



## LITERARY INSPIRATION

Aristotle & Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe  
by Benjamin Alire Saenz



## ARTISTIC INSPIRATION

Alma Thomas, who is now recognized as a major American painter of the 20th century, was a Black artist and teacher known for exuberant, colorful abstract paintings

**THEMES** | Courage, Belonging, Discovery, Reflection, Layers, Identity

**ELEMENTS OF ART** | Color, Shape, Space **SUBJECT MATTER** | Repetition, Abstract Art

## Purpose

- Aristotle and Dante struggled with sharing their true identity with their family, classmates, and even with each other, based on rules they felt they needed to follow. We will examine which parts of ourselves we keep inside, and those that we choose to share outwardly.
- Aristotle and Dante used poetry and writing as a way to discover how they fit into the world and into each other's lives. By using words, we can begin to process who we are and who we want to be instead of what we think we should be.
- Aristotle and Dante process pain and love differently and express their feelings in different ways. Art and creativity can be abstract and process based and does not always reflect real life. Creating abstract art will help us express ourselves in a different and unique way from other artists, even if we are processing similar feelings or struggles.

## Key Quotes from the Book

- "The problem with my life was it was someone else's idea." (page 3)
- "One of the secrets of the universe was that our instincts were sometimes stronger than our minds." (page 261)
- "Sometimes pain was like a storm that came out of nowhere. The clearest summer morning could end in a downpour. Could end in lightning and thunder." (page 261)
- "Sometimes, you do things and you do them not because you're thinking but because you're feeling. Because you're feeling too much. And you can't always control the things you do when you're feeling too much." (page 310)
- "Maybe we just lived between hurting and healing." (page 335)

## Art Vocabulary

- **ABSTRACT ART:** A style of art that does not look realistic. It is often characterized by the use of geometric line and shapes, bold and bright colors
- **REPETITION:** One object or shape that is repeated, meaning to be exactly the same over and over again
- **RADIATE:** To spread out from a center point, like sun rays
- **WARM COLORS:** A grouping of colors that includes reds, yellows, and oranges
- **COOL COLORS:** A grouping of colors that includes greens, blues, and violets
- **CONCENTRIC CIRCLES:** Circles with a common center, like a target

# Art & Lit: Identity Circles Project Instructions



Objective: Use shape, repetition, and color to create an abstract art piece representing reflection and identity

*Materials Needed: Cardstock (or heavy, smooth paper), Markers, Scissors, various sized circular objects/lids to trace*  
*Find your **Art Vocabulary Definitions** on the other side of this page.*

1. Find your paper with two 5.5" circles on it. If you don't have the accompanying supply kit, draw two 5.5" circles on your paper. You can find something to trace for your circle, or freehand it.
2. Choose two markers. Think about what those colors represent to you. Are they **warm** or **cool colors**?
3. Lightly trace/freehand 2 to 3 smaller **concentric circles** inside your two 5.5" circle to use as guidelines.
4. Let's start with fingerprints. Use the marker to color the tip of your index finger. Quickly stamp it in the middle of your circle (the bullseye of your target).
5. Now, switch to your second color marker. Color the tip of a different finger, and stamp that finger repeatedly to create a ring around the middle fingerprint. You will need to reapply the marker after every third or so print. Don't worry, it will wash off at the end!
6. Continue to create fingerprint rings in **concentric circles**, alternating between your two colors, starting in the middle and **radiating** out until you reach the outside edge. Enjoy the meditative process of **repetition**, repeating the same task, over and over, to create your **abstract art**.
7. Let's move to the second circle. We will use a similar process, this time with the text from your journal prompts. Start with your first color. Copy your text into the circle, following the curve. Each ring should contain a separate thought. Alternate colors as you work through the **concentric circles**. Notice that the outside rings can hold more text than the tiny space in the center of your circle. How does it feel to write in a circle, moving the paper slowly as you go? Continue writing and alternating colors until the text circle is complete.
8. (If you did not receive pre-cut circles) cut your two circles out. Use a pencil to write Words Alive, your name (first name and last initial), school, and contact (email or a phone number) on the back. Press lightly so your words don't show through the paper.
9. Place your completed circles in the stamped envelope and drop in a mailbox. If you don't have a provided envelope, **please mail to ArtReach at 2210 Columbia Street, San Diego, CA 92101**. Students who submit their final work will be entered to win a raffle item (educational toys, art supply bundles, etc).
10. Just as your fingerprint was only one dot in your larger artwork, your completed circle will be one dot in a \*giant\* circle. Join us for a virtual culminating event to see how your individual Identity Circle is collaboratively installed to create this Community Circle temporary mural! Event details to come.
11. Bonus - Do it again! Teach your family the technique you learned today. How do your fingerprints differ? What else can you make with fingerprint art? What other shapes can you bend your words to fill?