

Celebrate Circus Teaching Poster

From the Howard Bros. Circus
Model Elephant



***Sunshine State Standards**

Visual Arts:

VA.A.1 The student understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.

VA.B.1. The student creates and communicates a wide range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.

VA.C.1 The student understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.

VA.D.1 The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.

Language Arts:

LA.A.1 The student uses the reading process effectively.

LA.B.1 The student uses the writing process effectively.

LA.B.2 The student writes to communicate ideas and information effectively.

Math:

MA.B.2 The student compares, contrasts, and converts within systems of measurement (both standard and non-standard).

MA.B.3 The student estimates measurements in real-world problem situations.

MA.C.1 The student describes, draws, identifies, and analyzes two-and-three dimensional shapes.

MA.C.3 The student uses coordinate geometry to locate objects in both two-and three-dimensions and to describe objects algebraically.

Science:

SC.A.1 The student understands that tall matter has observable, measurable properties.

SC.F.1 The student describes patterns of structure and function in living things.

Social Studies:

SS.A.1 The student understands historical chronology and historical perspective.

SS.A.5 The student understands U.S. history from 1880 to the present.

SS.B.2 The student understands the interactions of people and the physical environment.

Physical Education:

PE.A.1 The student demonstrates competency in many movement forms and proficiency in a few forms of physical activity.

*Standards as of 2005 and subject to change



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Introduction

Goal

To introduce students to master model builder, Howard Tibbals and his marvelous miniature. Students will also be introduced to the unique history and cultural impact of the circus as one of the America's most popular forms of entertainment.

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about artistic dedication and collection building through the works of Howard Tibbals.
- Learn the characteristics of the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*.
- Learn the artistic attributes of model building.

The Celebrate Circus Teaching Poster is designed as a resource for the classroom teachers to prepare students for a visit to The Circus Museum's Tibbals Learning Center. Using this poster with the accompanying information and suggested activities will help students understand Howard Tibbals and the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*, which is on display at The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. Students will analyze and discuss the process of model building and be inspired by different means to collect, create, and write using various resources.

About the Artist

Born in Logan, West Virginia in 1936, Howard Tibbals has been fascinated with the circus for most of his life. At the age of eight, Howard accompanied his grandfather to watch the circus wagons unload and, from that moment, his passion for the circus has continued to grow. This fascination led to a life-long dream of creating the most accurate circus model possible based upon the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus when the circus was at its largest under tent. (1919-1938).

Howard grew up in Oneida, Tennessee, where his father and his uncle started and owned the Tibbals Flooring Company. While studying Engineering at North Carolina State University in 1956, Howard started sewing a replica of the six-pole big top tent of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. After graduating from college, Howard returned to Oneida to work with his father at the flooring company. Howard ran the plant after his father's death, and eventually sold it to a national flooring manufacturer. While working at Tibbals Flooring, Howard continued to study circus history and work on the model circus. Throughout his successful business career, he has never stopped building new circus pieces and adding to the ever-expanding *Howard Bros. Circus Model*.

After fifty years of work, the nearly 4,000 square foot $\frac{3}{4}$ inch scale miniature circus is a marvel!

About the Model

Every piece of the *Howard Bros. Circus Model* was crafted or purchased with attention to the highest degree of historical accuracy. Before undertaking any part of the model Howard



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Tibbals carefully gathered documentation such as historic photographs, measurements, notes, and even actual circus artifacts.

Often, it required months to scale, draw, cut pieces, assemble, and paint a single miniature piece Howard made every effort to accurately replicate each piece of circus equipment down to its most minute detail. For example, the dining tent in his model contains tables and benches to accommodate more than 1,300 wonderfully sculpted circus personnel, and also features more than 900 complete place settings, including dishes, cups, knives, forks, and spoons. Miniature bottles of mustard, ketchup and other condiments are on each table.

The *Howard Bros. Circus Model* includes all of the fascinating aspects of the show including railroad trains, parade wagons, sideshow, menagerie, big top, and the back lot (known as the backyard by circus people) where circus people lived and made the magic of the circus happen. This exquisite miniature has been exhibited throughout the United States.

The entire *Howard Bros. Circus Model* measures approximately 3,800 square feet with a 57-car train; 8 main tents, 152 circus wagons; more than 800 circus animals; and 1,300 individual performers and workers. The model also has 7,000 folding chairs that actually fold and stow in five circus wagons (just like in real life circus) to seat the circus patrons. Howard Tibbals is continuously adding to his circus.

The Howard Bros. Circus Model is so big that...

- It's larger than many homes (3,800 square feet).
- The visitor walking around the exhibit will travel the length of one and one-half football fields (450 feet).
- It contains more than 44,000 individual pieces in the entire display.
- More than 800 animals inhabit the miniature (211 exotic animals in the menagerie tent).
- Approximately 1,300 circus performers and staff occupy the circus grounds.
- Approximately 2,500 townspeople are on the circus grounds and in the tents (representing all types of people circa 1919-1938).

The Howard Bros. Circus Model is so small that...

- A fully grown miniature Asian Elephant in the Model is only 7 inches tall (9 feet in real life) and weighs less than 1 lb. (7000 lbs. in real life).
- The radio tower for WNOX is approximately 3 feet tall and in reality is about 324 feet tall.
- The 2,164 individually turned wooden tent stakes are only 2 7/8 inches in length are 324 feet in real life.
- The tallest person, the Giant from the sideshow, is only 6 1/8 inches tall and 8 feet in real life.
- Rolls of toilet paper located in the dressing tents, hang on hooks in the performers individual trunks and measure 7/8 H x 3/8 W x 3/8 D inches.
- The smallest individual piece is a nut, found in the drawers of a truck, in the truck department, that measures 1/16 H x 1/8 W x 1/8 D inches.



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Looking and Discussing

Ask students to look quietly for a few moments at the poster. Ask student to think in detail about what they see. Record their observations on an overhead or board for the class to view.

Description:

- What do you see?
- Describe the first thing you notice.
- What words would you use to describe the elephant?
- What is the elephant doing?
- Is the elephant's trunk moving fast or slow?

Analysis:

- How is the work organized?
- Looking at the elephants, do you think they are life size? Larger? Smaller?
- What are the elephants made of?
- What colors do you notice?
- What shapes do you notice?
- What is the elephant's expression?
- How is the elephant similar to a real elephant? How are they different?

Interpretation:

- What is the mood/ feeling you get?
- How would it feel to ride an elephant?
- How do you think the elephant feels about being in the circus?
- How do you think Howard Tibbals feels when he tours his *Howard Bros. Circus Model*?

Judgment:

- What do you think of the work of art?
- Do you think the elephant looks similar to a real life elephant? Why or why not?
- Is this a good work of art? Why or why not?
- Where do you think the *Howard Bros. Circus Model* should be displayed?



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Suggested Classroom Activities

Heritage Blankets

Elephant blankets have been used for many years in the circus. They are wonderful in their beautiful color and amazing details. Explain to students that their help is needed as costume designers to create original elephant blankets which will reflect the heritage of these different countries: Italy, Switzerland, Japan, Kenya, Brazil, England, Peru, and Hungary. Divide the class into eight groups. Assign each group a country to research using books, encyclopedias, and the computer. Students should brainstorm ideas for their blankets bearing in mind the country's colors, flag, etc. Encourage them to add many details on their blankets. Provide each group with butcher paper, coloring tools, yarn, sequins, etc. Have groups present their "heritage blankets" to the rest of the class and share what they learned about their assigned country. Students may also create personalized elephant blankets that reflect their own family heritage. **Curriculum Connections:** Visual Arts, Social Studies, and Technology

Elephant Memory

The expression "an elephant never forgets" has often been used to describe the intelligence of an elephant. Elephants have an excellent memory and are able to remember many different commands. Elephants have also demonstrated the ability to recognize human and animal friends after years of separation. Students will pretend to be "circus elephants" with their teacher as their "trainer." The "trainer" will be teaching the "elephants" new commands. Have students stand in an open area and teach them the following set of made-up words along with the corresponding actions:

- Sippa-stand on your toes
- Flingzing-raise both arms over your head
- Mickle-touch nose with your right hand
- Koonah-kneel
- Zeechee-jump up off the ground

Practice with the whole class first and then challenge individual students to come to the front of the room to demonstrate their elephant memory. For added difficulty, change the order of the word cues. Students may also design their own verbal cues. **Curriculum Connections:** Visual Arts, Science, and Physical Education

Circus Train

A circus train is the method of transportation for circus workers and performers. There are special wagons and railroad cars on the train for many of the animals. Collect a clean, white meat tray for each student. On white paper, have each student illustrate a circus animal and then cut it out. Glue the animals to Styrofoam trays, which will serve as their wagon. Have students cut several small vertical slits on the very top and bottom of their tray, about 1 inch apart. Provide a piece of yarn to wind through the slits to create bars on the wagon. Add sunburst wheels to the wagon and display to create a classroom circus train. **Curriculum Connections:** Visual Arts and Math



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Shape Elephant

Begin by reviewing different shapes with students. Have students provide examples for a circle, rectangle, oval, square, and triangle using objects from the classroom. Explain to students they will be creating elephants using different shapes. Brainstorm what shapes could be used to make different elephant body parts. As an example: circle (head), rectangles (ears), large oval (body), squares (feet), long rectangle (trunk-curl on a pencil to make it more realistic), and triangles (tusks). Students should cut out shapes to assemble into elephants. Assemble shapes and add facial features. **Curriculum Connections:** Visual Arts and Math

A Day in the Life of...

Explain to students that they will be taking over as a member of the circus for a day. Review job duties and descriptions for different positions in the circus. Instruct students to research the definition of each job and then have each student choose a circus job: Animal trainer, Ticket seller, Costume designer, Electrician, Ringmaster, Clown, Juggler, Tightrope walker, Rope dancer, Musician, Acrobat, Chef, Woodcarver, Trapeze artist, or an Equestrian. Students will write what their day consists of working in the circus: how do they prepare, who they work with, what they wear, how long they work for, what they eat, where they sleep, etc. When students have completed their writing, discuss with them the concept of construction. Provide students with pipe cleaners to construct the props they need for their job, animals, or fun costumes. Make a circus ring for all models to be displayed. **Curriculum Connections:** Visual Arts, Language Arts, and Social Studies

Compare and Contrast

Show students a picture of a real elephant and the model elephant in Howard Tibbals' miniature circus. Discuss with the class the differences between real elephants and the elephants that are part of the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*. Discuss similarities between the two. Complete a Venn Diagram as a class comparing and contrasting the two elephants, being sure to use many nouns and adjectives. Once the Venn Diagram is finished, use it as reference to complete cinquain poems. Explain to students the requirements of a cinquain poem.

Line 1: Write a noun. (Suggest using "elephant.");

Line 2: Write two adjectives describing the noun on Line 1;

Line 3: Write three words ending with -ing (action words) that describe what the noun on Line 1 might do;

Line 4: Write a phrase describing the noun on Line 1;

Line 5: Write a synonym of the word on Line 1.

When students have finished their poetry, allow them to share with their classmates.

Curriculum Connection: Visual Arts, Science, and Language Arts



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Timeline

A time line is a very useful device for graphically illustrating art history or any other kind of history because it gives students a visual representation of consecutive events.

To use a time line, a student must know how to read dates and understand their meaning. The length of the time line, as well as the span of the intervals, are determined by the subject and the period of history which it illustrates.

Since art can be considered a reflection of its time, it is important to study some of the developments of the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*. Invite your students to help construct a class time line.

Timeline of the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*

1939

Howard Tibbals saw his first circus at age 3.

1943

Through binoculars Howard watched the circus trains unload. Borrowing scraps from his grandmother's sewing basket and odd pieces of string, Howard begin playing circus.

1948

For his 12th birthday, Howard was given a lathe (tool used for shaping material) and a jigsaw, both of which he used in his model building.

1952

Popular Mechanics published *Here Comes the Circus*, detailing the logistics of moving the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

1956

Howard began creating his big top.

1958

Howard met Harold Dunn, a skilled model builder whose miniature circus was displayed around the country.

1959

Howard built Wagon #40, the first of 152 wagons currently in the *Howard Bros. Circus Model*.

1960's

Howard began collecting historic photos of the circus, in order to build the most accurate miniature possible.



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1963

Howard set up a workshop in his basement specifically for building the model.

1974

All for the canvas, wagons, and equipment for the *Howard Bros. Circus Model* big top were completed. The complete big top took 18 years.

1978

Howard began collecting posters and other circus memorabilia.

1982

Howard Bros. Circus Model made its premiere at the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee.

2004

Building complete, Howard began setting up the *Howard Bros. Circus Model* in the Circus Museum's Tibbals Learning Center.

2006

In January, the Circus Museum's Tibbals Learning Center opened on the grounds of The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.