

What Can You Do with a Color Wheel?



Beth Hubbert

How can students learn about the color wheel and incorporate it into a fun, imaginative lesson about color theory? Here is an approach that I have found successful with my third-grade students. As I have taught the color wheel over the last several years, it has evolved into much more than just a color wheel study. The color wheel is merely the seed for potentially complex and creative drawing. This lesson also easily adapts to connections in writing and reading. Bingo! Another core curriculum area that connects naturally with art.

Simple Color Wheels

To begin the lesson, we review the color wheel and primary and secondary colors, and I introduce intermediate colors. During the first phase of the lesson, we use primary and secondary color crayons to make the twelve colors of the color wheel. We review how secondary colors are made and learn the “recipe” for making an intermediate color: one neighboring primary + one neighboring secondary = one intermediate. I distribute a cardstock copy of two small blank color wheels, each about 4" in diameter, to each student.

Students color primary yellow at the top of the color wheel and proceed clockwise around it, mixing the secondary and intermediate colors. After the two color wheels are complete, they cut them out.

Transforming the Color Wheel

Students must now use their imaginations and consider interesting ways these two color wheels might be used in a new composition. Use of their sketchbooks is imperative at this

Connor Anderson.



Kylie Jackman.

point: they sketch several ideas for drawn objects that incorporate at least two circles. I remind them that they may, if they like, include an object that has more than two circles in it.

After students show me their sketchbook ideas, I give them a 12 x 18" piece of white drawing paper on which they must finalize their drawing ideas. They place the color wheels in the appropriate location on the paper and trace around each wheel in pencil. I poke holes through the paper so that they can attach the color wheels using paper fasteners. Students then continue drawing their composition around the two color wheels.

Much discussion occurs about providing a setting for the objects they have drawn, and not just allowing them to float around the page.

I stress the need for good artistry while coloring and offer students markers and crayons to complete their drawings. I also stress details, details,

details and the importance of including them in their drawings. Whatever object and setting they draw must have specific characteristics to make the picture even more interesting. They use black felt-tip pens to trace over the details and then add writing to the finished artwork.

Integrating Writing

The writing element of the artwork falls into place at this time. Titles for the artworks come easily to mind

because students want to express what their pictures are about. Many students ask if they can add a story to their drawing. This successful art les-

son involves art objectives, but it also strongly connects to other areas of the core curriculum.

I don't have to tell students that we're going to learn about art, writing and reading; it just happens naturally. As art teachers, we know that art is not created in a vacuum, but it is

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Materials

- 12 x 18" (30 x 45 cm) white drawing paper
- color wheel handout with two 4" (10 cm) diameter color wheels on cardstock, one per student
- crayons, markers, black felt-tip pens, pencils
- scissors
- paper fasteners

amazing when our students realize that, too! 🙄

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand perspective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

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