

Mr. & Mrs. POTATO HEAD

Mary Jane Hadley

Have you ever seen a child play with a Mr. Potato Head® doll and mix all of its parts up so its eyes, noses, and various other parts are not in the right place? Well, I have, many times. In fact, it seems that children rarely want to put the parts in the right place! This phenomenon is what inspired me to teach my second-grade students about Pablo Picasso. Picasso would probably delight in seeing my students' creations, as he once commented, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

Exploring Symmetry

First I read aloud *Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists: Picasso* by Mike Venezia. The book features Picasso's paintings, *Boy in Sailor Suit with Butterfly Net* and *Portrait of Jaime Sabartés as a Spanish Grandee* as examples of how Picasso rearranged the features of his subjects.

Students appreciated Picasso's ability to paint a lifelike image, such as in *The Altar Boy*, and felt more comfortable with something they understood. We discussed how people are symmetrical in real life, as in *The Altar Boy*, and how, if a line is drawn through the middle of a face, the facial features are the same on both sides. The faces on all the other portraits we looked at were asymmetrical—not the same on both sides.



Kaylee Martin, Megan. Photo by Katie Dinger.



Objectives

Students will:

- be able to compare things that are symmetrical vs. asymmetrical.
- learn about Pablo Picasso and his portraits.
- will be able to craft a collage of a Mr. or Mrs. Potato Head in an abstract, cubist style.

Assessment

To what extent did students:

- compare things that are symmetrical vs. asymmetrical?
- learn about Picasso and his portraits?
- craft a collage of a Mr. or Mrs. Potato Head in an abstract, cubist style?

plates, students added texture to their potatoes and cut them out.

I demonstrated how to fold and cut paper to make two identical shapes. Students folded 6 x 9" (15 x 23 cm) construction paper in half and drew and cut out legs, feet, hands, arms, eyes, ears, and one mouth and nose. Students glued the parts where they felt they were appropriate on their potato heads to give them individual personalities. We used crayons, permanent markers, and gel markers to color the construction paper.

It was really fun to see where the students' imaginations took them with their creations. I hope these students can maintain the free expression of their childhood creativity as they grow up! 🍌

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

WEB LINK

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Potato_Head

We viewed and discussed more examples of Picasso's portraits. Two of my favorites are *First Steps*, and *Maya with a Doll*. In these portraits, Picasso played with several elements of cubism. Students saw vivid colors, flat geometric shapes, and rounded shapes imaginatively arranged. Students enjoyed the playfulness of Picasso's art.

Students enjoyed the playfulness of Picasso's art.

Warm-Up

I brought in Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head® dolls for an introductory group activity. Each student took one piece and took turns placing the eyes, nose,

and various other parts onto Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head.

Next, students drew two potatoes (noting that these were organic shapes) on a page in their sketchbooks. They designed two different ideas for Potato Heads, letting their imaginations run wild!

Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head

For their final project, students drew organic shapes for their potatoes on a 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) piece of brown Kraft paper, drawing close to all sides. Using brown crayons and texture