



Language Arts, Visual Arts, Science

Drawn from Nature: Writing, Drawing, and Imagination

Grades 3 and up
Lesson by Royden Card

This lesson may be adjusted to fit whatever timeline you need. It can be the focus for one day, or worked on for an hour a day over a week or more.

Preface

There is no “RIGHT” way or “BETTER” way to do, or employ these techniques. The personality and experience you bring to them, or that your students bring to them, are valid, personal and should not be subject to anything but affirmation and gratitude. Humor is good, if that is what is being expressed or experienced.

For Younger Students:

There may be a need to help them learn descriptive words, colors, secondary colors, textural words. Exercises in color matching- to help them break symbol systems that inhibit their ability to see. (Clouds are white, tree trunks are brown, trees and grass are green, the sky is blue, rocks are black, dirt is brown). Give them the verbal, and imaginative words they can then use in their exploration of nature and works of art.

Objectives

By quietly sitting in direct contact with nature, students will be encouraged to be still and observe what is around them. By taking brief notes of what they see, describing colors, textures, smells, sounds and how they feel: they can then begin to arrange those brief notes of their experience and sensations into expressive phrases of prose or poetry.



Royden Card, *Gooseberry from Quail Creek*, 2013, acrylic

Introduction

By slowing down, looking deeply and describing what we see or experience in Nature or from gazing into an artist’s painting, photograph or drawing, we can generate words, poetry or prose that will deepen our understanding of the environment we are in or of what is presented in an artwork. We can gain greater access into the artist’s thoughts or feelings about the environment and the intent he or she had in creating their work of art. These efforts will increase the student’s ability to see more detail and the ability to express themselves more confidently.



Belmore Browne, *Wilderness Waterfall*, 1935, oil on canvas

Materials

- Sketchbook or 8.5 X 11 paper
- Pencils

Images from the Museum Permanent Collection

- Belmore Browne, *Wilderness Waterfall*, 1935, oil on canvas
- Mabel Pearl Frazer, *Sunrise, North Rim Grand Canyon*, 1928, oil on canvas

Images from the In Sight, Out of Mind Exhibition:

- Royden Card, *Gooseberry from Quail Creek*, 2013, acrylic
- Cody Chamberlain, *Procession*, 2020, oil
- David Meikle, *Mitchell Butte*, 2019, oil
- Carel Brest van Kampen, *Biophilia II-Tapanuli Orang-utan & Great Flying Lizard*, 2018, acrylic

Utah Core Standards

Language Arts: Writing Standard 10

[With guidance and support from adults] students produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

Reading: Standard 7

Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

Visual Arts: RESPOND (6.V.R.)

Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator (Standards 6.V.R.1–5).

Visual Arts: CONNECT (6.V.CO.)

Students will relate artistic skills, ideas, and work with personal meaning and external context (Standards 6.V.CO.1–2).

Science: Standard 1.3.2

Use a model to show the effect of light on objects. Emphasize that objects can be seen when light is available to illuminate them or if they give off their own light. (PS4.B)



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Learning Activity Option 1: Outdoors, in a Natural Environment

This option should be employed if possible. Nature is always the best option for writing about the environment—it doesn't come with editorial attitude.



Mabel Pearl Frazer, *Sunrise, North Rim Grand Canyon*, 1928, oil on canvas

Guidelines:

- No media allowed (yes, that includes ear pods)
- Get quiet. Be alone (remember the 6 foot rule)
- Sit. Be still. No writing...yet.

Observation Phase

For 5- 15 minutes have students quietly observe, with all their senses (they will not write anything at this point). Ask them to take time to notice, look, feel. . .

- What is around you? Grass, flowers, stones, trees? What kind?
- What are you sitting on? Is it hard? Soft? Sandy?
- Is it cool? Warm? Hot?
- Is the air still? Or is it breezy?
- What is the mood of the day? The angle of the sun?
- What is in the distance?
- What is the texture of the stones, grass, bark? What are textures of things you can touch around you?
- What colors do you see? What kind of browns or greens?
- What do you smell?
- What can you hear?

Writing Phase

For 5- 15 Minutes have students write brief descriptions of their observations. They should use 2- 8 word phrases to make a list of what they see and feel. Their descriptions should be brief.

Help them notice how they feel about the objects. What sensations and objects attract them the most?

Composing Phase

For 10- 20 minutes pull phrases and words together. Invite

students to use their lists to pull a few words together. Using “active imagination” have them put phrases they feel most important together. Notice new ideas. They will discover while doing this that their descriptive lines begin to make a kind of prose or poetry. Remind them to relax. This is not about making a poem- but is an exercise and an exploration about making discoveries using their observations. See what comes about from using your list, your ideas and imagination.

Share Phase

With any remaining time, invite students to share their prose or poems with the class or in small groups.

Learning Activity Option 2: Indoors, using Paintings or Reproductions

See page 4 for an example of this activity.

Alternative Objectives

To increase the students ability to focus, by describing what they see in an artwork, looking carefully and making lists of details they see in descriptive 2-8 word phrases. Students will know how those details may feel emotionally.

As students further explore the environment of an artwork, they can use their imagination and pretend that they can step into a painting or photo. They will learn how to interact with objects and details in an image, and record the impressions they get.

Finally, they will transform their lists and impressions into prose or poetry expressing their own viewpoint and experience they have had with that painting, photograph or drawing.

Alternative Introduction

By slowing down, looking deeply and describing what we see or experience from gazing into the artist's painting, photograph or drawing, we can generate words, poetry or prose that will deepen our understanding of what is presented.



Cody Chamberlain, *Procession*, 2020, oil



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Students will gain greater understanding of the artwork and the artist's intent in creating it. These efforts will increase the student's ability to see more detail, gain understanding about the artwork presented and increase their ability to express themselves with more fluency and confidence. It will also help them better understand pieces of art they may encounter in the future.

Paintings, prints and reproductions are "second-hand" experiences. They come already "chosen", "cropped", "edited", and "presented" by the artist. The artwork may have a message which is overtly evident. To explore the painting and the environment it presents, will require students to use their imagination, and have a willingness to ask questions (even if there are no apparent answers). Using a "child like" or "whimsical" imagination to "step inside" the painting or photograph, feeling free to wander among the details and images it contains, will help enrich their interaction with the work.

Guidelines:

- No media allowed (yes, that includes ear pods)
- Get quiet. Be alone (remember the 6 foot rule)
- Sit. Be still. No writing...yet.

Visual Exploration Phase

During this time of looking and feeling, have students mentally consider what is presented to them, and as they use their imagination to go inside the artwork.



David Meikle, *Mitchell Butte*, 2019, oil

Have them ask questions like:

- Does it seem to have a message? What is it?
- What is the mood? How does the artwork make you feel?
- Are the shapes or lines jagged or smooth?
- Is it natural or man made? Is it unreal? Is it "reality" transformed? Is it dream-like?
- What details do you see?
- Can they find objects or symbols in the painting? If so, what do they mean?
- What colors are these forms? What kind of green? Brown? Light or dark?
- Where is the light coming from?
- Are there clues as to what time of day it is, or season of the year it might be?
- What would the texture of that object (rock, leaf, fur, branch, metal beam, etc.) feel like?
- Is it cold or hot in here?
- Is there wind? How would you know?
- What sounds do you think you would hear?
- What would you see if you could fly around?
- What do you think the artist is trying to say? What would you say to him or her?
- What would the animal- house- leaf- cloud or stone be talking about if they could speak
- What would they say to each other about being in that painting or photo?
- What would you say to them? What would be their answer?
- What do you think is the message of the painting? Or does it have one

Writing Phase

For 5- 15 minutes, have students list their impressions from visual exploration, using simple 2 - 8 word phrases. Their writing should be brief and direct.

Composing Phase

Using their list of phrases and their imagination, have students pull out phrases that feel most important to them and put a few lines together. They should discover these composed phrases seem to make a kind of prose or poetry.

Remind students that this is not about making "The Great Poem"- it is an exploration. It is about discovery, observation, and their own imagination bringing something new to life. It is about taking time to look deeply, play with some ideas, and gain more understanding.

Share Phase

With any remaining time invite students to share their prose or poems with the class or small groups. Or let them work on them at home and share during the next class.



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Extension Activity

As further exploration, students can apply these principles to drawing. Students can create a companion drawing to their poem, or use their list to sketch their other sensations and observation.

Assessment

Students demonstrate their involvement with the looking and feeling exercise and have organized words from their list of observations into a poem or into prose.

Learning Activity Option 2 Example:

An example from Royden Card, who followed the phases from Learning Activity Option 2 while looking at Carel Brest van Kampen's *Biophilia II-Tapanuli Orang-utan & Great Flying Lizard* (seen right and 6).

Phrases:

- he peers between trunk and limb- he grasps the limb
- dk green lichen or moss on tree
- lattice patterned bark- scaly patterned crackled bark- whitish dried fungus
- dried moss flowing orange- like his beard and hair- or is it his hair?
- soft gray eyes- he eyes me as I enter - even level lips - about to smile? frown? snarl?
- Air- rainforest moist and thick.
- Lizard-green-yellow patterned- belly flared- gives me a sideways glance
- Is he about to fly?- am I disturbing?
- His face grayish brown wrinkled- wizened- He eyes me
- one finger shows under his beard- scolding?- warning?
- but for the title I would not know him- does he have a name?
- Does he have a knowing of himself? Know more than what to eat,- What stirs his fears?
- the green leaf patterns of the trees behind- what hides there?

Composed Poem:

He peers between trunk and limb
grey brown wrinkled face
(wizened, or just wise?)

Eyes me with his soft grey eyes
and under his flowing orange beard
out of shadow, holds one finger up

to warn?
to scold?
or to invite me in?



Carel Brest van Kampen, *Biophilia II-Tapanuli Orang-utan & Great Flying Lizard*, 2018, acrylic

Suggested Resources:

- Mary Oliver: *Blue Horses*, 2014 Penguin Press, New York
- Poetry and prose of flowers, animals berries, water, loneliness, & blue horses
- Mary Oliver: *Why I Wake Early*, 2004, Beacon Press, Boston
- Transcendental, environmental prose & poetry (simple, deep, reverence for nature)
- Andy Goldsworthy: *A Collaboration with Nature*, 1990, Harry N Abrams, New York
- A book to "look at" and wonder at his creativity and the beauty of nature
- Wendell Berry, *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry*, 1999, Counterpoint, Berkeley
- Thought-provoking environmental & people poems
- Cathy Johnson: *Drawing From Painting and Nature*, 1989 Tab Books Inc., New York
- Great quotes and simple drawing from nature instructions. It will help you see the beauty in your own backyard, the beauty of small & simple things with simple tools
- Janalee Emmer: *The Transformative Power of Faith & Art*, 2021, BYU Devotional
- There will be some quotes and mention of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but the views and opinions on beauty, and the variety of art mentioned and shown are very worthwhile, thoughtful and relevant to the arts and environment.



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