

Spotlight on Alma Thomas

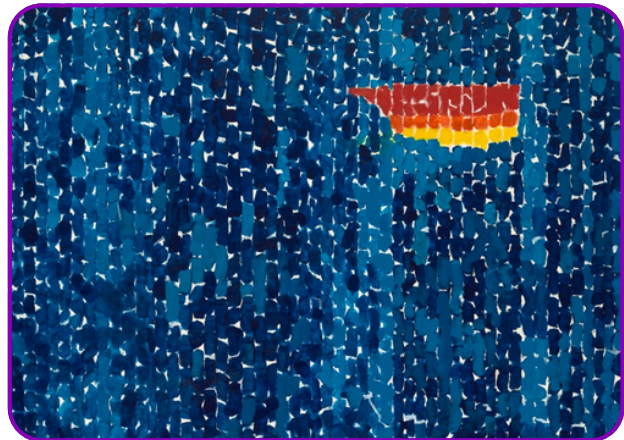
About the artist:

Alma Thomas was an artist and educator best known for her vibrant, abstract paintings filled with color and rhythm. After teaching art for over 30 years in Washington, D.C., she began a second career as a full-time artist in her 70s, becoming the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Thomas was inspired by nature, music, and the world around her. She often spoke of translating the beauty of gardens, sunlight, and space into color. Her signature “mosaic-style” brushstrokes resemble tiny tiles or “color stripes,” which she used to express harmony and joy. Her work is a bridge between realism and abstraction, showing how color itself can convey emotion and movement.



Apollo 12 Splashdown - 1970



Starry Night and the Astronauts - 1972

Discussion Prompts:

- What colors do you see in Alma Thomas's paintings?
- How do her paintings make you feel? (Happy? Calm? Excited?)
- What do the little shapes in her art remind you of? (Bricks? Raindrops? Confetti?)
- Do you think she was painting something real, or just using her imagination?

Learning Connections:

- **Art:** Using color, shape, and pattern to express feelings
- **History:** Learning about Alma Thomas, one of the first African American women to have her art shown in a big museum
- **Science:** Watching how colors mix and spread with water
- **Feelings:** Talking about emotions and how art can make us feel happy or calm

Supplies Needed:

- Roylco Blots Paper
- Roylco No Mess Tray
- PlusWater Color Diffusing Paint
- Spray bottle with water
- Roylco Paint Pipettes
- Construction or printer paper
- Glue sticks



This project features FSC-certified Roylco Blots Paper, made from responsibly sourced forests, and Roylco PlusWater Color Diffusing Paints, packaged in 100% recycled bottles. Together, they make it easy to create beautiful, eco-friendly art that's as kind to the planet as it is inspiring to make.

Project Steps:

1. Look and Learn:

Show a few pictures of Alma Thomas's artwork. Talk about how she uses lots of tiny colors and shapes to make big pictures that feel like they're moving.

2. Add Color:

Set up each station with 8-10 sheets of Roylco Blots Paper in a Roylco No Mess Tray. Then ask students to use PlusWater Color Diffusing Paint and Roylco Paint Pipettes to add color to the Blots paper. Make "color families" (like red, orange, and yellow together or blue and green together).

3. OPTIONAL: Allow Colors to Lighten and Diffuse Further.

Spray the Blots Paper lightly with water. Watch as the colors spread and mix—just like Alma's dreamy paintings!

4. Dry Time:

Let the papers dry while talking about how Alma loved nature and music. Use discussion questions on the back of this sheet.

5. Cut & Create:

Cut the dried paper into small rectangles (like little color bricks). Glue them on a new sheet of paper to make a pattern—lines, circles, or a rainbow!

6. Share Your Work:

Ask students to name their artwork (examples: "Sunny Day," "My Garden," "Happy Colors") and share how it makes them feel.