MOSAIC TILE ART

Teacher Information

Vocabulary

Petroglyph – an image carved into a rock (as opposed to a pictograph which is a painting on stone)

Background information

The Hoofprint Tradition:

The Hoofprint Tradition is a style of rock art found on the Northern Plains. It is generally dated shortly before settler contact with most images dating to between 1,800 and 300 years before present.

The Hoofprint Tradition is art of animal hoofprints carved into stone. This can include bison, pronghorn, elk, deer, and even horses. These hoofprints may be accompanied by actual images of bison, elk, human forms, and faces. Some bird tracks and bear prints may be depicted along with human hand and foot prints. These tracks and prints of different creatures are made to represent the creature itself.

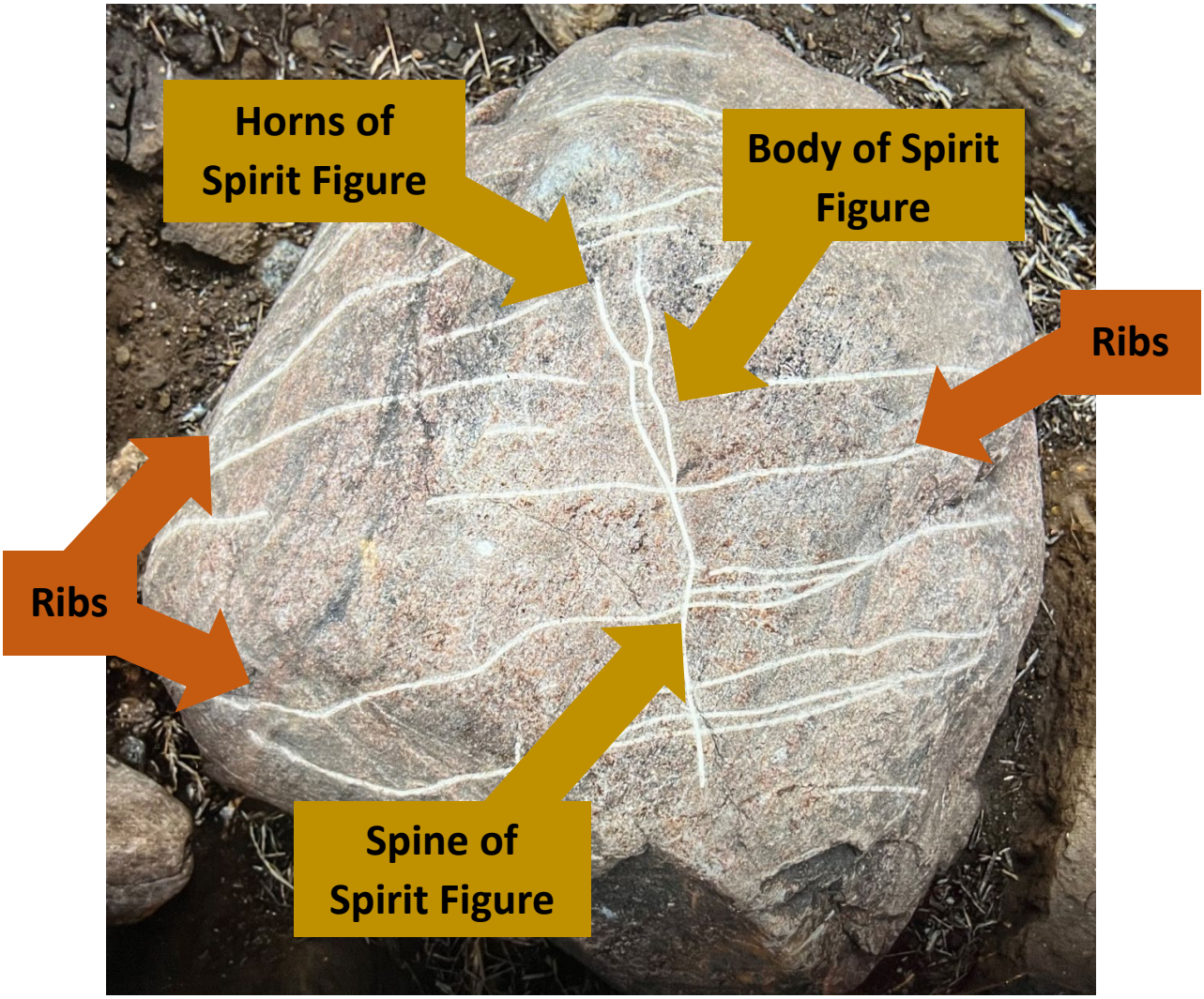
Representations at Wanuskewin:

One example of the Hoofprint Tradition is the Wanuskewin Petroglyph on display in the People of the Northern Plains exhibits hall (Picture A). This particular petroglyph is a ribstone. Ribstones are images an animal's ribcage (in this case a bison) that is carved onto the surface of a rock. We believe that this petroglyph is connected to the idea of renewal, and is related to bison hunting and the relationship between the Indigenous peoples and the bison. Visit our exhibit hall for more information on the Wanuskewin petroglyphs!

The Hoofprint Tradition is unique to rock art, but there are many other examples of art that represent animals or stories here at Wanuskewin. One excellent example of this is the dyed brick mosaic in the plaza entitled "We Were Here," which was created by Ruth Cuthand in 2020. The mosaic is based on Plains geometric designs and calls back to beadwork designs. It tells the story of Wanuskewin. Each quadrant repeats from left to right:

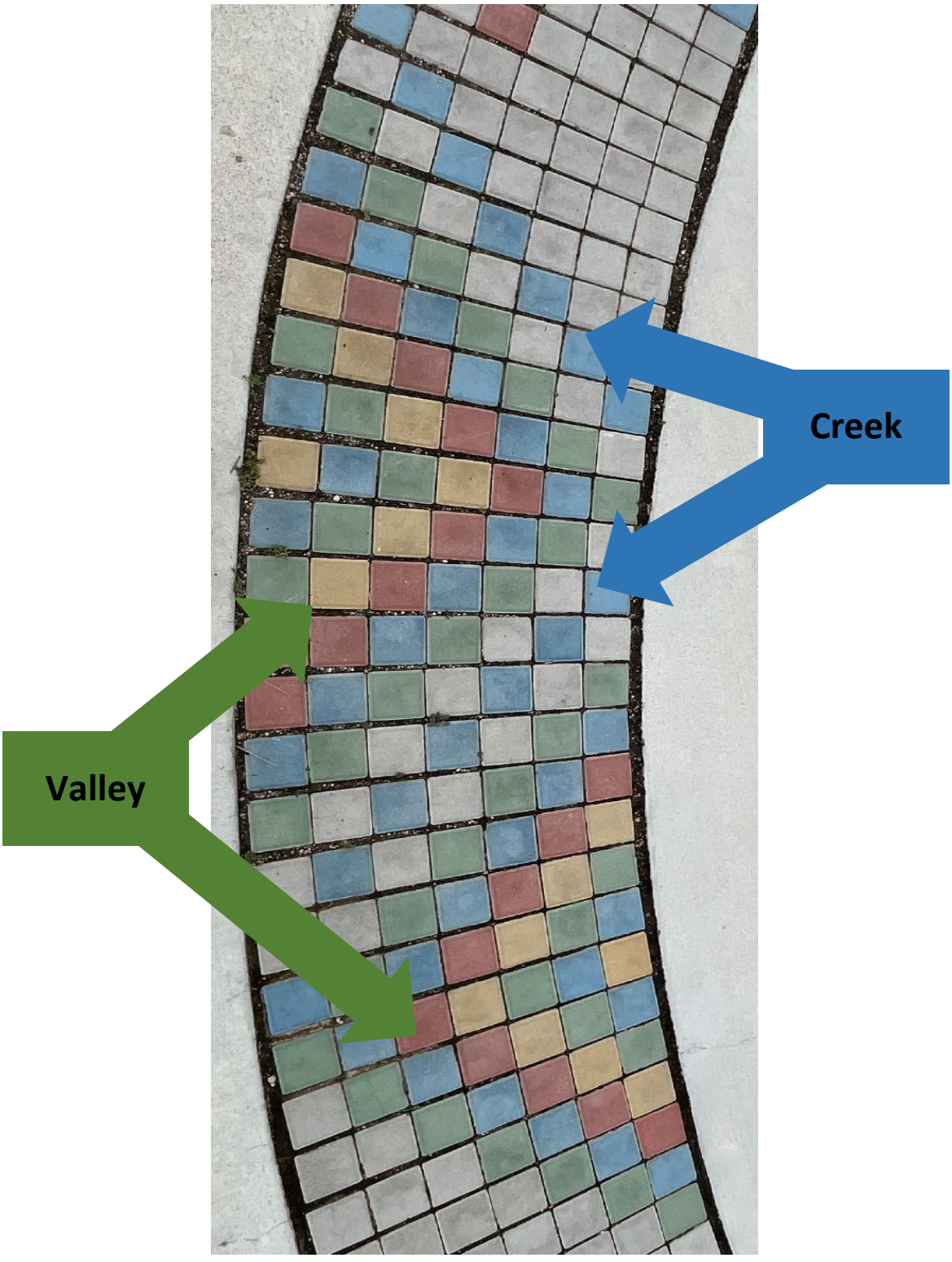
- Two hills with a stream running between them representing the opimihāw Valley (Picture B)
- Horse hooves that represent hunters chasing the bison (Picture C)
- The sun representing the spirituality of the Plains peoples (Picture D)
- The dragonflies representing warriors (Picture E)

PICTURE A

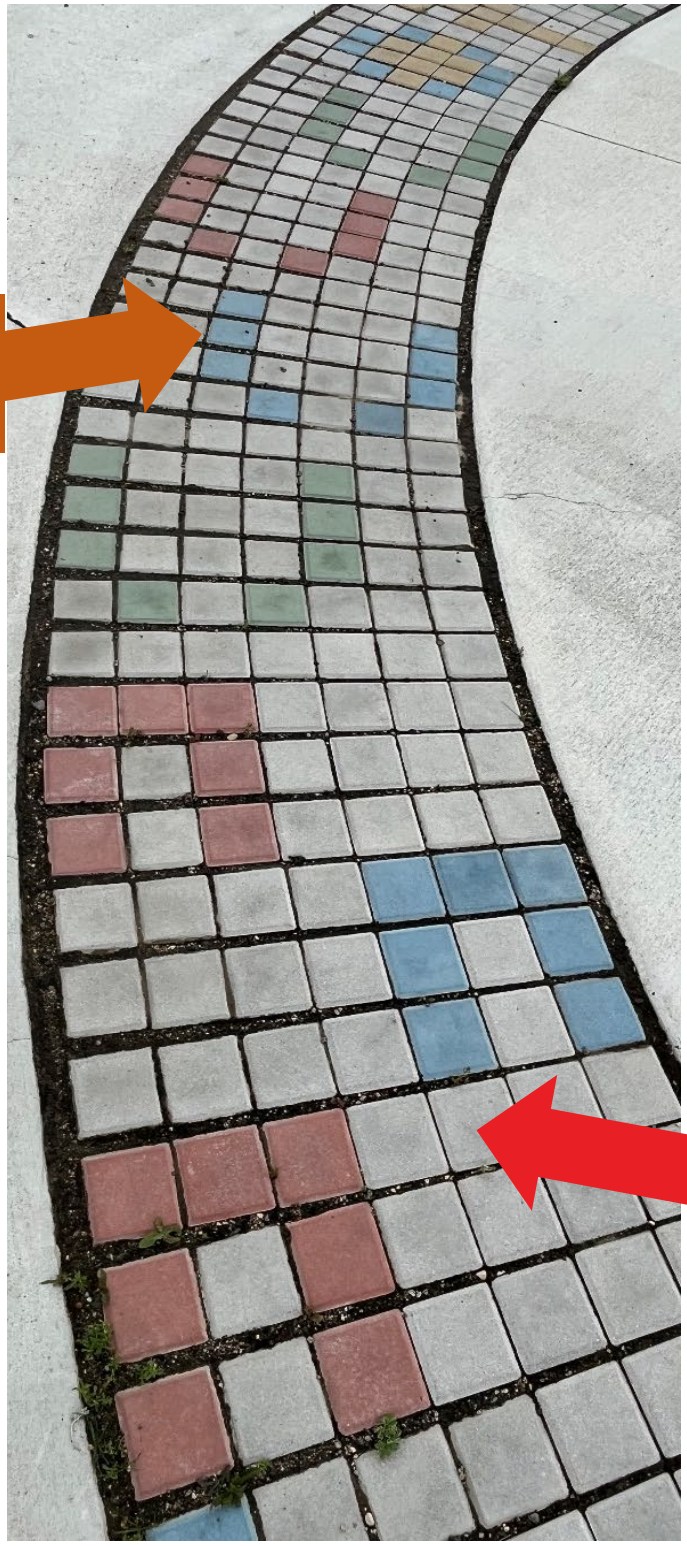


Carvings in this photo have been digitally enhanced.

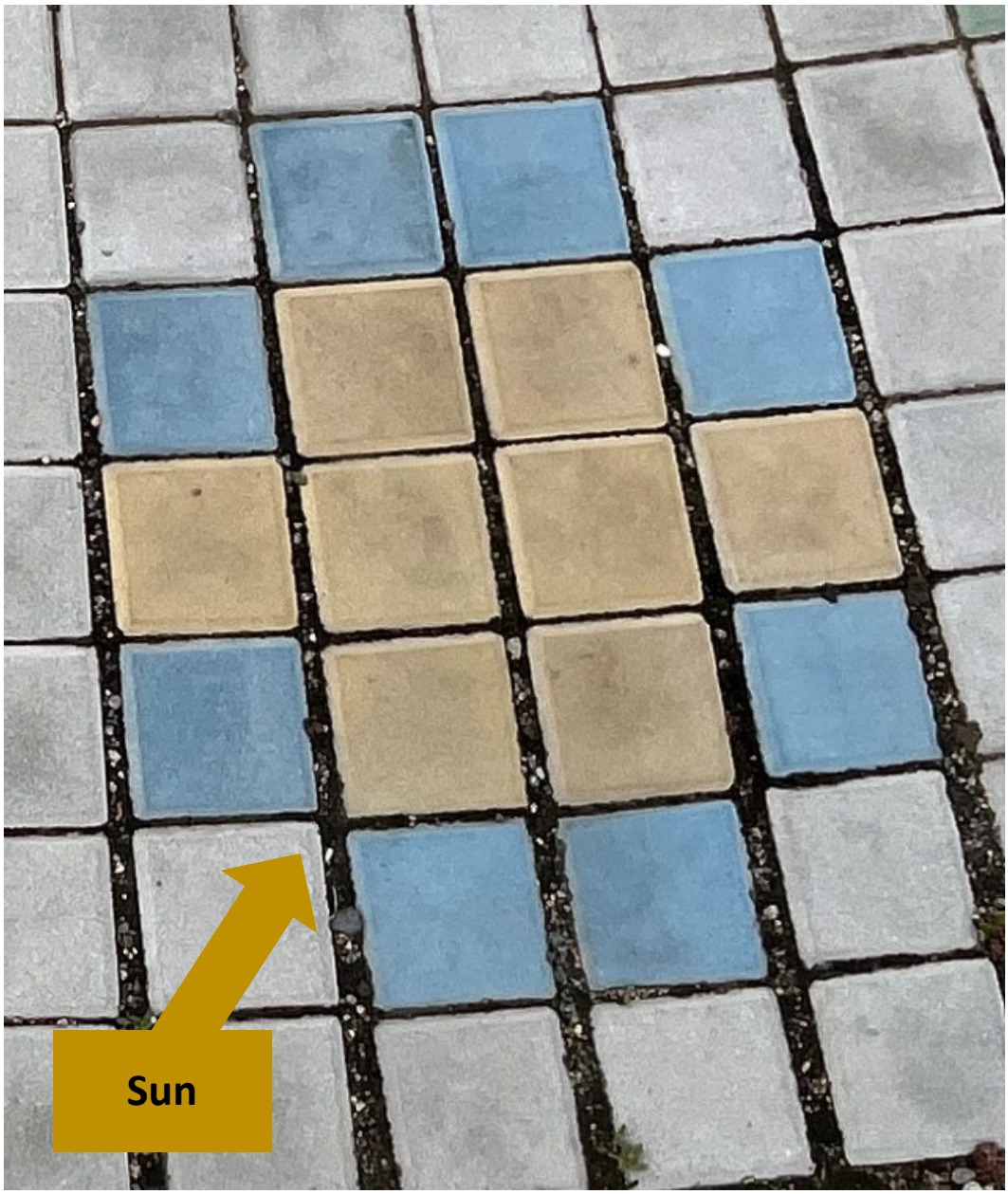
PICTURE B



PICTURE C



PICTURE D



PICTURE E

MOSAIC TILE ART

Activity Guide

Activity

Use the tiles provided to create your own mosaic artwork. See the examples provide for inspiration (Examples 1-6). Challenge yourself to create something using limited colours and spacing. You can even make use of dimensions (try stacking tiles to create a 3D effect!).

Like in the Hoofprint Tradition, you can create a representation of something such as an animal or you can challenge students to create a "beadwork" tile design based on a topic that you're discussing in your classroom such as family, self-identity, or kindness. How can these concepts be represented through simple designs without too much detail?

Beadwork (especially the beadwork in Wanuskewin's exhibits) can be a visual reminder of a fact, memory, or story. Sometimes it can tell you about the person who created it. What does the mosaic design you created remind you of? What does it say about you?

Make sure to take photos of the art you create if you want to continue this conversation in the classroom!

Take It Further

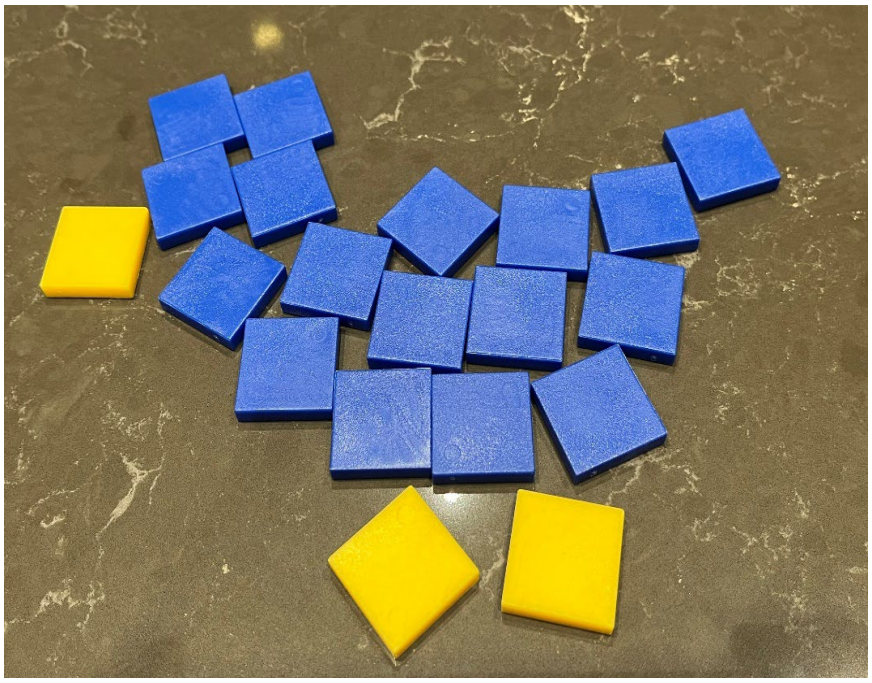
Brightly-coloured geometric (regular or straight lines and shapes) beading designs are often associated with the Indigenous groups of the Plains. Explore the beadwork designs in the exhibits. Try to find geometric designs in Wanuskewin's exhibits or galleries.

- Can you pick out any familiar shapes or images within the geometric designs? (Hint: the geometric designs are often inspired by nature.)
- Think about the colours used? Why might those specific colours be used? What might these colours call back to in nature?

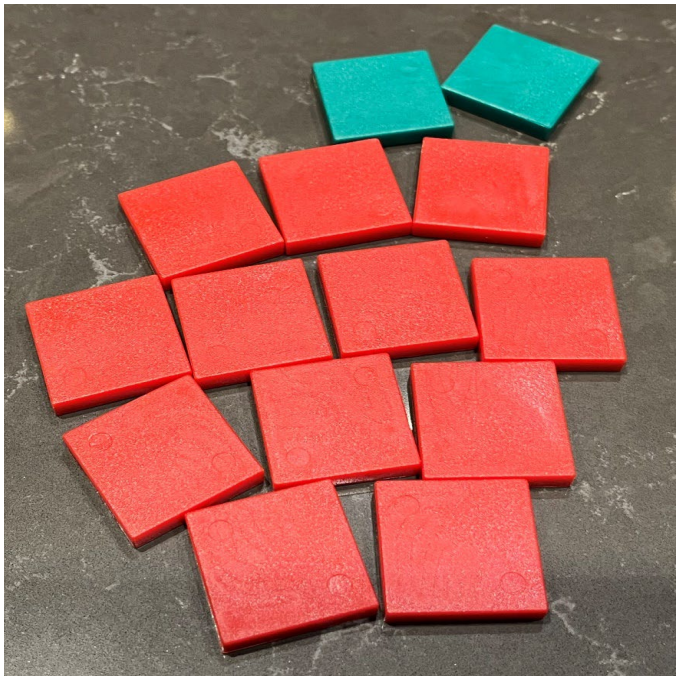
Continue this in the classroom

Using the same prompt (or a new one with a theme you are studying), create a larger version of these geometric "beadwork" designs using graph paper. Colour each square. Continue with the limited colour palette or expand your colour selection. Research geometric beading and use some examples as inspiration!

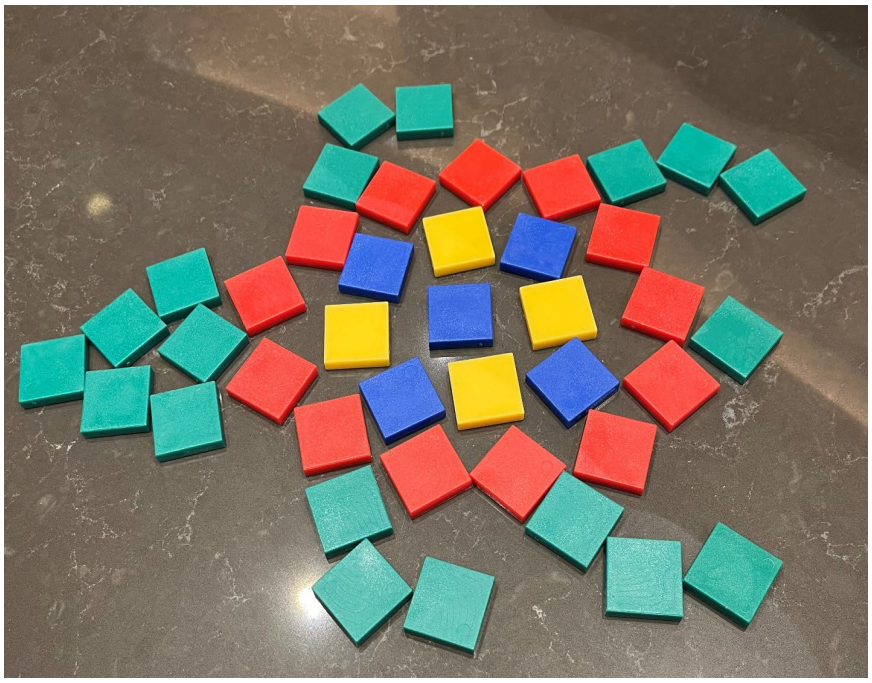
EXAMPLE 1 – Bird



EXAMPLE 2 – Apple

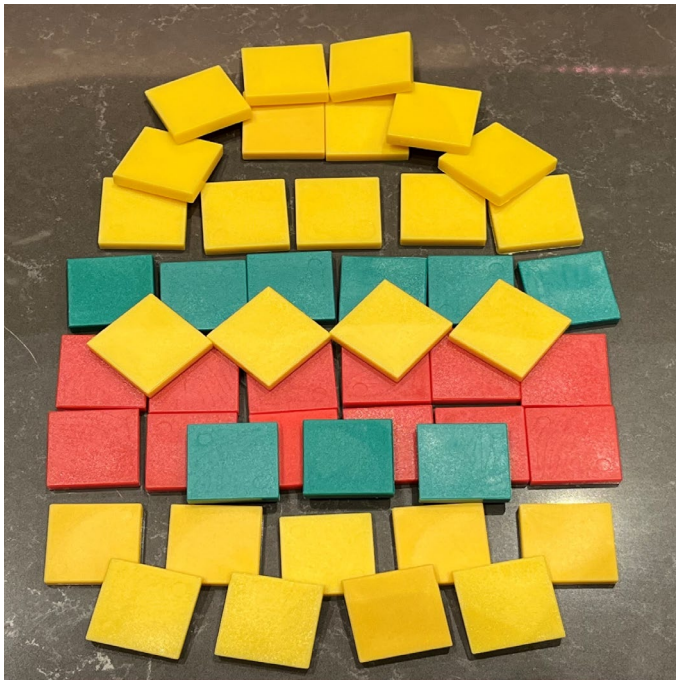


EXAMPLE 3 – Turtle



EXAMPLE 4 – Heart

EXAMPLE 5 – Hamburger



EXAMPLE 6 – Fries