

Gail Newman of “California Poets in the Schools” worked with Ms. Henry and Mr. Mattson’s fifth grade students to compose the following poems. The first series of poems, written by Ms. Henry’s 5th grade class focuses on the simple actions of “folding, weaving, twisting and stacking.” These actions were explored in a variety of activities in pre-engagement sessions with the Julia Morgan visiting artist Dave Maier. Students explored applying these actions to transform materials when creating their art, and even physically reproduced the actions with their bodies. After a few sessions, the students came to realize that these actions can be found everywhere! By prompting, “Where do you see folding, weaving, twisting and stacking?,” the students are encouraged to look closer, and they are given a way to discuss the art that they see.

TWIST

Noodles in a boiling pot
String, tied in a knot
The twist of whistling willow
Stars twist to brighten up the sky.
Twisted like a soda when you shake it.
A mother bird’s nest, twigs twisted
together to make a shelter.
The world twisting in a radical wind.
Vines, ropes, roller coaster.
The birds like wind rising and twisting
Cars twist around the city
licorice, dizziness, and cake batter.
Twisting like a monkey’s tail.
Plastic bags and a fan.
Twisting is like birds flying in circles
Twisted tree branches reach out
To touch the gleam of hope
Pollution, twisted wars in foreign countries,
murders, bombings. How
can we live in this twisted world?

WEAVE

My fingers weave into each other.
My heart weaves with art like everybody.
Weaving in my heart when I’m nervous.
Art weaves with my heart, like family weaves
together with me.
The shouting lightning crossing
Gossiping grasses weave together when I step on them
Shouting weaving clouds are like
Whales in the ocean weaving through seaweed.
Troubles weaving in your mind
Twisted fate weaving truth.
Good and bad, the world weaves
together through kindness and hate,
generosity and spite.

STACK

Salami and cheese on my sandwich.
Clothes on the floor, mom saying clean your room.
Happiness stacks up when I play with my dog!!
Love and happiness and anger and madness,
tight and dark.
Stress stacks up in me like a pyramid.
Life is like a novel with things
happening stacked up on each other.
CDs stacked in compartments.
Friends calling, three hundred and sixty five days,
non-stop stack.
Planets and stars stacking on gravity like
magnets on electric polarities

FOLD

The clouds folding quietly and slowly like soaring doves.
Fold a piece of darkness and throw it away.
Fold self-confidence into everybody’s soul.
Fold cards in poker.
Folding origami.
Layers of topping folded on ice cream.
Fold feelings like a sad hound dog.
My life stacked away like an empty box
then folded into a crate on my way to freedom.
Unfold the sun’s rays to make light for everyone.
Folding is always in the midst.

— Ms. Henry’s Class

FOLDING

The clouds folding away quietly from the sun.
The flowers extending and folding while they grow.
The water flowing and folding in the simmering light.
The wind folding quietly and slowly like a soaring dove.
The rose folding as flexible as ice cream
melting in the strong sun.

— *Viana Larkin*

TWIST

My twisted mind
Water twisting in my stomach
Cheetos twisting in my mouth
Friends twisted in my mind
Thinking of hard and twisting homework
I have twisted fun playing my
Gameboy Advance.
I feel as twisted as a monkey
that went crazy.
I feel like the world
twisting in a radical wind.

— *Ben Liang*

TWIST

(to a beat
louder, faster)

Licorice, dizziness, and cake batter
too! Pineapples, mango and
coconut juice. They all
twist together (pause) What about
you? Licorice, dizziness and
cake batter too.

— *Maxwilliam Chao*

STACK

A stack of paper on a desk
Stacking bricks towering up high
in the air
Stress stacks up in me like a
pyramid.

— *Nicolas Bloise*

STACKING

Stacking people in a circus act
Buildings stacking like there is no end to
the sky
Sprinkles stacking on ice cream
Planets and stars stacking on gravity like
magnets on electric
polarities
Muscles stacking on Arnold Schwarzenegger's arms
Stacking is everywhere

— *Edwin Yan*

WEAVING

A spider web delicate like a feather
The slithering branches on a tree
The whispering clouds
Weaving like the good and the bad
of life

— *Ruby Wong*

WEAVE

Clouds weaving through into the bright blue sky.
Fingers weaving my beautiful hair with braids.
The breath taking rainbow weaves into many
varieties of colors.
My mind is weaving through so many books
and feelings.
The clocks weave through time, seasons, & life.
Teachers weave into grades, pages, and
education.
My heart weaves with art like everybody
to gravity like magnet to lockers like art
weaves with my heart like family weaves
together with me.

— *Win-Mon Kyi*

The following poems, written by Mr. Mattson's 5th grade class, were inspired by Asawa's artwork — the Grand Hyatt Fountain, the Origami Fountains at Japantown and the tied-wire sculpture at the Oakland Museum

Grand Hyatt Fountain at Union Square



twisting dragon leaps, roars,
scattering people on all fours,
on Ruth Asawa's sculpture.

people in robes doing karate,
the water rises up, like steam on a latte,
on Ruth Asawa's sculpture.

the shining sun smiles,
on 3-D pictures, not at all vile,
on Ruth Asawa's sculpture.

buses and cars drive,
reaching towers seem alive,
on Ruth Asawa's sculpture.

— Gabriela Pelsinger



The surface has layers, makes your
mind buzz with questions. The sculpture,
like its own region, jogs my memory
of San Francisco. Silent, sparkling, it
captures the heart, tells a story of
art, every inch, the cracks, the clatter.
All the elements go together like a
fairytale. Everything is perfect...

— Tanya Evanchak

The print of art, blade of lightning sparkling
on the blossom planet. The flow of coldness,
the spring of light erupting.
The force of a blade-like figure scattering
through
the darkness like a busy buzzing bee, flying
through the night sky like the force of a secret.
Ruth Asawa's art is like all that.

— Byron Lee

This fountain, dedicated by Ruth to the children of San Francisco, is a banquet the senses for those who stop and take a moment to look closely. The fountain was a “grand” experiment that involved casting the fountain in bronze from “baker’s clay,” an inexpensive dough first used by Ruth at Alvarado School. No simple task, the project involved many hands and about 1,400 pounds of flour and salt!

The magic of art

The hands of a community

The pounding, squishing, and the teamwork.

Kids touching the metal
like hands touching the cold water of the ocean.

Sitting on the steps with ears wide open,
hearing
the engines of cars and buses,
high heels clattering on the ground.

Happiness, friendship, joy.

The City’s fountain will always be
in the hands of San Francisco.

— Megan Wong

BASIC BAKER’S CLAY RECIPE

4 cups flour
1 cup salt
1 1/2 cups water (more if necessary)
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Mix five times this amount for a class of 25-30 students.

Mix flour and salt well. Add water and knead until smooth, so that the dough is pliable but not sticky. (Mix shortly before use since the dough does not store well.)

For coloring, add food coloring to the water or tempera powder to the flour and salt mixture.) After sculpting, bake the finished items in a slow oven: 250 to 300 degrees for color, 300 to 350 degrees for uncolored dough, for one hour or more (depending on thickness of the pieces) until hard.



Origami Fountains at Japantown



The folding is like a silent story, shy and secret.
The ocean comes out of the blossoming flower.
The serenity of the cold waters dropping down.
It remains still, but full of life.

— Kristen Quan



It's like a woman
in an outside mall saying,
"I wonder where I should go."
With a brown ruffle dress and a
ruffle hat looking spiffy.

— Josh Dillard



This art shows the true meaning of San Francisco,
unity of all people
Ruth Asawa
reminds us
of our unity
like fire in a tornado,
they don't go
together but they are
one
like us

— Yves-Olivier Mandereau

Tied-Wire Sculpture at the Oakland Museum



RUTH ASAWA

Beautiful as the swirl of dreams like whispers of music.
Beautiful as the sparkling of stars like darkness of night.
Beautiful as the spring of blossoms like summer of wonder.
Beautiful as the heat of hearts like oceans of waves.
Beautiful as the whirling of wind like giving of life.
Beautiful as the leaves of fall like silent secrets.
Beautiful as the bubble of dreams like spaces of fire.

— *Angela Huynh*

The volcano of dreams explodes like a
Wave in the ocean
Darkness colliding with the beauty
Of the art
A chain of memories in
each piece of art
The art is as calm as a petal
gliding across a
prairie
The art is like mist
dancing on a lake
a web of dreams
in a painting in a gallery
lightning erupting in the earth
like the excitement in the art

— *Kevin Hu*

Ruth Asawa's art is like lava, it slowly
drifts down and into your heart.
It explodes into your mind like a bean sprout.
It is clear as crystal yet foggy and blocked.
Each wire is like a single cell in the
body of art.
Yet still some people look at it like
any other blade of grass on a hill.
Like ash and ice, dust and snow, each
piece of work is similar, yet totally different.
When I look at her art I feel
solid and hollow at the same time.
Unlike some people, she doesn't hunt for
fame.

— *Zachary Ruylemeyer*

