

Classroom Activity: SHAPE SHACK

Target: Elementary

MATH (GEOMETRY)

Common Core Standards: K.G.A1-3, 1.G.A.1-2, 4.G.A.3



Green Shack



Binion's "H" Wall



Stardust star

Background:

The Green Shack restaurant sign is believed to be the oldest sign in the Boneyard, dating to the 1930s. Neon signage came to the US in the early 1900s, but scientists and inventors had been experimenting with it since the mid-1800s. French engineer and inventor Georges Claude patented the technology in France in 1910. He then received a U.S. patent for neon lighting in 1915. In 1923, his company sold two neon signs to a Packard automobile dealership in Los Angeles. The first neon sign in Las Vegas is thought to be a sign for the Overland Hotel, erected in 1928.

Early neon signs were fairly simple blade signs, double-sided, hanging from the side of a building so that people walking down the sidewalk would pass directly under them or they could be easily seen along the narrow streets of the time. Generally, the letters were formed by single neon tubes, and the sign was outlined in neon. Over time, signs became bigger and more elaborate, including huge neon displays called "spectaculars" that wrapped entire buildings in light, popularized in the 1950s, and huge pylon signs that could be seen for miles. Neon signs in Las Vegas are a delightful combination of common geometric and fanciful organic shapes. These signs provide a wealth of opportunities for students to consider how shapes they know form the signs they see every day.

Activity:

Neon signs are all about shapes! Symmetrical, asymmetrical and organic shapes abound in the Neon Boneyard. Collect an assortment of pictures of neon signs to help students identify lines of symmetry, (or the lack thereof). The signs can be used to discuss other aspects of geometry that students study, including the characteristics of shapes, angles, parallel and perpendicular lines, and congruence.

Extension: Have students create signs of their own, showing or writing about the symmetry of the elements and/or the entire sign, or have students bring pictures of signs from their neighborhoods that show symmetry or identifiable shapes.

