

The View From Here – An Exploration of Landscape Art

Title: The View From Here

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Suggested Grade Level(s): P-3

Suggested Length of Class Time: two 30 minute classes

Subject Areas: Social Studies, Visual Arts

Rationale:

Landscape artwork speaks of place in a way that is instantly appreciated by young children. However, too often we show children examples of landscape art and ask them to create their own without providing them what almost all landscape artists rely on: a chance to observe a landscape! In this lesson, children will explore the Landscape genre and consider their art practice as they learn how and where artists create artwork. In having the opportunity to create art “on location”, children begin to form an understanding and appreciation of the art and artists. They also become aware that their artwork exists within the context of their own world and community. This experience will also help to build an understanding of differences in landscapes.

Logistics:

Classroom setup

- Class discussion and individual work. The art-making component of this lesson takes place outside and requires dry weather.

Materials

- painters or masking tape
- clipboard, binder, or thin hardcover book for each child (something firm to draw on)
- piece of thick white cardstock for each child (Dimensions for postcard are: length 140-235 mm, width 90-120 mm) or white sketching paper
- oil pastels or coloured pencils

Preparation

Place the card on a clipboard or other hard surface and tape around the edges. The tape will create a nice neat border on the work and also keep the paper on the page.

Suggested resources/images

- some examples of the landscape genre in art - reproductions, magazines, calendars, post cards, etc.

- where available, a variety of landscape images online
- if possible, some photos of artists working in the field.

Suggested Outcomes:

Students will be expected to

- Discover art as a way of expressing ideas and sharing art work
- Explore the natural and built environment
- Demonstrate an understanding of the lives of artists within cultural / historical / social contexts
- Demonstrate an understanding of the interactions among people, places, and the environment

Introduction:

Invite students to explore a few Landscape paintings as a class. Examine the works in detail and encourage students to discover as much information as possible about the place depicted. Prompt their imagination by asking questions such as ~

- What do you see?
- What do you think it would sound/smell like in this place?
- Is it warm or cold? What season is it?
- What would you do if you were in this painting?
- How does it make you feel?
- Do you hear sounds?

After looking at several landscape examples, explain that a “landscape” is a picture of a place. Though “landscape” is the name of the type of work, “seascape”, “streetscape” and “cityscape” can also be used in particular cases and in the examples you present.

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:

Section 1: (in class)

Explore the Formal Aspects of Landscape:

Horizon Line - Speak the word “Horizon Line” and have the children say it as a class.

Ask if anybody knows what it means and ask him or her to explain it to the class. *The horizon line is where land (or water) meets the sky.* Ask the students to use their finger to trace the horizon line of different landscape examples (in the air). Note how some may be flat, others bumpy with mountains, or slanted with a hill.

Background, middle ground, foreground. Ask the students to identify the different areas of the painting. Begin with the background, as many will know that word. Then introduce the concept of middle ground and foreground. (A good trick for remembering that foreground is at the front is that it comes “before”) Let the children identify various objects, shapes or colours in the different fields.

Art Practice:

Consider how artists make landscapes.

- How did artists make these paintings?
- Where did they do the work?
- Did they “make up” the landscape?

View some photos of artists working in the field.

- Why are these artists working outside?
- What are they painting/drawing?
- Why might artists choose to work outside?
- Are there times when artists might work indoors?

Tell the students that they, like the artists, are going to create a piece of landscape art outdoors.

Brainstorm as a class what possible challenges might arise. Will you have a table to work on? What about wind and weather? Invite children to list tools and materials necessary for working outside. Involving students in this step helps foster a sense of responsibility, sharing, and accountability for materials.

If possible, include students in the decision of where to go to make their artwork. A class trip to a park would be exciting but if not realistic, consider the landscape around your school.

Section 2: Make Landscape Art on Location

If time has passed, briefly revisit the plan for making art outside.

As a group, find a location with some interesting views. Before beginning, lead children through a sensory exploration of the “landscape”. What do you smell? What do you hear? Are you warm or cold? What do we see in the “background” far away?

Allow children to pick their own spot to work.

Circulate among the children to see what they are seeing, and encourage them to include everything they observe in their drawings.

Note: Young children will likely still be in the symbolic stage where their drawings of trees are symbols of trees rather than what a tree truly looks like. Similarly, their use of space in a drawing will likely not be “realistic”. Do not fret about this, as even considering the possibility of observational drawing is an important step. Be positive and supportive while continually connecting the work on paper with the landscape and encouraging observation.

Extension of ideas:

- Once you have established landscape drawing outside as a way of working, you may integrate it into many field trip experiences.
- Consider creating different seasonal/weather landscapes. Use a view from a window on inclement days. Identify the different colours and feelings of different seasonal landscapes.

- Turn landscapes into postcards and send them to pen pals. Take notes of sensory landscape observations you discussed on site. Use these to help children compose a text for the back of the postcard.
- Translate their landscape artwork into 3 dimensional scenes using plasticine or recycled materials.

Suggestions for Assessment:

- Have students work together to create a “landscape calendar” for their classroom. Note the aspects of sharing, recall of the details of their lesson on landscape, and responsibility for materials.
- Create individual art journals in which students can do quick landscape sketches at home, on vacation, or on class trips.
- Check students’ understanding of the art terms by using their bodies in space to depict foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Invite students to work on dramatic tableaux in which they create the landscape using their bodies. (E.g., pyramids for mountains, bodies bent over for small hills or curled up like clouds) Again, note level of participation and understanding of the concepts covered.