

Naomi and
Hodayah
examine a
wheel, grade two.

There Was a

Bulldozer

in Our Yard!

Laurie Bellet

It was so exciting! We arrived at school and found a bulldozer on our blacktop. It's not that we were particularly surprised—for months a new playground was being built on an upper yard. But, to have such a giant machine just inside our gate was an opportunity too delicious for this art specialist to pass up.

Lines

Armed with sketchbooks, pencils, and carpet squares to sit on, my second and fourth grade students headed out-

side. At Oakland Hebrew Day School, every art class begins with a quick sketch. Our assignment this week, which was to draw as many different kinds of lines possible in two minutes, was a perfect fit for our surprise outdoor adventure.

Confronted with the challenge, students found different kinds of lines in the exposed engine, the wheels, the cables attaching the scoop, and even in the rust patterns. In fact, they were so excited that, for several minutes after the quick sketch concluded,

students encircled the bulldozer, exchanging the locations of the “coolest” line finds with one another.

Create

Our class periods are forty minutes long, so we could not spend much time investigating lines before moving on to our main art experience. I instructed my student artists to draw the bulldozer, offering several choices: they could draw the entire machine; they could draw one part or several parts of the machine; they could con-

Maytal

Maytal added jet packs, grade two.



tinue working in their sketchbooks; or they could use clipboards and 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) white paper. The one requirement was that student work must demonstrate detailed observation of the bulldozer components.

The reasons that plein-air artists choose to paint outside became evident to my students without any prompting from me. They were astounded at how the shadows changed, even in our brief time frame, and how the colors appeared different at the beginning of their sketch time and at the conclusion. The wheels were of particular intrigue as they seemed to reveal untold, even magical, elements with every close glance. Students relished the feel of the bulldozer's rough edges and marveled at

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the raised numbers and letters they found just within arm's reach.

Choices

Students could arrange their bulldozer parts however they fancied, they could fashion an environment, they could use any colors they desired. Ten minutes before the end of the class period, I offered students access to crayons and fine-tip markers. They did not have to complete their work within the single class period.

Well past the art class period, the enchantment with the bulldozer continued. Students took their sketchbooks and clipboards out for their recess periods, journal entries regaled the experience, and the descriptive language glowed and extolled!

From this experience, I received my own education in the art of heavy machinery. The bulldozer, as I was to learn later, was actually a backhoe. Either way, the big lesson is clear: Whenever possible, take advantage of unexpected opportunities and let students discover the wonders of the world beyond the studio walls. 🌀

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

www.ohds.org/art.php