

Art & Poetry: Ideas for Teachers

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1) Three-Mile Radius Project: Monoprints displayed in a grid with an accompanying group poem.

Introduction: I showed the students a series of photographs that I took from within a three-mile radius of the school. I called it a Treasure Hunt and had them keep track of how many places/things they knew about. Then we went back over the photos and talked about each one. I then asked them what are the things they care about, find beautiful or funny or fascinating about their three-mile radius. Imagine going for a walk outside your home, what do you see? Talk for a bit about their ideas.

Art: Give the students paper with two or three formats drawn on in advance, so they can make a few drawings. Have them make line drawings without very much detail. No shading. Choose one from each student to make a monoprint. It takes about 5-10 minutes for each student to make a monoprint with an assistant. (Note: If the drawing includes words or something else that can't be printed in reverse, have them hold their drawing up to the window and trace it onto the back.)

Monoprint supplies:

- 2 oz tube of etching ink (I used item# 45216-2123 at Dick Blick, which is oil based and cleans up with mineral spirits, \$13.55, enough for 300 prints. There may be water-based alternatives.)
- 4"-6" hard rubber brayer (item# 40125-1004 at Dick Blick, \$11)
- Sharpened 2h pencil
- 11" x 14" Piece of glass with duct tape covering the edges.
- Scrap paper with a window cut out slightly smaller than the paper you will be printing on. (If printing on a 5" x 5" paper, then the window should be 4 ¾" x 4 ¾") Tape this paper to the glass along the top edge.
- Quality, thicker paper for printing on, ripped or cut to size. (I used printmaking paper that I pre-stained with acrylic paint and ripped into 5" squares.)

How to print:

- 1) Squeeze out about ¼" of ink onto the plate. Using the brayer, smooth it out to a shape bigger than your format. (Note: You will have to add more ink after every 2 or 3 prints.)
- 2) Lay the paper with the window onto the plate.
- 3) Place the blank printing paper, face-down and centered over the window.
- 4) Lay the student's drawing face-up over the printing paper. (Note that it will print in reverse.)
- 5) Instruct the student to not lean their hand or fingers onto the paper. ONLY their pencil point should touch the paper.

- 6) While an assistant holds down both papers over the window at the edges, the student uses the sharp pencil to trace their drawing. The assistant needs to pay attention to be sure the student has traced all of the lines, since once you lift off the drawing from the plate, it's hard to get it all lined up again.

Poetry: Once the monoprints are completed, it's time to write the group poem. The first line can be, "We celebrate our city of Springville." The rest of the lines follow this format: "Where the _____." (See the Walt Whitman poem below.) Each student can write their own line, or the class can compose several lines together as a group, using the chalkboard. Help them revise and be concrete.

2) Adding Lines of Well-known Poetry to Student Art

Christopher Smart's poem, "For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry" and Walt Whitman's poem, "Song of Myself" have many lines that would work well for students to illustrate, then incorporate into their drawings. (Christopher Smart was an English poet born in 1722. Walt Whitman was an American poet born in 1819.) Display the work together.

Have the students choose one line that they would like to illustrate. Ways to incorporate the text into the art are:

- 1) Hand write the words on the drawing anywhere they'd like. They can do this at any time while drawing.
 - 2) Hand write the words across the bottom of the drawing.
 - 3) Hand write the words in a separate space at the bottom of the page.
 - 4) Print out the entire line and add it as collage anywhere in the drawing.
- (Note: another interesting way of adding text is to scratch through wet paint to a darker color beneath.)

Lines from Christopher Smart's "For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry"

For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For he looks upon his forepaws to see if they are clean.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
For tenthly he goes in quest of food.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance.
For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes.
For he purrs in thankfulness when God tells him he's a good Cat.
For he is an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon.

For, though he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer.
For he can swim for life.
For he can creep.

Lines from Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself"

Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead
Where the buck turns furiously at the hunter
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock
Where the otter is feeding on fish
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the bayou
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey
Where the beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous shuddering of their hides
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes it
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of the water
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square miles far and near
Where the humming-bird shimmers
Where the neck of the long-lived swan is curving and winding
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and iced trees
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the marsh at night and feeds
upon small crabs

3) Writing a "Days of the Week Poem," then making a "Stripe Painting" that includes the entire poem.

Poetry: Help them revise and be concrete.

Monday is _____ (add a color) _____ as _____ (add a simile) _____.
Tuesday is _____ (add a color) _____ as _____ (add a simile) _____.
Wednesday is _____ (add a color) _____ as _____ (add a simile) _____, etc.

Art: Show them stripe paintings by artists Bridget Riley, and Paul Klee. Have them paint seven stripes in the colors mentioned in their poem. This is an opportunity to learn about color mixing. These lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. They can also be irregular like in the Klee paintings. Then, they draw or paint their lines of poetry onto each corresponding color. If the colors are dark, just draw the lines on with light chalk or white charcoal pencils. It's OK if their lines read sideways or diagonally! (See also the song title paintings of Squeak Carnwath.)

