



English Language Arts, Fine Arts

Animating Your Perception

Grades 1 and up
Lesson by Angela Rosales Challis

This lesson may be adjusted according to grade level and is recommended to be done over the course of many days.

Objectives

- Students will point out how author Yamile Saied Mendez is able to pinpoint specific descriptions of the place the protagonist is from.
- Students will identify where they are from based in all sensory ways.
- They will create a mask that represents who they are and where they are from.
- They will create a stop-motion animation with the mask.

Background

Inspiration from this lesson is from the book *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Mendez. This book explores how we can more creatively define who we are and what makes us unique.

Inspiration was also taken from a historical context: The Bolivian Morenada Masks and dance. For more information about this historical event and cultural phenomenon, please visit: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1CBcj1a4FobnywfsCfGOiVL-2zxodKgQM/edit#slide=id.p1>



L'deane Minor Trueblood, *The Storyteller*, 1990, bronze



Judith Ann Mehr, *Grandma is a Storyteller*, 2000, oil on canvas

Materials

- Scrapbook paper for background
- Variety of paper
- Scissors
- Glue dots/sticky tack
- Found objects
- Animation Stand
- Light/desk lamp
- Phone, tablet, or iPad
- App Stop Motion Studio:



Utah Core Standards

Fine Art Core:

CREATE (7–8.V.CR.): Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation.

CONNECT (7–8.V.CO.): Students will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context.

English Language Arts Core

Writing Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.

Images from the Museum Permanent Collection

L'deane Minor Trueblood, *The Storyteller*, 1990, bronze
Judith Ann Mehr, *Grandma is a Storyteller*, 2000, oil on canvas
James Taylor Harwood, *An Interesting Story*, 1904, oil on canvas



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Lesson Plan

This lesson is best split up between multiple days. Here is a rough outline that you may wish to change depending on your group:

Introduction: 1 hour

Mask making: 1-2 hours

Animation: 2-5 hours

Introduction

In the book *Where Are You From?* the author points out six clear descriptions of the place where the protagonist is from. Her abuelo (grandfather) gives specific descriptions of what you could see at each place. But in addition, each place has a specific feeling and/or meaning. This happens in all of our lives. We attach feelings and meanings to events, topics, and places.

In an effort to have students more creatively define where they are from, we can think of it in a sensory way, like how the protagonist's abuelo describes. Students will be making and animating masks that abstractly and creatively describe who they are and when they are from.

After reading the book, have the students brainstorm ideas of where they are from based on their senses other than their eyes. For younger grades, you may wish to do this as a class.

Ask questions like:

What is your favorite smell in your home/hometown?

What do you touch frequently?

What's a memory of different tastes or smells?

An example:

I am from Colorado. The smell of freshly fallen snow reminds me of my childhood- it's clean but at the same time very earthy. And when it gets dirty, it smells like gasoline and car tires. I remember feeling rough wallpaper and cold granite in my home. My favorite food was fresh tomato soup made from tomatoes from my father's garden. It would be so hot outside and we would be sweaty but we would eat piping hot tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches.

Encourage your students to be creative and come up with as many thoughts, stories, and feelings as possible.

Mask making

After students have thought about what makes them unique and where they came from, it's now time to take those words and thoughts and construct a mask.

Students will be taking the ideas they brainstormed about where they are from and constructing a mask. The mask should have at least six unique elements (hair, eyes, mouth, nose, ears, eyebrows, etc.). Each element will represent one of the sensory experiences they described from their childhood or their hometown. Note: the sense does not need to match the element. For example, the nose does not need to be representational of the smell they described. Encourage abstraction and creativity whenever possible. Masks can be made with any material: paper, small found objects, etc.

Masks can be representational of the student or completely abstracted. It's up to them!

NOTE: If you are wanting to animate the masks coming together, make sure students do NOT secure any of the elements with glue or tape. Continue on with the rest of the lesson.

If you want to create just the mask and not animate it, have the students secure the elements down and create a collage.

Pre-production and production (animating)

Here are the 10 steps and the checklist to go through with your students while animating.

1. Idea
2. Storyboard
3. Frame rate/frames per second
4. Controlled light
5. Background
6. Camera stability
7. Onion skin
8. Time
9. Be patient
10. Watch the progress
11. Add voice over

Reminder:

The animation will be done through the app "Stop Motion Studio." It's very user friendly, but make sure to download and play around with it so you can direct students on what they need to do.



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Pre-production and production (cont.)

Idea

Make sure each element has a meaning. *Mise-en-scene* is the filmmaking term meaning that everything in front of the camera needs a reason to be there. Nothing is unplanned.

Storyboard

- Make a plan for the order the elements will come into frame. For example, hair first, then eyes, then ears, etc.
- Figure out a pathway for each element.
- Decide what happens to the element once it arrives at its place.
- Some pathways can be direct, others can be indirect. Mix it up!
- Draw the pathways because a clear plan will make the work easier later.

Frame Rate/Frames per Second

Frames per second is how many pictures are in one second of video. 8 to 10 fps is good for beginners. 12 fps is regularly used and 24 fps is used by the experts. Stick to 8 to 10 fps with your students.

Controlled Light

- Get the room as dark as possible.
- Avoid rooms with windows or cover the windows.
- Be sure not to create shadows with your body.
- Use a desk lamp or a light over the animation stand so you don't create overhead shadows.



James Taylor Harwood, *An Interesting Story*, 1904, oil on canvas

Camera Stability

- Make sure your box is stable and won't fall over or shake while taking pictures.
- When taking photos, do not move the phone or iPad.
- You may choose to use the timer mode on your camera.

Onion Skin

There is a setting on the left side of the screen that makes the previous picture a little transparent. This helps you know how far you are moving from the previous picture.

The smaller the movement in between pictures, the smoother the animation.

Time

- Make sure you have plenty of time to complete the animation in one sitting, at least about three hours.
- If you need to leave it for the next day, use sticky tack or glue dots to keep it in place and maybe ask the janitor to not clean your room.
- If your elements moved, don't panic. It is possible to rearrange and get back to where you were the day before.

Watch the Progress

It's nice to keep watching the progress of the animation to make sure it's coming together in the way you like. If something is not working or if it isn't the way you thought it would be, change the storyboard and change it up.

Be Patient!

Time flies when you are animating! But it can be quite tedious at times. Some students will find the work relaxing and fun while others may find it hard to focus. Keep reminding them to be patient and the end result will be worth it!

Add Voice Over

After you have completed the video portion, it's time to add voiceover! Each element (eyes, ears, eyebrows, etc.) should have a sentence explaining a part of childhood or their hometown. Make sure the timing of the movement of the element and the voiceover is the same. The end product should be a little less than a minute long.



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Conclusion

Ask students to evaluate their work and the work of their peers. You can have them present their work movie premiere style. Note: since the movies are so short, it's best to play them twice or more. Have them ask questions like:

- How is my mask and video similar to others?
- How are they different?
- Why is my mask and video similar or different?
- What did you learn about yourself or your classmates?
- Have a Q&A session where students can ask classmates about their choices and presentations.

Adaptations

For younger students, it might be best to brainstorm and produce an animation as a class or in groups. It can be more of a community mask versus a personalized mask. This can also be the case if not every student has access to a smart device.

Students can synthesize what they learned into a write-up to help them further their development in visual literacy.

Watch an example!
An example of this project can be found at:

<https://vimeo.com/604549972>

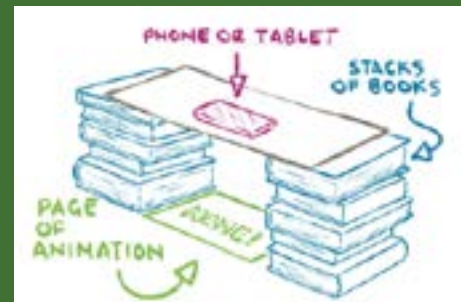


How to Make an Animation Stand!

1. Take a medium-sized cardboard box (paper ream boxes work well)
2. Place the box on its side and cut a small hole on the top
3. Place a small desk lamp or other light inside the box
4. Place your phone or tablet on top of the box with the camera poking through the hole.
5. Refer to photo:

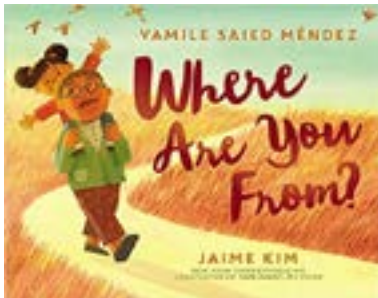


If resources are limited, you can construct an animation stand out of books:



Additional Resources

- *Where Are You From?* by Yamile Saied Mendez
<https://www.amazon.com/Where-Are-Yamile-Saied-M%C3%A9ndez/dp/0062839934>



- You can view Angela's stop-motion animation work online at her website, **including a tutorial**.
<https://www.angelarosaleschallis.com/animation>



John Hubbard Rich, *Mexican Children with Fruit*, 1932, oil on canvas



Judith Ann Mehr, *Grandma is a Storyteller*, 2000, oil on canvas



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