

Playing Around Underground

Bill Yarborough

Many elementary students have seen shows like *Meerkat Manor* on TV or ant colonies at school and are fascinated with creatures that live underground. You can capitalize on this interest by having students create realistic or imaginary pictorial views of life beneath the surface.

There are many children's books with underground settings such as *Mole Music* by David McPhail, *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin, and *Prairie Dog Town* by Bettye Rogers. Read one aloud to students and discuss the story, setting, and characters.

For this lesson, I had students draw tunnels, caves, or burrows that depicted life underground. As an extension, I also had them write down the stories they depicted.

Objectives

My goals throughout this lesson included making sure that students:

- understood that artists sometimes create artworks with unusual or funny settings.
- perceived and discussed unusual settings in artworks.
- used markers to draw an underground setting for a story.

Materials

- markers or other drawing materials
- 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) white drawing paper

Engage

I asked students what creatures live underground in burrows or tun-



nels, and what stories they knew that have underground settings. I explained that a viewpoint or point of view is a place from which an artist looks at a scene. Students were to draw a view of the underground, including a setting for a story and the ground above their underground scene. They could draw realistic or imaginary views using living creatures or invented characters.

Create

I asked students to decide if their scene would be horizontal or vertical. They were to fill the page with their drawings. As they worked, I encouraged them to fill their draw-

ings with as many details as possible.

Language Arts Connection

Throughout the lesson I reminded students that in a story, the setting is where the action takes place.

Science Connection

For an interdisciplinary connection, I shared with students images of underground colonies or tunnels such as those created by ants, prairie dogs, armadillos, moles, or meerkats.

Assessment

I assessed student work based on the following questions:

- To what extent do student drawings show an underground scene?
- Does the drawing show both above and below ground spaces?
- Did the student appropriately fill the paper with many details? 

Bill Yarborough was teaching art at Beck Elementary School in Roanoke, Texas, when he taught this lesson. Wm.yarborough@gmail.com

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.

WEB LINK

www.fieldmuseum.org/undergroundadventure/resources/index.shtml

This lesson was adapted from Grade 2, Lesson 22 in Explorations in Art, Davis Publications, 2008.