



Safe at School Art Curricula
Middle School

Day 1: Shape and Feeling – The Use of Abstract Shapes in Composition

Goal:

The students will explore the use of abstract shapes and the feelings they evoke.

Process:

This lesson plan is based on Molly Bang's "Picture This." A good summary of the principles of the book is available at <http://www.northern.edu/hastingw/mbang.htm>. Her own website is <http://www.mollybang.com/>.

1. Cut out basic shapes (triangles, rectangles, circles and other curvilinear shapes) from several colors (red, black, white and light purple) of construction paper. Cut out several different sizes of each shape. Place a large white sheet of paper on an easel for a background. Give four colors of construction paper to each student (red, black, white and light purple or another pastel) as well as a larger sheet of white paper and scissors.
2. Have the students brainstorm a scary situation that might happen in their school - a bully on the playground, in the hallway, someone waiting to corner a victim.... Find a situation that is appropriate for your school's community.
3. Using the colored paper, pick a shape that will be the "bad guy" in the story. Do they want it to be a soft, curvy shape or a rectilinear, angular one? Put both options up on the white paper on the easel and ask them which one feels "badder." Long, thinner triangles feel more threatening than stable fat triangles or rectangles. Triangles that are tilted off the horizon line feel scarier than those that are based on the horizon.
4. Now ask them to find a "good guy" shape. Use the same color. Should it be the same shape as the bad guy? Should it be different? Should it be curvy or angular? Ask them to imagine running to the good guy shape for comfort and safety. What would that shape feel like? We feel scared with pointed or jagged shapes and more secure with rounded or curvy ones. Should the safe shape be the same color as the scary shape? Try making the safe shape different colors. Which one is safest? The pastel color will feel best!
5. Now put the two shapes on the board on opposite sides of the paper. How do the two relate to one another? Consider their size. Should the bad guy be bigger or smaller than the good guy? Is the bad guy scarier when it is a lot bigger? The larger a shape is in the picture, the more frightening it feels. The smaller a shape, the more vulnerable it seems.
6. Now think about how the two are related on the paper. Does the bad shape feel more threatening if it is closer or farther away from the good shape? Is a threatening person scarier when they are closer to the victim or farther away? Does the bad shape need to be up high on the picture plane? Should the smaller one be closer? Should they be near to one another and both closer or both farther away? What happens when the shapes are in the center of the picture plane? How do the students feel when the shape or shapes are moved to the edge of the page? The center of the page is the center of attention. The closer an object is to the edge of the paper, the greater the tension we feel. Play around with the shapes changing their position on the paper until the students are satisfied with their placement. If

- the shapes are close together, the larger shape feels more threatening. If they are closer to us, we relate to them more than if they are in the background and removed from our world.
7. Now discuss the setting for the shapes. Tall, thin vertical rectangles are exciting and strong. Try putting some tall, thin, black rectangles across the white page—how do they read to the students? Can they be trees in a forest? What happens when you change those rectangles and make them thinner or fatter? What if they extend off the page? What happens if you tilt the rectangles? Do they make the space safer or scarier? Diagonal shapes imply motion or tension. The diagonal rectangles seem as if they are poised in mid-motion. Are they falling?
 8. How can you make a “safe” place for the “good guy” shape to hide from the bad one? What type of shape would this be? Would it be a tall thin rectangle or a square shape? Would it be large or tiny? A square is a stable shape and should be seen as an island of calm within the picture plane. What color should it be? What happens when you make it the same color as the “good guy” shape? Does it look like it belongs there? Do the students associate the shapes with real objects? Does the square seem to read like a house?
 9. Now ask the students to think of a situation where they felt afraid at school or threatened. Using the colored paper and scissors, have them cut out a safe shape and a bad guy or scary shape. Using the principles you have just gone over, have the students illustrate their scary situation with abstract shapes.
 10. Look at all the finished work together and discuss which compositions are scariest and why.

Day 2: The Emotional Aspects of Color

Goal:

The students will learn about the emotional and physiological affects of color.

Process:

1. Artists understand the power of color in affecting the viewer's feelings. Throughout art history, artists have used color to convey and heighten the emotional content of a painting. In the early twentieth century, artists began to focus on color as a direct translation of their feelings, and to use color as an emotional force. This group of artists was called the Fauves (or the wild beasts in French) and they included Henri Matisse (1869-1954), Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958), and Andre Derain (1880-1954.)
2. Project on a white board screen or print a large reproduction of Matisse's Harmony in Red (Red Room) 1908-9.
http://www.artchive.com/artchive/m/matisse/harmony_in_red.jpg
Red is the predominant color in the painting. How would we feel about the painting if it was mostly green? Or overwhelmingly blue instead of red? How does the predominant redness make us feel? The color red usually makes us feel warmth because we associate it with the sun and fire, but also because the color red has a physiological effect on us that excites and stimulates. More energy is reflected from warm colors than from the cooler ones. "Warm" colors - red, yellow and orange - traditionally are thought to evoke feelings of heat, whether psychological or real.
3. "Cool" colors are believed to evoke colder or darker emotions and they can have a calming effect on us. Look at a painting from Picasso's Blue Period like The Tragedy, 1903: <http://www.nga.gov/cgi-bin/pimage?46388+0+0> . Even without knowing the title of the painting you understand that these figures are not happy. There are many other things that help you sense this, but the mood is created by the overall coloration. How would this painting feel if the overall tone were red or yellow?
4. We often refer to color when we talk about our feelings. Ask the students to brainstorm about using color to describe emotions: "I'm feeling blue" or "I'm so happy I want to paint the town red." We also talk about looking at the world through "rose colored glasses" or being so angry that you were "seeing red." What other examples can the students think of?
5. Ask the students to think about color in their own lives. Do they wear different colors depending on how they feel in the morning? Do they wear lighter, brighter colors when they are happy and darker, cooler ones when they are feeling down? Color is also subjective. Explain that because we associate colors with objects, we will all think of different things when we see a color. What specific things do they think of when they see certain colors?
6. Hand out the compositions the students made during the exercise on shape and feeling (Day 1). Have a variety of colored construction paper available (both warm and cool.) Ask the students to experiment with the same shapes. Ask them to change the colors of the shapes. Which colors are better suited to the "bad guy"

shape? To the “good guy” shape? Have them cut out the shapes from other colors. Ask them to consider what color or colors the background should become? Is it scarier when it is white? Or red? Or a darker cool color? Remind them this is a subjective decision. There is no wrong or right, what is important is how the colors make them feel.

7. When they have finished discuss their findings. Have them use their compositions as examples when they are talking. Which colors worked best to convey certain kinds of feelings?

Additional Activity:

Have the students create a painting or drawing about anything they want - a topic related to safety or school in general would be best. Tell them that they can use many colors but that they one color should be strongest. Next have them re-create the painting except using a different color as the “strong” color. How does this change the painting? Does it have a different feel? A different theme?

Day 3: Jackson Pollack

Goal:

Students will explore the use of line to convey emotion.

Process:

1. Pass out pencils (or Sharpies) and paper.
2. Ask the students where the scary places are in school: the hallways, the locker room, the gym, the bathroom...
3. Discuss which places are frightening and why? Are they places where students might be victims to bullying, abuse, or violence?
4. Ask each student to imagine themselves in the scariest of these places (They cannot talk during this exercise).
5. Tell them their pencils represent them in this place. While their pencils are moving, they will be safe in this place. As soon as they stop, even for a moment, they are targets. There is someone in this place who is trying to hurt them and they need to keep moving in order to remain safe.
6. Tell them you will time them and tell them when to stop. Time them for about one and a half to two minutes.
7. Have them look at each other's papers. Talk about what kinds of lines and marks they have made. What are the lines like? Are they smooth and curvilinear? Or sharp and erratic? What kind of movement are they describing? What kinds of feelings do they get when they look at the marks?
8. Show them the following images:
"Lavender Mist," Jackson Pollock, 1954
http://faculty.evansville.edu/rl29/art105/img/pollock_lavendermist.jpg
"Autumn Rhythm, (Number 30), Jackson Pollock, 1950
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/images/h2/h2_57.92.jpg
9. Discuss the type of lines used by the artist. What was he trying to tell us? How did he feel? How do we feel when we look at them?

Day 4: The Power of Language

Goal:

Students will explore the use of words in art.

Process:

1. Artists often incorporate words in their compositions. Why and how do they do this? Artists have used words in their work since the Cubists, particularly Picasso and Braques, who began including them in collages of the early 1900s. Pablo Picasso's Still Life with Chair-Caning from 1912 is a good example. <http://www.usc.edu/schools/annenberg/asc/projects/comm544/library/images/263bg.jpg> Here Picasso has used the letters 'jou' which could be the beginning of the word 'journal' which means newspaper in French or could refer to 'jeu' or 'jouer' which means to play. How has Picasso used the ambiguity of the letters to add meaning to the painting?
2. Other artists have used words in their work. One of the first American artists to use text was Stuart Davis (1894-1964). Although he worked in a Cubist style, he eventually began to use abstract patterns into which he introduced lettering and suggestions of advertisements and posters as in Visa, 1951: <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/davis/davis.visa.jpg>
3. Art is a visual language and adding verbal language incorporates another type of communication into the work. Visual language uses line, shape, color, and form. Verbal language uses letters and words. Words can have multiple meanings. How can you use the different interpretations of a word or phrase to add meaning to your art work?
4. Brainstorm with your students some phrases that have to do with safety in schools, for example: safety in numbers, better safe than sorry, crossing the line, lockdown....
5. Ask the students to pick a phrase or word and illustrate its meaning visually. They should include the words or letters in the drawing. Give each student a piece of white paper for the background. Have magazines, newspapers and letter stencils available. Also put out glue sticks, scissors, pencils, colored pencils and markers.
6. They should consider placement of the letters. Should they be together or spread out on the page? Can their placement add or change the meaning? (If you have done the exercise on Shape and Feeling, remind them of some of those concepts.) Should some letters contain other letters? Should they include all the letters (or omit some like Picasso)? They should consider their size. Should they all be the same size? Should they increase or decrease in size? How should they be written? They should consider all the fonts that they can use on the computer and how they use different ones to convey different moods or meaning. Do they use a different font when they are typing a paper versus when they are sending a message to a friend via email or instant messaging? How can they write the letters to convey meaning? Do they want to change the shape of the letters to connote meaning? For example: how could the letters in the word "lockdown" be shaped to convey its meaning? Do they want to imply more than one meaning to the words? How can they do that? (Vocabulary: ambiguous.)

7. Encourage them to look for different typefaces in the magazines, newspapers and stencils. They can use one typeface or cut out and collage different letters onto the page (like a ransom note!) They can use different size letters.
8. When they are done, put the work up on the wall. Look at the different interpretations of the same words and phrases. How could they combine the lettering with image to provide additional meaning?

Day 5: Tree of Decisions

Goal:

Students will explore different choices and their outcomes in a visual format and use the branching pattern to follow choices and outcomes.

Process:

1. Introduce students to the branching pattern that is found in trees and other natural patterns - river deltas, leaves, etc. Show how a line splits in two (vocabulary: Bifurcate) and then splits again to create a growth pattern which is found in trees. A good branching resource for teachers: http://www.brooklynkids.org/patternwizardry/images/pwkit_chapter_branching.pdf
2. Discuss other factors that affect the growth of trees in nature: wind, weather, light source, other trees, lightening. What else can they think of?
3. Demonstrate the growth pattern of different types of trees and how their growth is changed by some of these factors. What about roots?
4. Discuss the use of tree imagery in literature. Do they know of any examples of trees being used as metaphors in literature? (e.g. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn)
5. Ask the students to think of a situation involving safety in school where they have had to make a difficult decision. For example: Was a friend being bullied and did the student have to choose to ignore or defend them? Did they know about a weapon at school and have to decide whether or not to tell someone? Choose examples that fit your school's population.
6. The students should begin by drawing the situation at the bottom of the page and having a 'trunk' lead up the page from it. Their two choices and the outcomes: i.e. ignore bullying or defending someone will branch off of this trunk. Ask them to use their imaginations and follow each branch splitting, making choices and following each possible outcome as far as they can go. Ask them to make their trees as big and full as possible, in other words to take the situations as far as they can.
7. After the students have explored their decisions and outcomes as far as they can, ask them to decide what kind of tree they have and what different factors have affected its growth? (As in number two...)
8. Have them draw their trees using whatever media you choose: pencils, watercolors, markers, colored pencils, collage....
9. Ask them to consider including text as well. How would they write some of these thoughts and include them in the image? How could this make the drawing stronger and fuller in meaning? What are some innovative ways of incorporating words? (They could use the text as the limbs; the leaves could hold writing...)
10. After the students have completed their drawings, discuss how this made them think about the choices they make in life. How do their values affect these choices? How can they use these drawings to make others aware of the choices they have?

Day 6: Conversations and Arguments with Lines

Goal:

Students will learn to use visual instead of verbal language to have a conversation.

Process:

1. Pair the students off and hand out three pieces of paper and two pencils to each pair.
2. The students will do three timed exercises with their partners. There is no talking during this time. Tell the students that you will let them know when each exercise is over.
3. For the first exercise, ask one of the students to select straight and angular lines, the other will work with curvilinear lines. When you tell them to begin, they will take turns making lines on the page and having a “conversation” between the two types of line, but the two types of line will never cross over one another. Ask them to fill the whole page and be sure to tell them to have the two sets of lines converse. Time them for a minute and a half or two minutes.
4. For the second exercise: they must have a conversation, but this time their lines can intersect and cross one another and either student can use either type of line.
5. The third exercise will ask the students to use either type of line and to have an argument between each other. After a minute, ask the students to resolve the argument. They must come to a mutually satisfactory conclusion in the next minute.
6. Ask the students which type of line felt more aggressive? How did they have a conversation without language? Which type of line did they want to use when they were arguing? When they were trying to come to a resolution? How did their lines change when they were conversing versus arguing? Or when they were trying to resolve things? Did the lines say things to each other without words?
7. Ask the students to think about whether there are other ways to say things without verbal language? What other kinds of language are there? What about body language? How does body language come into play with bullying, emotional abuse and violence? How can you use your body to send negative messages? To exclude someone? To threaten someone? Are there ways to use body language to include someone, to make them feel protected or on their side?

Day 7: Conflict Resolution - Keith Haring Figures

Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution.

Process:

Solving problems in your school and trying to make it safe for everyone, is a GIANT undertaking. How can you do this? After all you're just kids!? Working together is sometimes the best way to understand others. Everybody has different perspectives and ideas. When you work as a team you have to resolve conflicts, agree on ideas, and how to implement them. People working together can sometimes resemble a big machine with each person being a different part of the machine. If everyone works together you can create a big machine out of many different parts. This machine can create harmony, an environment of mutual cooperation and a culture of kindness in your school.

1. Look at the book "The Way Things Work" by David Macaulay. Pick several of the illustrations from Part One to show the students the mechanics of movement. Discuss levers, wheels and axles, gears and belts, cams and cranks, pulleys, screws and springs.
2. Alternatively or in addition, buy an inexpensive wind up alarm clock and take it apart to show the students how the gears and springs connect and work.
3. Demonstrate that wheels and gears are various-sized circles that fit together with different sized teeth. Pulleys, levers, axles and other pieces of machinery are also made up of simple shapes.
4. Have the children sketch different machinery parts from illustrations or real parts.

Day 8: Conflict Resolution - Keith Haring Figures Part II**Goal:**

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution.

Process:

1. Show the students pictures of Keith Haring's paintings. Go to: <http://www.haringkids.com> for appropriate images from his work. Click on 'books' and then look at the page entitled 'teamwork.' Discuss the poses of the figures and what they seem to be doing. How do the figures look like a machine? What parts of the figures have been changed to resemble machines? Are the figures connected? Do the figures fit together in some ways? What do the lines outside of the figures represent? What do the symbols on some of the figures mean? How could the figures be further changed and linked to fit together more? To seem more machine like?
2. Tell the students that they are going to make a "Keith Haring" machine of people working together. Talk about Keith Haring's figures. What do they look like? Do they have individualized features or characteristics? Why not? How does he create these figures and how realistic are they?
3. Ask the students to sketch figures in Keith Haring's simple linear style. Ask them to sketch them in different poses.
4. Bring out the drawings of machine parts from the last period. How can the students change the figures to incorporate some of these elements? Can arms and legs become levers? Can hands, feet or heads become gears or wheels? What about the holes in Haring's figures?
5. Have them do several drawings of figures with these elements.

Day 9: Conflict Resolution - Keith Haring Figures Part III

Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution.

Process:

1. Have the students look at their drawings from the last class. Ask them to pick a pose they would like to draw.
2. On the floor lay out life sized pieces of paper. (They need to be bigger than life-sized to allow for the adding of machine parts. Best if cut from a roll.) Have the students pair-off and take turns tracing each other in the pose they have selected. Use very light pencil or vine charcoal that is easily erased or wiped off. Have them do a loose outline of the body, keeping in mind the “Haring style.”
3. Have each student change the shape of the figure and incorporate their machine parts into their figure. They must have their figure interact with at least two others. (In other words, a lever from a foot will go through a hole on another figure and a wheel for a head will fit into another gear or lever on someone else’s figure. They need to consider size of gears, wheels and their teeth!)
4. Have the students paint their figures in bright colors of their choosing.
5. Have the students outline their figures with a heavy black line and add whatever other signs, symbols or marks on them.

Day 10: Conflict Resolution - Keith Haring Figures Part IV

Goal:

Students will work together to create a mural that models cooperation and conflict resolution.

Process:

1. Give the students scissors and have them cut out their figures.
2. Have the students put their figures up on a huge wall in school using push pins.
3. Remind them: everyone's figure must be included and attached to at least two other figures. They must practice a culture of kindness with no negative or demeaning comments. Everyone's opinion must be respected. Ask them to move the figures around until everyone is satisfied, but give them a deadline to the task of several minutes before the period ends. Remind them periodically of the time remaining.
4. Photograph the process and the final result.
5. Ask the students to think about how they worked together. Did several people take charge and lead the decision making process? Did some people not participate as much? Why not? How did they resolve differences of opinion? Was it hard to practice kindness? Did you have to remind them of this policy? What does it mean to work together? How did their "machine" function? Was it well-oiled or in need of "greasing?"

Additional Activities:

If the technology is available, you could photograph the mural in many different stages, or have the kids change it several times and use a simple computer program to animate it. Alternatively, you could print the photos and make a simple "flip book" from the different arrangements.

Day 11: Amulets

Goal:

Students will create amulets to keep them safe. They will learn about amulets and their uses in different cultures.

Process:

What can I do to keep myself safe? What have other cultures done to stay safe? What about objects with magical powers? Do they really work? Or do they just make us feel better? If you could make an amulet to wear what characteristics would it need to protect you?

1. Show students images of tribal African men and modern African American men wearing amulet pendants.
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=33>
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=57>
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=64>
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=88>
<http://africa.si.edu/collections/rsdAdvnNav.asp?BrowseMode=3&offset=91>
<http://www.skinz.org/celebrity/50-cent/50-cent-03.gif>
http://www.desktopexchange.com/gallery/albums/50-Cent-wallpaper/50Cent_pictures_5.jpg
2. Explain the long history of amulets. Discuss their magical powers and the beliefs of those who wear them: They will be kept safe.
3. Discuss the belief in the magical powers of animals (Meso-American and Aztec cultures) and the use of imaginary animals to protect tribes and villages.
4. Look at the components that make up the amulets. Get the children to brainstorm about the animals and their human traits that we assign to them. (Middle School Vocabulary: anthropomorphize)
5. Ask the children to list (either as a group or individually) the traits that would protect them and keep them safe. (i.e. lions are brave and fierce.)
6. Have the children choose several traits from their lists they would like to include in their animal amulet.
7. Demonstrate how to make a palm-sized slab and shape it over a styrofoam peanut (so that it is not too thick for drying.) Demonstrate how to score and slip the clay in order to attach different pieces. Encourage the students to try unusual combinations of characteristics.
8. Give each student a small piece of clay (2 x 2 x 2”), a piece of wax paper to work on, a toothpick, a plastic knife, a packing peanut, and a cup of water.
9. After softening clay and getting the feel of it, flatten clay by dropping it on the table surface.
10. Cut out or shape clay into a mask shape and fit over packing peanut to make it three dimensional.
11. Add decorations and facial features to mask by modeling and attaching shapes, incising with a toothpick, and adding coils or other cut shapes. Use thin strands for hair and whiskers, triangles for ears, etc...
12. Poke a hole through the top of the mask for stringing with leather.

13. Inscribe initials with a toothpick on the back.
14. Dry, fire, glaze and then re-fire or use paint and self hardening clay.

Day 12: Final Project

Goal:

Students will create artwork (paintings or collages, etc) based on their knowledge of line, shape, color, words and emotion.

Process:

1. Put out the students' exercises addressing line, shape, color, and words.
2. Have them review their work.
3. How can they best use this knowledge to create a piece of art that expresses how they feel about safety in school? Which of the exercises did they find the most interesting? What elements do they want to include from them? Do they want to make a collage, a painting, or something else entirely? Do they want to include words? What types of images will they use? Will it be abstract shapes or realistic imagery?
4. What will be their subject matter? Have them write how they feel about this issue after all the discussions and exercises they have done. What is most important to them? What do they want to say about it?
5. Have them write a list of the elements they want to incorporate in their final project. What materials will they use to convey their ideas?
6. Have the students answer some of these questions in their sketchbooks or on a piece of paper. Have them make a sketch of what they want to make.
7. Assist the students in creating their final project. Encourage the students to branch out and think outside the box to create something not yet discussed in class.