other written words outside of the image. You may hear: marbles, bright colored balls, plastic container, plastic lid, old wood table.

#### Step Two: What are you wondering? (thinking about the facts)

After you've heard what your students are noticing, you'll probably hear the peppering of questions: What are the balls made of? Are they edible? Is that a spray paint can lid in the background? What's in the plastic container? This is a good time to reveal the photo's caption, accompanying quote, and facts about the actual situation. Watch how the conversation shifts from what they believe to be true to discerning the facts about the photo.

#### Photo caption:

A collection of balls or "peas" from used aerosol spray cans is saved for a future Community Rejuvenation Project mural. Photo by Mark Andrew Boyer.

#### Photo facts:

Statement from the photographer: Colorful messages of peace, dignity and hope are cropping up in neighborhoods throughout San Francisco, Oakland and East Palo Alto, California. With roots in the contemporary mural movement of the 1970s, public art in the Bay Area continues to flourish under the leadership of artists and organizations that are working with youth to create positive change.

The basic definition of a mural is a large painted image or photo on a wall or ceiling.

Murals date back to Upper Paleolithic times. In modern times, Mexican painter Diego Rivera created large fresco murals and helped found the Mexican Mural

Movement. In Italy, Rivera "found the inspiration for a new and revolutionary public art capable of furthering the ideals of the ongoing revolution in his native land."

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, graffiti is the most common type of vandalism.

Many cities and towns across the country have considered or have adopted a ban to prevent anyone younger than 18 years old from buying spray paint. Some see this as a deterrent to graffiti damage. Others feel it will reduce injuries and deaths from huffing (inhalant abuse) spray paint.

In some places like Los Angeles, it's against the law to paint murals in public places. Undeterred by the ban, Chicano artists Robert Del Hoyo and David Russell started the Mobile Mural Lab—an old rescue truck brings murals to schools and neighborhoods where people are invited to paint the sides of the van.

There remain two marble manufacturers in the U.S. Twenty-five years ago, JABO in Reno produced 3.5 million marbles a day. Today, they make 250,000 marbles daily, primarily for spray paint cans. Most marble production is now in China.

#### Step Three: What next? (jumping off the facts)

1. Are there murals in your hometown? If so, describe one. Does it have any personal significance to you? To your community? Why do you think it was painted?
2. What differences are there between murals and graffiti?
3. Do you know what laws exist in your city or town related to graffiti or purchasing spray paint? Do you think there should be age restrictions on who can buy spray paint? Why or why not?
4. According to the Community Rejuvenation Project (CRP) [<http://crpbayarea.org>] in the San Francisco Bay Area, public art can help define the identity of the neighborhood and becomes a source of pride for residents. What brings pride to your community? How does your neighborhood, city, or town publically show its pride?