

Moving Waters Moving Color



This lesson plan comes from a series of lessons developed in conjunction with the Moving Waters Workbook. These art-making activities are based on the principles of the [Visual Thinking Strategies](#), a student-centered, discovery-based method that uses art to teach thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy to young people.

Teaching art and environmental awareness through the VTS provides students with open-ended forums for discovery and reflection. The lessons are designed to be experimental and flexible, focusing on the process over the final product. Learn more about the VTS and how you can get involved on our website 04ARTS.ORG.

Goals

To encourage material and aesthetic discovery based on imperial evidence, collaboration and group discussion.

Objectives

- Make visible the properties of water in its liquid state through experimentation with water-soluble color.
- Embrace the fluidity of water as an art-making medium, encouraging unexpected results based on material experiments.
- Introduce basic color theory
- Introduce students to the properties of watercolors

Materials

- Watercolor paper or heavy card stock
- Student-grade watercolors
- Brushes
- Plastic plates to be used as palettes
- Paper towels

LESSON DESCRIPTION

This lesson is appropriate for all ages and will take roughly two hours. Although the time will be dependant on the number of students and the length of discussions. Because this lesson plan is based on material experimentation, I have found that it's important to have a lot of pieces of paper of varying sizes. This frees students up to take risks with the materials that will ultimately lead to a more extensive understanding of the material. Watercolor is actually a very complex medium which can be used in many different ways. By varying the amount of water used, students can create a lot of exciting effects with color mixing and bleeding.

LESSON PROCEDURE

Introduction

The best way to introduce this lesson is through concrete examples of different ways watercolors can be used. These examples can come from books, or ideally from examples you have prepared ahead of time. These examples do not need to be "pictures" of anything, but instead records of different ways watercolors can be used. Try to use examples of watercolors being used wet into wet, where the colors are able to bleed into each other, dry-into wet, where color mixing is a little bit more controlled, and dry onto dry, where transparent layers or color overlap to create new and often times complex hues.

Explore these examples with your students through discussion and questioning.

- *How did the artist create the effect?*
- *What would happen if the artist had used more water? Less water?*
- *Explain that water is a fluid medium which responds to its conditions and context.*
- *What would happen if you turned a painting upside down when it was still wet?*

Communicate to students that this project is not about making realistic "pictures" of things, but records of the way water and paint can mix. Encourage students to be creative, and to take risks. Remind them that there is lots of paper, and it is okay to make mistakes

MAIN ACTIVITY

Start the activity with a demonstration of different techniques. Create one example where watercolors are mixed on the palette (plastic plate) and then applied to the paper, and one example where clear water is poured onto the paper, and then color is added. Tip the paper to one side and watch the path the water makes as it drips towards the edge. Can you make the water change direction?

Supply each table with a stack of varying sizes of paper, watercolors, brushes and jars of water. Encourage students to try as many different ways as possible to use the paint and water. Help students to become aware of there own discoveries through open-ended questioning.

What's going on here? What did you do to get that effect?

CLOSURE/CONCLUSION

Allow student work to dry. Ask students to pick a few examples, maybe their favorite and least favorite, or maybe their “craziest” painting to present to the class.

Reflection

Have students present work to the class. Ask the group,

- *What’s going on in this picture?*
- *What do you see that makes you say that?*

Allow students to discuss what they liked and what they found frustrating about the project. Talk about the differences of working with watercolors vs. other art-making mediums they are familiar with, drawing, collage etc.