



Objective: To teach children the process in creating a work of art.

A) Introduction:

During the year we are going to talk about art and artists. Today, we are going to discuss different ways artists can make their art more interesting. An artist is a person who expresses the way they feel through making a piece art. Some works of art can be created from more unique and original ideas. To create an original picture an artist must think about all the things he wants in his artwork. First they may create a rough drawing of their idea in a book. Within each drawing the artist will continue to move around the placement of shapes to make every part of the art piece interesting.

B) Vocabulary:

- **Original:** Something that is fresh and unusual, that is not copied.
- **Sketch:** A rough draft or initial drawing of an idea for a work of art.
- **Design:** Arrangement of shapes in a picture.
- **Center of Interest:** The part of the artwork where your eyes keep returning.
- **All-Over Design:** An arrangement of shapes when all are of equal visual importance.
- **Rhythm:** In art, repetition of lines, shapes and colors

When an artist creates a picture, he must first decide what the picture will be about. He often looks through his sketches to get an idea. Once an artist has an idea he must decide how to arrange the shapes in his picture. This arrangement of the shapes is called the design.

As an artist develops his design he may decide that one part of his picture will be more important than other parts. This is called the center of interest. When you look at a picture with a center of interest, the center of interest is the first thing you notice. Some artists will decide to arrange the shapes in their picture so that there is no center of interest but there is an all-over design in which all parts are equally interesting.

Whether an artist designs a painting with a center of interest or an over-all design, it is important that he make every part of the picture is interesting. An artist wants you to look carefully at everything in his picture. It is the rhythm in the picture that helps your eyes move from one thing to the next. Can anyone tell me what rhythm is? Music has rhythm, doesn't it, when sounds happen over and over again in the same or similar ways? A rhythm is made in a picture when line, shapes, or colors are repeated. A rhythm is created as a result of repetition.



Now, let's look at some pictures and talk about their design and rhythm.

C) Artwork

Title: American Gothic, Grant Wood, 1930

Artist: Grant Wood

Details: Painting on Canvas

- Have you seen this picture before? What is the center of interest, where do your eyes go first?
- An artist wants you to explore every part of their work and they do this by repeating shapes throughout their piece. What shapes are repeating?
- The lines in the pitchfork go up and down, what other lines in the picture go up and down?
- Do you see other shapes like her pin?
- You may see the two figures first, but the lines and shapes give it a rhythm and keep us interested in exploring every detail of the entire painting.

Title: Distant View of Niagara Falls, 1830

Artist: Thomas Cole

Details: Painting on Canvas

- Have you heard of Niagara Falls? Cole felt that Niagara Falls was a wonder of the world.
- He filled a sketchbook with sketches and notes about the colors and the description of the details of how everything looked.
- At the time that this was painted there were factories and hotels surrounding the falls. He replaced those buildings filling in the space with lush trees.
- Do you see rhythm in the piece, what items do you see repeating? (Colors and lines that create the motion of the falls, color of the foliage, reflections in the water)
- Cole wanted to recreate the beauty of the American wilderness, he also added Native Americans looking upon the falls.
- The Native Americans are very tiny compared to the falls, he wanted to depict that man is a very small part of nature.

Reinforcement Activity



Materials provided:
blank paper
paper with animal cartoons

Children provide: pencil and/or color pencils

Give each student a sheet of blank paper and
each table a animal cartoon example sheet

Ask them to pick an animal from the sheet. Next
ask them to focus on the shapes that create that
cartoon animal...circles, ovals, triangles. Once
they are visualizing the shapes ask them to start to

sketch (lightly and loosely draw) those shapes onto the piece. Each of the shapes they draw should start to build upon the cartoon they are trying to recreate. Encourage them to continue to use shapes to try and recreate every part of that cartoon animal. As they build upon the shapes have them start to connect those shapes, by erasing lines to connect them. Have them round the corners of triangles if the shapes is more rounded. Example the dogs ears are rounded triangles, but have them sketch the geometric triangle as the ears, then have them sketch over those sharp corners with curved corners.



Additional Background Material:

This material is provided to give you, the discussion leader, additional information about the artists and paintings that may help you answer questions or generate additional discussion with the children if time permits. You are not expected or required to cover this information in the classroom.

Grant Wood, American Gothic, 1930

Grant Wood's (1891-1942) *American Gothic* caused a sensation in 1930, when it was exhibited for the first time at the Art Institute of Chicago and awarded a prize of three hundred dollars. Newspapers across the country carried the story, and the picture of the farm couple posed with a pitchfork before a white house brought instant fame to the artist. The Iowa native, then in his late thirties, had been enchanted by a simple Gothic Revival cottage he had seen in the small, southern Iowa town of Eldon. Wood envisioned a painting in which, as he put it, "American Gothic people...stand in front of a house of this type." He asked his dentist and his sister to pose as a farmer and his spinster daughter. The highly detailed, polished style and rigid, frontal arrangement of the two figures were inspired by Flemish Renaissance art, which Wood was able to study during three trips to Europe between 1920 and 1926. After returning to Iowa, he became increasingly appreciative of the traditions and culture of the Midwest, which he chose to celebrate in such works as this. Wood was accused of satirizing in this work the intolerance and rigidity brought about by the insular nature of rural life – an accusation he denied. Instead, in *American Gothic* he created an image that epitomized the Puritan ethic, virtues and dignity that he believed defined the Midwestern character.

Thomas Cole, Distant View of Niagara Falls, 1830

Thomas Cole (1801-1848) was born in England and immigrated to America in 1819. Living his childhood in an industrialized area of England made Cole keenly aware of the threat of commercial exploitation to the wilderness regions of his new homeland, and he became passionately devoted to the natural scenery of his adopted country. In 1829, Cole traveled to Niagara Falls for the first time. "I anticipated much".... he wrote, "but the grandeur of the falls far exceeded anything I had been told of them." Cole sketched many versions of the falls from several different viewpoints. His sketchbooks include notes on color and composition. Cole studied the sky as much as the landscape and his notebook is filled with observations about the sky at specific moments. In his depiction of pristine landscape, dramatic stormy clouds and two Native American figures, Cole portrayed a romantic, untouched American wilderness that bore little resemblance to the actual site in the 1830's when factories, hotels, and scenic overlooks already surrounded the falls.