

Lesson Title **Origami Reflection**

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Grade Levels K-12

CREATIVE CHALLENGE

Reflect on the events, decisions and conditions you've experienced that make you the unique individual you are today. How do people see you? Do they understand the things you've experienced? How can you explore and represent these things through origami?

OVERVIEW OF LESSON

Students reflect on a variety of topics that influenced their development and discuss with others the topics they wish to share. They write some of these topics in specific areas of a square piece of paper. In other areas of the square paper they use art materials (colored pencil, pastel, collage, etc) to represent how others see them in a non-representational manner. The paper is then folded through a series of origami steps to reveal a butterfly. The wings of the butterfly are the visible portions (how others see them) while the writing about their experiences is hidden from view. Note: this lesson works best if the butterfly is a surprise and not announced ahead of time.

PREPARATION (either materials or prior learning)	MATERIALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare to project or print the questions • Copy the template onto plain copy paper (1 per student) • Cut out the template or provide scissors • Assemble the art materials you will provide (colored pencils, pastels, collage paper, etc) • Do the project so you know what to expect • Decide how to group students into 2-3 for discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scissors • Template • Art materials (colored pencils, pastels, collage paper, etc) • Reflection questions • Sticky notes or other paper for writing artist statements • Pins or tape to display butterflies in the room

LESSON SEQUENCE

Note: Videos are available to lead students through most of this project. A sample script is provided but the videos add a visual component.

1. Introduction: *"A lot has happened from the day you were born until now. You've had a lot of events happen, you've made a lot of decisions, and certain situations have come your way to make you who you are today. There are infinite things that can influence who you've become, and I've made a list of ten. I'll show you two ideas at a time and you and your partner(s) will have a couple of minutes to discuss them. If there's one idea you don't want to talk about, you can talk about the other, or change the question to a different aspect of how you've become who you are today. Share what you're comfortable sharing."*
2. Project the ten [questions](#), (or provide the [printed version](#)) allowing discussion time for each pair of questions. By presenting the questions in pairs, students have a greater level of choice, should they want to discuss one option and not the other.
3. (Show [Video 1](#)) *"Here is a piece of square paper. The area inside the dark lines is divided into eight triangles. Four of the triangles are small and four are larger. Think about four big ideas you discussed"*

that seem most important to you. Write about those four in the large triangles and write four smaller ideas in the small triangles."

4. "Sometimes artists create portraits that look just like the person; other times they create "non-representational" art in which colors, shapes, and lines communicate emotions and personalities. What colors might communicate a calm, easy going person? What colors might represent an exciting person? Would you expect a person who feels misunderstood to have light colors or dark colors? What about a person who is optimistic about life? Here is a list of 100 emotions ([slide 12](#)). Look at these two artworks ([slide 13](#)). Tell your partner what emotion names come to mind for image A and B. (then C and D on [slide 14](#))

5. ([Show Video 2](#)) "Notice there are 4 empty triangles outside of the dark lines. These triangles will represent how people see you, but not literally what you look like. Fill in the four triangles with colors, lines, and shapes that you feel represent who you really are. These things don't need to make sense to anyone else. They don't need to be 'representational'."

Extra challenge: "Notice the point where the two triangles touch. This is a special place that you might think of as your source of strength, or your heart. The final creation will look even more special if your colors, lines, and shapes radiate outward from this point."

6. ([Show Video 3](#)) "Now that you've filled the square with writing and colors, it's time for origami. In Japanese, "ori" means 'fold' and "gami" means 'paper'. Origami is the Japanese art of paper folding and you're going to fold your paper six times. (five times for young students) These folds represent the events, decisions, and situations that have made you who you are today. Paper remembers each fold and once a paper has been folded, it will remember it always just like the things in your life. The first fold is a valley fold ([slide 17](#)), making what looks like a taco and your colors will be hidden inside this fold. As you make this first fold, think about the situation you were born into: the family you had, your genetics, the culture you were brought into and all the things you couldn't control about your earliest days.

7. ([Show Video 4](#)) The next fold is a mountain fold from corner to corner. Your colors will be visible this time. While you're making this fold, think about the positive events in your life that have given you strength and allowed you to grow like a mountain. The third fold is also a mountain fold going across the other two corners of the paper. As you make this fold, think about the decisions you've made that made you who you are. As I said, just like our life, the paper remembers all the folds.

8. ([Show Video 5](#)) If you gently toss the paper up, it should come down looking like a pyramid because the paper remembers all the folds. The next two folds will reveal your colors completely. Look at the picture ([slide 21](#)) and bring the bottom right tip of the paper up to the top of the small black triangle. Think about your goals as you make this fold. Repeat this fold with the left tip. Your colors are now showing. Think about flying towards your goals as you make this fifth fold. Does this origami creation look like something you recognize? Surprise!" ("A butterfly!") Note: For younger students (younger than eight), this can be the final butterfly without doing the last, more challenging step.

9. ([Show Video 6](#)) "As you know, life isn't always easy. Sometimes we have to lean into the more difficult decisions or events in life. The last steps represent the difficulties of life and the beautiful things that can emerge when we persevere. You're going to do a fold, a curve and a pinch. The fold is to simply crease the base of the small black triangle away from you. The curve is not a crease. Push the triangle up to the top and over the top wing before folding the triangle back over the wing and pinching it to lock in the curve." (Video really helps here)

10. "As you look at all the butterflies in the room, what do you notice?" [prompt as needed: "Are they the same or different?", "Can we see all the events, decisions and situations that created each butterfly?", "Do you think there might be a beautiful butterfly in the room that had some difficult events or challenging decisions?", "What's important to remember when we meet a new person?"]

11. Have students write a reflection on a sticky note or small piece of paper. They may write any of the ideas from the discussion in the last step.

12. *"Now that you see your butterfly, how might you revise it? Would you like to make another one, now that you see the whole process? What colors, shapes, lines or other changes will you make so it best represents who you are or how people see you?"*
13. Use tape or straight pins to display the butterflies in the room along with the written reflections.

NATIONAL CORE ART ANCHOR STANDARDS & OTHER/COMMON CORE STANDARDS

National Core Art Anchor Standards (simplified)

Students...

- ☐ brainstorm multiple ideas for the artwork
- ☐ organize their thinking and further develop their ideas
- ✓ make the artwork and refine it
- ☐ select artwork to present
- ✓ make final revisions to the artwork
- ✓ present the artwork in a way that conveys meaning (displaying explanation or reflection as appropriate)
- ✓ read and respond to artwork
- ✓ interpret intent or meaning in artwork
- ☐ apply criteria to evaluate artwork
- ✓ make artwork that is personally meaningful
- ☐ understand the history and cultural context of art

California's Social & Emotional Learning Principles Guidelines (simplified)

- ✓ Includes social, emotional, or physical well-being as a goal of education
- ✓ Is relevant or responsive to students either personally or culturally
- ✓ Builds human capacity by focusing on relationship-building experiences or environments
- ☐ Partners with families or community

Other Standards (CCSS for ELA, Math, etc)

Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standard #4 requires that students learn to "Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including ...figurative meanings." As students move through the grades they progress logically from identifying words and phrases that suggest feelings (first grade), to distinguishing literal language from nonliteral language (third grade), to working specifically with metaphors and similes (fifth grade), and analyzing how a writer's word choices impact the tone of a text (sixth grade). This project relies on the metaphor of butterflies, wings, and the meaning of colors, shapes and lines. See what metaphors the students suggest for the project, such as caterpillars, chrysalis, and flight.