

ART ACTIVITY

*Zines and Revolutionaries***Background**

Women of many different races, cultures, and identities led activist groups and collectives across the 1960s and 1970s in pursuit of their beliefs. One of the ways that these groups shared ideas, spread information, and raised awareness was through the creation and distribution of pamphlets and newspapers. In the following decades, the sharing of information shifted in some groups to the creation of “do-it-yourself” zines. As a non-commercial way to challenge the mainstream and spark dialogue, zines continue to be a powerful form of ideological and creative expression for marginalized voices.

Task

Students will read and analyze a variety of publications--pamphlets, newspapers, and newsletters--created and distributed by activist groups and collectives in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing inspiration from the images and writings of W.A.R.N., the Young Lords Party, and the Furies, students will work in small groups to create zines responding to what they’ve learned about activist women’s groups during this time period.

Materials

- Pencils
- Printer paper (8 1/2” x 11”)
- Drawing paper (cut into 5” x 8” pieces)
- Markers (Suggested Brands: Prismacolor or Crayola)
- Collage materials: construction paper, magazines, printed images, photographs, decorative paper, origami paper, etc.

- Elmer's glue or glue sticks
- Scissors
- Stapler

Art Vocabulary

- **collage:** A two-dimensional work of art made by layering and gluing pieces of pictures, paper, and/or found materials.
- **layering:** Building up a surface.
- **mixed media:** Artwork created using more than one medium.
- **zine:** A small, cheaply-made, self-published magazine of original or appropriated text and images, usually devoted to a specialized subject matter. Zines are often made by an individual or small group and reproduced via copy machine for distribution.

Steps

- Invite students to discuss the different ways that information is spread by groups and individuals.
 - Where do you get most of your information today?
 - How do you share information about things that are important to you? What are the most accessible and effective ways to do this?
 - A lot of information is spread today through social media and the internet. How did people share information before they had access to these things?
 - Why is the sharing of information so important to activist groups and collectives?
 - How can imagery and writing be powerful agents for change? How can they persuade and inform?
- Begin by leading an inquiry with the cover of the pamphlet created and distributed by Women of All Red Nations (W.A.R.N.) in 1977 using the line of questioning below.

- What do you notice about this image?
- What are the different details that the artist chose to include?
- What does the image tell the viewer about W.A.R.N.?
- What information about the ideals, goals, and beliefs of the organization is communicated through this image?
- Based on this cover, what do you think you might find inside this pamphlet?
- Why is cover imagery so important? Do you think the imagery is effective in drawing readers in and making them want to read more? Why or why not?
- Choose one of the covers of [Palante](#), a bilingual newspaper published from 1970-1976 by the Young Lords Party, a revolutionary political activist group fighting for the liberation of Puerto Rican people. Have students compare the cover imagery with the W.A.R.N. pamphlet, and discuss using the questions below.
 - What kind of publication do you think *Palante* is? What will you find inside?
 - What do you notice about the kind of imagery on this cover? How is it different from the W.A.R.N. pamphlet?
 - How does each cover balance text and imagery?
 - The Young Lords publication uses more text to let you know what you'll find inside, whereas the W.A.R.N. pamphlet only includes the name of the organization. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each approach?
 - Which design do you prefer and why?
- Next, give students the opportunity to see what is inside these publications, and read some of the pieces that are included in each one. Have them look at the [W.A.R.N. pamphlet](#), an issue of [Palante](#), and [Volume 1](#) of the monthly publication created and distributed by lesbian feminist collective The Furies.
 - **Trigger Warning:** Some articles in the W.A.R.N. pamphlet discuss sterilization and acts of violence against Indigenous women. If you do not

feel comfortable working through these topics with your students, you can excerpt portions of the publication for them to read.

- After students have had some time to read and look through the publications, break them into groups of three and have them discuss the following:
 - What are these groups writing about?
 - What are the ideals and goals of these groups? How are they communicated?
 - How are they expressing the conversations that they are having within each group to a larger audience?
 - What is the balance of image and text in each publication? Which elements do you find the most compelling?
- Students will now work in their groups to design and create their own zines, cheaply-made and self-published magazines that share information about a specific subject matter through image and text. They will select either W.A.R.N., the Young Lords, or the Furies, and use their zines to share what they learned about that group. Have students begin by discussing the following:
 - Why did you choose this group to focus on? How might you get other people interested in learning more about them?
 - What concepts, conversations, or ideologies will you respond to in your zine?
 - How will you convey what you've learned through different combinations of image and text?
- Each student in the group will independently create two pages of their zine, one graphic piece (drawing, collage, or mixed media work) and one written piece (a poem, short essay, manifesto, etc). Their artistic piece can include text and their written piece can include imagery or designs. Students can draw inspiration from the 1970s publications that they read, and can also look at some examples of [zines](#) to consider how this specific medium combines text and image. They can also explore the *Growth and Turmoil* unit in more depth for further inspiration.
- Before they begin creating their individual pages, have each group of students discuss a visual theme that will make their zine feel cohesive. Will they all stick to

a specific color scheme for their individual pages? Are there design elements that each person might use to unite their pieces?

- Give each student two pieces of 5" x 8" drawing paper, one for each of their pages. Each group should also get markers, scissors, collage materials, and glue.
- When designing their graphic piece, students should think about the type of imagery that would engage viewers and represent the activist group that they are focusing on. For example, they could create a drawing honoring a specific group member, make a collage that represents the group's goals, or create a mixed media piece that includes a personal drawing layered with printed photographs and other imagery significant to the group. They can also include text elements, such as quotes, in their design.
- For their written piece, students can type and print it out, or they can hand write their words directly onto the page. It all depends on the look that they have chosen for their zine! They can also add visual elements to their written pieces to engage their readers, like decorative borders or small drawings relating to their text.
- Once students have finished their individual pages, the group should come back together to design the front and back covers of their zines. Each group should get two more pieces of 5" x 8" drawing paper to do this. As they are designing, have them reflect again on the covers of the W.A.R.N. pamphlet and the *Palante* newspaper.
 - Which cover did you find most engaging? Why?
 - How will you draw your readers in with your zine cover?
 - What will your cover tell readers about what they will find inside your zine? Will you be more specific and rely on text to do this, or will you signal the subject of the zine with a strong image?
- Once all pages and covers are complete, students can assemble their zines. Give each group two pieces of 8 1/2" x 11" paper. Students should stack them together and fold them in half to make a booklet. Then, glue the covers onto the front and back, and open the booklet up to glue down each one of their pages.

- When assembling their zine, students should consider what order their pieces will go in so that the zine flows well. Will they break it up into sections, or have a more organic flow?
- Students can also be given more sheets of 8 1/2" x 11" paper if they want their zine to have extra pages like an introduction or a table of contents.
- When everything has been glued together, have students open the booklets to the center fold and staple two or three times down the crease to bind their zine.
- An important aspect of zine culture is distributing and trading what you've created with others. When students have finished, have them swap zines with another group and reflect on the following questions:
 - What was it like to share what you learned in this format?
 - What was it like to work in a group to create the concept of your zine? How did each person's work contribute to the final product?
 - How did other groups design and create their zines? What did you learn from them?
 - What different approaches did everyone take to engage the reader?
- Extension: Make photocopies of student zines and have them swap their zines between classes to learn more!