

Three ways to 'paint' a poem 2: charcoal drawing

Literacy/Art

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To use words as a starting point for painting
- To use charcoal drawing to explore mood rather than exact representation
- To understand abstract forms of expression
- To link words to images.

SKILLS TARGETED

- Interpreting the text of a poem
- Expressing mood through drawing
- Art and design
- Experimentation
- Movement.

RESOURCES

- A range of charcoal sticks from fine to extra thick
- White chalk or sketching sticks
- Black and off-white A4, A3 and A2 sugar paper
- Masking tape
- Newspaper
- Erasers
- Fixative (unscented hairspray)
- Drawings of 'Shell bursts' by Rae Smith
- Time and cleaning equipment – this exercise carries a VERY MESSY warning!

SUGGESTED TIME SCALE

1 session

WHAT THE CHILDREN NEED TO KNOW

- Children may need to spend some time experimenting with charcoal

Step 1

Look at Rae Smith's drawings and discuss what makes them work. Emphasise that they are monochrome. The children can think about how the drawings use contrast between black and white, and line – mostly straight, some very short – moving from very pale to completely black.

Step 2

Read the extracts from Wilfred Owen's poem *Anthem for Doomed Youth (On 3 ways to paint a poem1)* and look at the paintings.

Discuss with the children the idea that neither the poet nor the painters create accurate reports or descriptions of war in the trenches – instead they create an 'impression' which is, in many ways, more powerful.

Discuss with the class what range of colours could represent earth (eg, shades of brown), sky (grey to yellow) or figures (black silhouettes). Explain that collage works best if you stick to a limited palette of colours.

Step 3

Give each child a piece of sugar paper and ask them to create a frame around it using newspaper and masking tape to keep the borders clean.

Step 4

Everyone should now cover the entire surface of the sugar paper with charcoal, making it a solid mass of black.

Step 5

Help the children to blow off excess charcoal outside or at the sink.

Step 6

Now ask the children to create responses to the poem, as they did in the previous exercise. They can choose a particular line or image to create on paper.

The children can use the erasers like drawing tools, rubbing out areas of the paper to create light. They should be clear about what kinds of marks they are making and the effect they create – for example, lines might give an impression of noise or fracture. To help, you could look again at how Rae Smith and other artists use this method.

Step 7

Using this technique the children can keep adding and removing tone (light or dark) until they have reached the effect they want.

Step 8

When the work is finished it should be fixed by spraying it with hairspray.

Step 9

As with the previous exercise, the children could create soundscapes, text, and movement responses to the artwork they have created.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- Children will experiment with the medium of charcoal and understand how to create light and dark
- They will experiment with interpreting text in their drawings
- They can develop their drawings into movement and sound.



War Horse Learning

War Horse drawings by
Rae Smith

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