Sixth Grade

A series of lesson plans designed to help sixth grade teachers use art as a tool to teach Utah’s Core Standards.

Nicholas Britsky, New Americas, 1974, oil on board

Support for educational resources provided by:
“An elementary school that treats the arts as the province of a few gifted children, or views them only as recreation and entertainment, is a school that needs an infusion of soul. The arts are an essential element of education, just like reading, writing, and arithmetic.”
William Bennett, Former US Secretary of Education

Art is a powerful teaching tool.

Recent academic research supports what many teachers already know, “arts education helps close the achievement gap, improves academic skills essential for reading and language development, and advances students’ motivation to learn.” Yet for many educators it has become increasingly difficult to make time for the arts in their classrooms.

We can help.

The Springville Museum of Art is excited to announce a new series of lesson plans designed to help educators use art as a tool to teach core subjects like **language arts**, **math**, **social studies**, and **science**. Each lesson in this packet incorporates Utah’s core standards, and historically and artistically significant images from the Springville Museum of Art’s permanent collection. We have redesigned our lesson plans to be simple, easy to use, and appropriate for each grade level.

Additional Resources

The following educational resources and programs are available, for little or no cost, to Utah educators.

- **Art Talks**: Our museum outreach educators will come to your school and provide interactive classes for students, training for teachers, and materials for classroom use.
- **Posters**: These 18” x 24” full-color fine art posters feature art from the Museum’s permanent collection. Each back of each poster includes information about the artist, artwork, and curriculum connections.
- **Postcard-Size Image Sets**: This educational postcard set includes 59 full-color images from the Museum’s permanent collection. Each postcard includes information to help students engage with the artwork through **learning**, **looking**, **asking** and **creating**.
- **Museum Tours**: You are invited to come and visit the museum with your class. We provide guided tours, pre- and post-visit lesson plans, and subsidized bus transport (to qualified schools). All tours must be scheduled at least two weeks in advance.
- **Evenings for Educators**: Learn how to implement arts education in your classroom through hands-on workshops and special presentations. **Evening for Educators** events happen during the school year at museums and galleries throughout the state.

Contact Us!

Our education staff is eager to help you harness the power of art in your classroom. Don’t hesitate to contact us to ask questions, schedule tours, order materials, or to arrange an Art Talks visit. For more information visit www.smofa.org or call 801-489-2727.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Talks</th>
<th>Educational Materials and Tours</th>
<th>General Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Stratford</td>
<td>Julie Hall</td>
<td>Jessica Weiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach Coordinator</td>
<td>Teacher Coordinator</td>
<td>Associate Curator of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:RSTRATFORD@springville.org">RSTRATFORD@springville.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:JHALL@springville.org">JHALL@springville.org</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:JWEISS@springville.org">JWEISS@springville.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Objectives

- Explore point-of-view.
- Use descriptive detail, sensory language, and figurative language.
- Evaluate artistic subject matter and themes.

Introduction

Ask the students if they have ever played the game Taboo. Explain that in the game of Taboo you have to describe an object, thing, or idea without using certain “taboo” words. The point is to get your team to guess the word you are describing. If you say one of the “Taboo” words you get buzzed!

Ask for some brave volunteers to help demonstrate the game. Demonstrate using 2 or 3 actual cards from the game taboo, or make your own. Have one student at a time describe the word on the Taboo card while the class tries to guess the word.

After the demonstration tell the students that for today’s lesson they will be playing the game Taboo using artwork from the Springville Museum of Art. They will be coming up with a list of taboo words, writing descriptions, and trying to match descriptions to artworks.

Learning Activity

1. Begin by letting each student choose an artwork from the postcard-size image set.

2. Once students have selected an image, they should examine it carefully, and write the name of the artwork, and 6 taboo words on a post-it note. Remind students that these taboo words should be obvious, descriptive words. For example if there is a cowboy in the picture one of the taboo words should be “cowboy.”

3. Students should stick their post-it note to the back of the postcard and then return the postcard to the front of the classroom.

4. Once all of the postcards are returned to the front of the classroom each student should choose a new postcard. It cannot be the image they chose before.

5. Students will now write a two paragraph description of the artwork they selected. They must not use any of the “taboo” words attached to their postcard. Discuss how to use descriptive detail and figurative language. Remind students that they should use words and imagery that will help someone guess which artwork they are describing. Make sure that each student writes his or her name on the back of their description.

6. When students have finished writing their description, they should trade with a neighbor and check each other’s descriptions to see if the author accidentally used any taboo words.

Materials

- Postcard-size image set
- Buzzer
- 2-3 Taboo cards (from the game or homemade)
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Post-it notes

Images from the Museum

Images are available as individual full-color posters, in postcard-size image sets, or digitally as a part of this packet.

For this lesson you can use any artwork. We recommend using our postcard-size image set which includes 59 works of art from the Springville Museum of Art’s permanent collection.

Utah Core Standards

English Language Arts: Literacy: W.6.3d
Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.

English Language Arts: Literacy: L.6.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Visual Arts: Standard 3
The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes.
7. Once the descriptions have been checked all of the students should turn in their descriptions.

8. Next, each student will receive one of their classmates descriptions and try to match it to the postcard it describes. You could hang postcards around the room or on the board and have students place their description next to the postcard they think it corresponds to.

9. Have each student check to see if the description that they wrote is correctly matched to the postcard they described.

Conclusion

When students have finished the learning activity talk about the experience. Ask a few students to share descriptions they thought were well-written. Ask students some questions to generate discussion, such as:

- What was hard about this activity?
- What kinds of descriptions made it easier to find the right postcard?
- Why is it important to use a variety of descriptive words as a writer?
- How does this exercise apply to artists?

Assess

Assign points to students based on the following criteria.

- Did the student participate in class discussion?
- Did the student write 6 taboo words?
- Did the student write a descriptive text without using taboo words?
- Did the student’s writing demonstrate use of detail, figurative language, and descriptive language?

Student Example

(Picture was a photograph of the Sydney Opera House)

Taboo words: purple, lights, water, bridge, buildings, blue, tall, dome(s).

Looking out at the vibrant lavender sky that blankets us, I want to get there soon. Up ahead of the vessel lies a spectacular twinkle of sparks in the dusk like stars that litter the ground. I can hear shouts and laughter from the city, but more prominently, sounds of music reverberate off the structure ahead.

It’s like a crystal being shoved out of the ground- jagged and sharp. It’s as if the setting sun had leaked through the ceiling and into the construction, setting it alight with its power, and leaving the rest of the world to sink into violet.
Objectives

- Define what alienation means.
- Analyze different ways people feel alienated.
- Critique a work of art that shows themes of alienation.
- Decipher the significance of certain symbols.
- Create an artwork that explores the commonalities between two different objects or ideas that seem unrelated.

Introduction

Choose four students to act out a lunchroom skit. The four students will be sitting at one table to eat their lunch. They should act very friendly with each other like they are best friends. Either the teacher or another student—who is confident—should act out the part of a brand new student on their first day at a new school.

Lunch time is always the most intimidating and scary time for a brand new student. The students eating at the table should act disinterested in this new student when the student asks to sit with them. Perhaps some comments could be made about them being different than the other students, or that they aren’t friends, so they can’t sit with them. The new student should then shy away and find a seat alone.

Following the skit have the class discuss what kinds of feelings this new student may have felt as he/she entered the lunchroom and came in contact with these students. Ask if any of them have ever felt like the new kid. Have students share ideas about how the student should have been treated.

Discuss with the class the meaning of the word “alienation”. Webster’s dictionary defines alienation as a withdrawing or separation of a person or a person’s affections from an object or position of former attachment. Explain how a new student may feel alienated or alienate them from a situation that seems unwelcoming.

Discuss

Have students take out a piece of paper and write down everything they think of when they think of America.

Then show students the image by Nicholas Britsky, titled New Americans. Show the image for a full minute and have students observe as closely as possible. When the minute is over, remove the image, and then have students describe the image to a neighbor in the best detail the student can remember.

What things do they remember from the images that were symbols of America? Show the image again and list everything the students can observe about the image on the board. What is different about the right side of the painting from the left side? Do they portray different moods? Do the members of the family
seem happy? Comfortable? Excited?

Next, have the students write a letter to a friend still living in their native country from the point-of-view of someone in the painting. What does the letter say? What kinds of emotions are portrayed? Is there hope? Is there regret?

Learning Activity

Discuss the art principles of balance, harmony, and unity. Explain that an image may be made up of many people, objects, or ideas that don’t seem to have anything in common and yet there can still be balance, harmony, or unity in the artwork. In order for people not to alienate themselves, they must not feel like aliens, they must find commonalities with the world around them.

Using this same concept, have students brainstorm two objects or opposing concepts like knives/silly putty, toothbrush/cake, light/dark, beautiful/ugly, or rich/poor and so on. The challenge for the student is to find a common ground that the two objects share and portray this in a picture.

For example, if a student chooses a car and an apple perhaps the apples are portrayed as the wheels of the car because the shape is common. Or if the student chooses light and dark they may show a light switch because it has the power to achieve both.

Once the artworks are finished, have students trade pictures with another peer and then have the peer make a judgment on whether the student was successful at creating unity among objects or ideas that would normally create alienation.

Learning Activity

Have students spend some time researching areas in the world where alienation is happening to entire groups. Many of these groups have become refugees in the United States or in neighboring countries. Students should research why the alienation is occurring (prejudice, wars, land disputes, etc.). Students should also see if they can find out how these refugees are being accepted in their new countries. Do the refugees feel alienated? Students should type up their findings and make suggestions of how to improve the situation of refugees.

Extension

Have students relate the idea of alienation back to art with postcards. Pull a variety of art postcards representing many different mediums and styles throughout history and group them into categories of style or theme. Ask if the students have a favorite style or medium.

If they do have favorites, then do they still consider their least favorite images artworks? What if the art world decided that only impressionistic artworks were true art, and then all other artist with different styles began to alienate themselves from the art world—what would happen? Would art be as interesting?

Have students think about movies, advertisements, video games, magazines, and images they see around them every day of people. Is everyone the same? Are most people they know just like the people they see in the movies? Have the students get into groups of four and come up with four reasons or ways people can feel or make themselves alienated from the rest of the world. Then have the students come up with a solution to prevent the alienation from happening.

Assessment

Use a 1-5 rubric to grade the studio assignment. The discussion should be a participation grade and the letter graded like an essay.
Objectives

• Demonstrate an understanding of light refraction.
• Demonstrate an understanding of how light separates into a spectrum of colors.
• Create an original landscape using the three properties of color: hue, value, and intensity.

Introduction

Show students the artwork *Symphony in Colour: Designed Landscape*, by Philip Henry Barkdull. Ask students questions about the artwork, such as:

• What stands out to you about this painting?
• Why do you think the artist called this painting, *Symphony in Colour*?
• What color stands out to you the most?
• Does color have anything to do with science?

Explain to students that they will be using this artwork as a starting point for today’s science lesson. They will conduct some experiments to learn how light separates into various colors, and at the end of the lesson they will make their own artwork demonstrating three important properties of color.

Experimentation

Ask students if they have ever seen a rainbow. Ask some questions about rainbows.

• When do you usually see a rainbow?
• What is the weather like?
• What time of day do rainbows usually appear?
• What colors do you see in a rainbow?

Explain to students that two physical phenomena are at work within a rainbow: refraction and reflection. Refraction occurs each time light passes across a boundary from one substance to another, such as from air into water. As light crosses that boundary, the rays bend at different angles depending on the wavelength (color) of light. This is the familiar prism effect wherein “white” sunlight is broken into a spectrum of different colors from red to blue-violet.

The same thing happens in a rainbow: white sunlight enters a raindrop and is broken into different colors heading in slightly different directions. The light is then reflected and magnified off the back of the raindrop and passes back into the air again. The reason that rainbows are somewhat rare is that you will only see them when there is rain in front of you and somewhat in the distance, and the sun is behind you and fairly low on the horizon.

Let students know that white sunlight divides into all the colors of the color spectrum (color wheel) when it passes through a raindrop at a certain angle and then reflects off the back of the

Materials

• Pen or pencil for drawing
• Watercolor sets
• Good heavy gauge paper
• Paintbrushes
• Various materials for the science experiments

Images from the Museum

Images are available as individual full-color posters, in postcard-size image sets, or digitally as part of this packet.

• Phillip Henry Barkdull, *Symphony in Colour: Designed Landscape*

Utah Core Standards

Science: Standard 6: Objective 2
Describe how light can be produced, reflected, refracted, and separated in visible light of various colors.

Visual Arts: Standard 2: Objective 1: a
Describe the three properties of color: hue, value, and intensity.

Visual Arts: Standard 2: Objective 1: b
Differentiate and identify colors by value and intensity within works of art.
Science and Visual Art

Symphony in Color (continued)

raindrops and is magnified to make the beauty we know as a rainbow.

Choose one or more of the following experiments to demonstrate the principles of reflection and refraction.

The Water Glass Method:
1. Fill a glass with water. 2. Place the glass on a table in front of a sunny window. 3. Place a sheet of paper on the floor. White paper works best. 4. Wet the window with hot water by misting it with a spray bottle. 5. Adjust the glass and the paper until you see a rainbow.

The Mirror Method:
1. Place a mirror inside a full glass of water. 2. Make sure the room is dark, and has white walls. 3. Shine a flashlight into the water, moving it around until a rainbow can be viewed.

The Prism Method:
A great demonstration in rainbow building can be done easily with a prism. A prism can be used to break light up into its constituent spectral colors (the colors of the rainbow). Prisms can also be used to reflect light, or to split light into components with different polarizations.

Prisms can be purchased inexpensively from any educational or art supply catalogue. They can be used easily with a flashlight to create a beautiful rainbow projection.

Art Making Activity

The creation of a rainbow in your class is a real attention getter and sets the mood for the creative thinking necessary to make an interesting drawing and watercolor.

When you make a rainbow Identify the colors in the right order: Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, and Violet. The memory device for this is ROY G. BIV. Show students that the color order is the same as the color wheel. Remember that Indigo is made by mixing blue and violet.

Return to the artwork from the beginning of the lesson and introduce the color properties of hue, value, and intensity.

• Hue is a color or shade. For example, reds, yellows, oranges, etc. Ask students to find similar hues in the painting.
• Value is the lightness or darkness of a color. Ask students if they can find two colors in the painting that are the same hue but a different value.
• Intensity relates to how strong a color is. Ask students to identify colors in the painting that are very intense.

Next, students will use their new understanding of color to create their own rainbow art. Their artwork should demonstrate an understanding of the three properties of color.

Have students look at some images or photographs of rainbow. Once they have researched rainbow pictures, have the students create a preliminary sketch. Students should shade in shadows and textures in the drawing. Point out to students that their rainbow does not have to be an arch. It could be a sky full of color like Philip Henry Barkdull’s painting. We want to try to get past the symbolic icon of a rainbow.

When it comes time to watercolor, here are a few simple hints to improve the effect of the watercolor technique:

1. Use the tip of the brush and use gentle pressure. Do not scrub with the brush.
2. Do not over use the water. Do not go back to the water each time you paint.
3. If you want to mix colors and you probably will, to get a good indigo (blue violet) do not mix on the paper, mix the colors in the mixing tray on the back of the watercolor set.

Assessment

When students are finished, have them give their artwork a title and describe the science behind how a rainbow is formed. They should use new science vocabulary words such as reflection and refraction.

Have students self-evaluate according to criteria you set with them, based on what specific art skills you have been working on in your class.
Objective

- Understand the principles of ratio and proportion.
- Look carefully at faces in artwork.
- Draw a proportional face using appropriate ratios.

Introduction

Show students Nicholas Britsky’s *New Americans* and *George II* by H. Lee Deffebach. Talk about the faces in each picture. Ask the students a few questions about the artworks to generate discussion, such as:

- Is there anything unusual about the faces in these pictures?
- Do the faces look realistic? Why or why not?
- How are the faces different?

Introduce the idea of proportion. Explain that faces look more realistic when their features are proportional. When features are too big or too small the face begins to look like a cartoon.

In the artwork, *New Americans*, the artist exaggerated some of the features such as the eyes. The artist was not trying to make a realistic face. However, in *George II* the artist wanted the face to be recognizable as George Washington so she was careful about the size, shape, and placement of his features.

Ask the students how an artist knows where to draw a person’s features to make their face look realistic. Explain that many artists use the mathematical concept of ratio to help them draw realistic faces. No matter how small or how large a face is the ratio of one feature to another is always the same.

Demonstration

Use the artwork *Snow Queen: Portrait of Adah* by Lee Udall Bennion to demonstrate the ratios found on the human face. Begin by drawing a vertical line from the top of Adah’s head to her chin. Point out that Adah’s face is symmetrical, meaning her face is the same on each side of the vertical line. Draw horizontal lines to mark the top of her head and her chin.

Next, demonstrate that the eyes are located halfway between the top of the head and the chin. Draw a horizontal line across Adah’s eyes to mark the halfway point. Point out that the tops of Adah’s ears begin at her eye line.

Then draw a horizontal line halfway between Adah’s eye line and her chin line. The bottom of her nose should rest on this line. Her mouth line is halfway between her nose and her chin.

Learning Activity

Now, invite the students to draw with you. Encourage them not to work ahead of the group. They will practice drawing a face correctly, and then they will be able to complete some independent practice. Use this class practice as an opportunity to

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Images from the Museum
- Oil pastels, markers, or colored pencils

Images from the Museum

Images are available as individual full-color posters, in postcard-size image sets, or digitally as part of this packet.

- Nicholas Britsky, *New Americans*
- H. Lee Deffebach, *George II*
- Lee Udall Bennion, *Snow Queen: Portrait of Adah*

Utah Core Standards

Math: Content: 6.RP.A.1
Understand the concept of a ratio and use ratio language to describe a ratio relationship between two quantities.

Visual Arts: Standard 4: Objective 1: a Compare/contrast art forms, past or present, in terms of subject matter, culture, and history.
quiz the students about the ratios you have just discussed.

1. Begin by drawing an oval that is slightly wider at the top than it is at the bottom. Students should draw their oval so that it fills up most of the page. It is important to work big, so that students can include important details.

2. Once students have completed their oval, ask them what they should draw first. Remind them that a vertical line will help keep both sides of the face even and symmetrical. Lightly sketch a vertical line down the center of the oval.

3. Next, draw the eye line. Ask the students where to put the eyes on the face. Remind them that the eyes are halfway between the top of the head and the chin. Make sure they understand that the top of their head is not their hairline.

4. Draw the eyes on the eye line. Remind students that eyes should look proportional—not too big or too small. Also, help them understand that eyes are not circular, they are shaped more like a football or an almond.

5. Next, ask students where to draw the nose. The bottom of the nose rests on the nose line. The nose line is halfway between the eye line and the chin. Encourage them to try different ways of drawing a nose.

6. The next line is the mouth line. The mouth line is halfway between the nose line and the chin. The bottom lower lip should rest on this line. Remind the students that everyone’s lips are different. Use the artwork to point out different shapes and sizes of lips.

7. At this point ask the students what is still missing from their faces. Talk about the position of the ears, eyebrows, and hair. The top of the ears should line up with the eye line. Eyebrows start just about the inner corner of the eye and extend just past the outer corner of the eye. Hair should come from the top of the head, down towards the top of the ears.

8. Finally, talk to students about adding details to make a face unique. Ask them what details they see in the artworks you have shown that help to differentiate one face from another.

Art Making Activity

Before you begin the independent practice portion of the lesson ask students to help you generate criteria to assess their artwork. List these criteria on the board so that the students can reference them.

Next invite students to practice drawing independently. Walk around the room and help students adjust their drawings to make them more proportional. Encourage them to ask their neighbors for feedback. They could ask questions about whether certain features need to be larger or smaller.

When students feel ready they can create their final drawing. Give students a sheet of high quality paper and encourage them to lightly sketch a face in pencil. When they have finished their pencil sketch they can use markers, colored pencils, or oil pastels to finish their artwork.

Conclusion

Once students have completed their artwork discuss their artwork in relationship to the artwork discussed at the beginning of the lesson. Include questions like,

- What was the hardest part about drawing a face?
- What was easy for you?
- Do you think you are better at drawing faces now than you were before?
- Did knowing the mathematical proportions of the face help you improve as an artist?

Assessment

Assess students according to the criteria you generated as a class. Rate their work on a scale of 1 to 5 for each criteria.