

The View from Here

Grace Hulse

Second-grade artists are eager and enthusiastic learners. The world is opening up for them as they become proficient readers, creative writers, and independent artists. Creating motivating, meaningful, and relevant lessons means connecting to classroom curriculum, exploring a variety of media, and understanding the material and visual culture of seven- and eight-year-old students.

In our school district, students in second grade begin to learn about geography. As they study maps and mapmaking they learn the concept of bird's-eye view. Students create maps of their neighborhood, imagining what things look like from a bird's perspective.

In language arts class, second-graders analyze reading selections to decide whose point of view the story is written from. Which character is telling the story? How does that affect the writing? How would things be different if told from another character's point of view?

Perspective and Point of View

I use students' background knowledge to help them begin to understand perspective and point of view in art. When they enter the artroom I ask them to

sit in a circle on the rug. In the center of the rug I pose a large stuffed animal and ask students to draw what they see.

Using their sketchbooks, students do a quick sketch of the animal. We look at several of the sketches and talk about how each of them has a different point of view when observing and drawing.

Creating relevant lessons means connecting to classroom curriculum, exploring a variety of media, and understanding visual culture.

I expand the idea by showing students ways artists use different points of view when they create paintings and drawings. We look at examples of still-life paintings, portraits, and landscapes that show close-up views, bird's-eye views, and profiles.

Four Different Points of View

Once students understand the concept, they are asked to create a drawing showing four different points of view. I demonstrate by folding a 12 x 18" (30 x 45 cm) sheet of white drawing paper into quarters. With a black crayon I draw the stuffed animal from the front, the side, the back, and from above.

Now comes the fun! I pull out a large box of bean-bag animals saved from when my own children were young. Students each select a stuffed animal and take it back to their table to draw. They draw it first from the side, then from the front and back. Last, they place the animal on the floor



Painting by George.

next to their seat and draw it from above. The stuffed animals are a great motivator and the simple shapes make drawing less intimidating.

Once the drawings are complete, we share them and discuss the results. Which views were easiest to draw? Which were more difficult? Are there other views we could draw? I ask students to put a dot on the two views that they believe were the most successful.

Drawings into Paintings

The next time we meet, students once

again take their stuffed animal to their table to use as a model. We look at the drawings again and students are asked to use their two favorite views to create paintings. Decisions are made about paper orientation and placement on the page. I ask students to lightly sketch their animals on two pieces of 12 x 18" paper with chalk.

We discuss how to draw a horizon line behind the animal in order to make it look like it is either outside (ground and sky) or inside (floor and wall). The chalk lines are traced over with a neutral color outline. This helps

students define the shapes and makes it easier for them to control the paint when filling in shapes later.

During the final class period students blend and mix colors to come as close as possible to the colors of the stuffed animals. They are free to use any colors they want to complete the background. The finished paintings are bold, colorful representations of the bean-bag animals painted from different points of view.

The experience of learning a concept through multiple activities helps students form a better understanding of the meaning and application of point of view. They are able to transfer their

knowledge from one subject area to another, making new connections.

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

WEB LINK

www.chrisvanallsburg.com/flash.html
teachers.bcps.org/teachers_lem/ghulse



Jacob McNeal, grade two.