

Ashley Epp
EDMA 3100
14 October 2024
532 Words

Mandala Artist's Statement

I designed my mandala to represent my mathematics journey using a variety of lines, shapes, and colours. I started my design from the center to represent the beginning of my relationship with math, moving outwards to illustrate how that relationship has transformed over time. The beginning of my journey with math was very negative, and I quickly grew to dislike mathematics strongly. As primary school changed to middle school and so on, my relationship with mathematics improved, slowly but surely. My mandala reflects this transformation through the contrast of colours, lines, and shapes.

When I was first introduced to mathematics in primary school, it was always as problems with a single correct answer, often practiced through solving a sheet of math problems within a short timeframe. In primary and middle school, math was something I dreaded. Practicing math felt like a frustrating chore that stifled my creativity rather than encouraging it. In my mandala, I chose to represent this stage of my math journey with sharp angles, straight lines, and cool colours such as blue, purple, and green. I drew angular shapes to resemble shards of ice, illustrating my cold and rigid relationship with math early on.

During secondary school and university, my relationship with math began to change. Practicing mathematics suddenly became a fun partner or group activity that I looked forward to. Gone were the days of times worksheets and working alone on textbook questions. Math began to require exploration, creativity, and collaboration. I found myself engaged in math more than ever before, feeling excited to explore different ways to solve a single problem. In my mandala, I chose to illustrate this transformation with curved lines, twirly shapes, and warm colours such as yellow, orange, and pink. I wanted to represent the creativity I now experience through math, using whimsical cloud-like shapes with loops and swirls to illustrate the many directions my thoughts can go when solving problems.

Mixed in with the different stages are elements of contrasting feelings and ideas. Bright orange tendrils blossom from the sharp, cold center, representing how my positive feelings about math began to sprout amidst the negatives. In the further stages of the mandala, cool colours and pointy shapes hide in the warm colours and curvy loops, showing that some insecurity in my math abilities still lingers. I added eyes near the edges of the mandala, both to represent the act of "opening my eyes" to math and the frustrations I still feel at times, illustrated in the eyes surrounded by tears.

Using my mathematics journey as inspiration, I hope to make math an enjoyable subject for students by encouraging creativity, exploration, and collaboration above all else. These values are what made me grow to love math, and allowing students to have creative freedom when solving problems is incredibly important. It is also important to understand the struggles and negative feelings students connect to math, so that we may better understand how to change a student's mindset. To create a positive mindset, we must first change how math is practiced. This was the first step in changing my math mindset, and it will be the first step to change other negative mindsets as well.