
Classic Still Life: Fruit or Flowers



Grade: 4th Grade

Medium: Paper Collage

Learning Objective: Students will draw and cut rounded shapes and arrange them in a balanced composition. They will view traditional still-life compositions done by master artists. They will practice good craftsmanship.

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Elements of Art

Shape - organic 'closed-line.'

Space - the area between and around objects.

Principles of Design

Balance: the distribution of the visual weight of objects.

Proportion: a harmonious relationship of parts to each other.

Unity/Variety: feeling of unity created when all parts fit together: too much variety creates confusion, too much unity creates boredom.

Vocabulary Words

Overlapping: a technique of layers objects to create the illusion of depth.

Composition: the interesting arrangement of parts of the picture within the space.

Materials & Supplies

- Class set or more of dark colored construction paper, 9"x12"
- Class set or more of multiple colored construction paper, 4.5" x 6"
- Examples of traditional still-life art
- Class set of scissors
- Class set of pencils, markers, erasers
- Class set (or less) of glue sticks

Context (History and/or Artists)

Still-lifes are works of art depicting inanimate subject matter, either natural, or man-made. Still life emerged as a genre by the late 16th century, giving artists more freedom in the arrangement of elements in a composition. Food and flowers were symbols of the seasons and of the five senses.

Advanced Preparation

Gather photos or artistic still-life images with simple compositions that fill the space.

Post the elements and principles of design, and the additional vocabulary to explain and later to refer to.

Tips & Tricks

- Distribute full background sheets of dark colored paper plus scissors, rulers, pencils and erasers before you start.
- When drawing, draw lightly so erasing is easier. If they can't completely erase, remind them they can flip the shape over to hide the pencil lines.
- An angular shape can be rounded by cutting off the corners: a rectangle can be trimmed at the edges to form a vase or bowl. Discourage drawing the full shape and cutting it out—it leads to a smaller shape that can't be trimmed.

Discussion Points

- Discuss why the genre of still life became so popular:
 - a. Any viewer can identify with the beauty of nature and the bounty of ripe fruit.
 - b. The artist can choose his/her subject and can arrange it him/herself to form a pleasing composition.
- Discuss the way objects are typically arranged in still life artwork to fill the space in a balanced way: not too crowded or empty anywhere, and the shapes and colors draw the viewer's eye around the whole composition.
- Talk about what unifies the composition and what gives it variety, or interest, so that it's not too boring or confusing.
- Point out the way in which the objects overlap, which suggests depth. Point out the white highlights on the shiny objects in the still life.

Reflection Point (Assessment of Learning Objectives)

Students will examine traditional still-life images for evidence of overlapping, highlights and an interesting composition. They will cut paper shapes to form either flowers in a vase or fruit in a bowl and arrange them in an interesting composition. They will use good craftsmanship (neatness).

Instructions for Lesson

1. Using either an overhead projector or demonstrating at a table, show how to trim a bowl or a vase from a half-sheet of colored construction paper by cutting off the lower corners and rounding them to be a bowl, or angling them slightly to form a vase (see example). The choice of a vase or a wide bowl determines the orientation of the background paper. It's good if the vase or bowl is large in the space, but if you need more room for the flowers or fruit, just trim it to fit.
2. Orient your background paper to suit the choice of bowl or vase. Place it in the space, without gluing it.
3. Have students do the same, choosing either a vase or bowl, trimming it and placing it on their background sheet without gluing it.
4. Have the group come back to your demonstration. On smaller, appropriately colored papers, draw simple flower shapes or fruit shapes, pointing out how the size should be proportional to the bowl (or vase). One of the student examples above does NOT have correct proportion between the bananas and the flowers. They can trace a shape for multiples like flowers or grapes. Don't draw stems and leaves attached to the flowers or fruit. Cut them out separately. You are 'building' a picture, one shape at a time.
5. Without gluing them in place, arrange the flowers or fruit so they make a nice arrangement. If there is extra room in the background, a dangling flower or bunch of grapes might fill it nicely. This should be a fairly close-up view of the still life.
6. Try more than one quick arrangement and then settle on the most interesting one. You may glue or start to glue.
7. Instruct the students do the same once they have finalized the arrangement of pieces. You might ask them to first check in with the docent or an adult helper before they start gluing.
8. Optional: Cut a white triangle that has a curve in it to make the 'highlight' on the apple or shiny bowl; a thin white strip can make a highlight on a tall vase. Markers may also be used to add details.
9. The artist should sign his/her name with the year in the lower right-hand corner, like the artists who paint still-lives do.

References and Attributions:

https://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf

<https://www.thoughtco.com/principles-of-art-and-design-2578740>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Still_life

Notes for Educators

21st Century Thinking Skills

Observing, visualizing, comparing/contrasting (size relationships), determining main idea (making an interesting composition), problem solving, determining point of view, evaluating (what makes a good composition).

WA State Learning Standards

Performance Standard (VA:Cr1.1.4) a. Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem. When deciding which fruit or flowers, which container shape to draw.

Performance Standard (VA:Cr1.2.4) a. Collaboratively set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makers.

Performance Standard (VA:Cr2.1.4) a. Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches. When showing how to round shapes and trim them with scissors.

Performance Standard (VA:Cr3.1.4) a. Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion. This is achieved as you make comments on what students have chosen to depict in their still-lives and how they are arranging the compositions.

Performance Standard (VA:Re9.1.4) a. Apply one set of criteria to evaluate more than one work of art. This happens when you reflect if students learned the objectives of the lesson.

Performance Standard (VA:Cn10.1.4) a. Create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions. This happens when you examine an artistic genre such as still-life.

Performance Standard (VA:Cn11.1.4) a. Through observation, infer information about time, place, and culture in which a work of art was created. This happens if certain objects in the still-life are shown to reveal these details.

Arts Integration Opportunities

Vocabulary words can be included in spelling lists.

Natural Science: Students can examine real flowers and fruit for details.