

Exploring Media and Materials

How do artists use art materials to cause different responses in the viewer?

How do writers use writing traits to cause different responses in the viewer?

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students will work with various media with the goal of exploration and experimentation. Students will use different drawing tools to create lines, patterns, shapes, and textures; experiment showing value and form; and explore how different media and tools can help them express ideas and feelings. Students will make an art exploration sheet to keep in their folders and then continue to experiment on new sheets of paper.

LENGTH OF LESSON: Two 45-minute sessions

KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT VISUAL ARTS AND WRITING

Visual Arts

- Art materials are tools that help artists communicate ideas and emotions.
- Different materials and techniques cause different responses in the viewer.

Writing

- Writing traits are tools that help writers communicate ideas and emotions.
- Different writing traits cause different responses in the reader.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students will:

Visual Arts

- Identify ways artists use a variety of media and tools to communicate ideas and emotions
- Understand that different art materials convey different ideas and emotions
- Experiment with various media and tools to communicate ideas and emotions
- Describe the effects they create with various media and tools

Writing (optional activities)

- Identify ways writers use the traits of writing to cause different responses in the reader
- Experiment with various traits to convey emotions
- Describe the effect they created using the traits of writing

FOR THE TEACHER

If possible, set up stations in your room where students can work in groups of four or five. Have enough materials at each station to allow each student to experiment with all of the materials. If there are not enough materials for this set up, arrange each station according to media (one for watercolor, one for markers and crayons, etc.) and have students take turns at each station.

For tips on working with watercolor, see the video in the Multimedia section of the [ABC website](#).

Make an art exploration sheet in advance that you can show to students as an example.



SUPPLIES

- Student journals
- Pencils, crayons, colored pencils, charcoal, and oil pastels
- Large drawing paper (16" x 20" or 11" x 17"), one large sheet and several smaller sheets of paper per student
- Watercolor paints
- Different sizes and styles of paint brushes (bristle, foam, sponge, etc.)
- Plastic wrap and salt for making textures with watercolors

VOCABULARY

Drawing is a series of intentional marks that describes how a thing looks or feels. Drawing can also describe an idea or feeling.

Watercolor is a paint medium, usually more transparent than other paints like tempera or acrylic.

Crayon resist is an illustration technique in which watercolor is painted over a crayon drawing.

The wax in the crayon resists the watercolor, so the watercolor only fills the spaces between the crayon.

Rubbing is a process that transfers textures and patterns from the surface of an object to paper.

Elements of art are color, line, shape, form, space, value, and texture.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN: OBSERVE, CREATE, AND REFLECT**Quick Write**

Tell students they will be experimenting with different art materials in this lesson. Before they begin, ask students to respond to one of the following prompts.

- For me, experimenting means _____.
- I get good ideas when _____.
- When I try new things I feel _____.

Introduction

Tell students that their job is to experiment with different art materials to see how they can use them to explore the **elements of art**—color, line, shape, form, space, value, and texture. Tell students they are to use every material that is available to fill a sheet of paper with different kinds of lines, shapes, textures, and patterns, and to experiment showing value and form, labeling all of their drawings and marks. They will keep their art exploration sheets for reference as they make their final artists' books. Then they will continue to experiment with different techniques—**drawing, watercolor, rubbings,** and **crayon resist**—to create patterns and textures on new sheets of paper.

Observe: Look and Discuss

Show the different materials to students and explain how they are meant to be used. Demonstrate several of the techniques, such as watercolor, crayon resist, and rubbings, and show students an example of an art exploration sheet—a large sheet of paper filled with many different kinds of drawing marks and media combinations, labeled with the tools and media.



Create: Art Exploration Sheets

Give each student a large sheet of paper or several sheets of smaller paper if large is not available. Give students these guidelines to follow while exploring materials:

- Label each mark with the name of the tool they used to make it. Add any other details that will help them remember how to make it again, such as “heavy line with crayon.”
- With drawing tools like crayons, pencils, charcoal, etc., try drawing by moving just their wrists. What kinds of lines do they get? Then try again, this time moving just their elbows, then shoulders. How are the lines different? Try this with other drawing tools.
- Try making a hard line by holding the crayon or pencil firmly. Then press lightly for a soft line. Draw a shape and fill with a gradation going from hard to light. Notice that the flat shape begins to look more like a three-dimensional form.
- Make as many different kinds of lines (straight, curvy, zigzag, hard, light, twirly, etc.) as they can.
- Experiment with unique kinds of lines or combination of materials.

Art Techniques: Have students experiment with each technique and then try them in various combinations, such as a rubbing with crayon resist.

- **Watercolor and plastic wrap:** Use a big brush to fill a sheet of paper with different colored washes of watercolor paint. Make sure the paint on the paper is very wet. Cut a sheet of plastic wrap that is a bit larger than the paper and place on top of the paper. Bunch it up to create lines and textures on the paper. Let the paper dry completely before removing the plastic wrap. It might take a few days for the paper to dry. If it is wrinkled, place dry paper between books for a few days to flatten it.
- **Watercolor and salt:** Use a big brush to fill a sheet of paper with different colored washes of watercolor paint. Sprinkle salt on the wet watercolor and watch as textures form. Let the paper dry. Flatten it between books if it is wrinkled.
- **Crayon resist:** Make a quick drawing or series of patterns and textures with crayons. Paint over the crayon with watercolor paint and see how the wax of the crayon resists the watercolor paint. Experiment with different colors of crayons and watercolor. Try drawing with a white crayon on white paper and add watercolor on top.
- **Rubbings:** Try making rubbings from different surfaces around the room. Experiment with different drawing tools (crayon, pencil, colored pencil, and charcoal) to see what kind of effect each creates.

Reflect

Arrange students' work on tables or desks and give them a few minutes to look at each other's work. As a group, discuss the different technique experiments. What do some of the examples bring to mind? Do any evoke different kinds of weather, natural scenes or landscapes, emotions, or events such as fireworks or celebrations? What else do the students see or notice in their work? Can they imagine how they might use these processes in other artworks they might create? How might they use them in the artists' books they will create in future lessons?



Have students respond to one of the following prompts in their journals.

- The best thing about this activity was _____.
- It was hard for me when I had to _____.
- Next I would like to experiment with _____.

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Visual Arts and Writing

- Ask students to choose one of their experimental sheets and describe the emotion or idea it communicates.
- Encourage students to continue working with one of the media techniques in their journals or on an additional sheet of paper.
- Have students write a poem, lyric, or short piece based on something they created in this lesson.

Science

In science class, students often compare the physical properties of various liquids and solids. Artists make similar comparisons of their artistic materials. Both use the same skills of observation, reflection, and discussion, as well as the formation of conclusions about the materials.

- Have students create a chart or guide to compare the physical properties of materials and characteristics of different art media like watercolor, tempera, crayons, and oil pastels. They can experiment with the drying speed of certain paints or their opaqueness or transparency. Students can record their findings and refer back to the guide to help them choose the best materials for their projects throughout the year.
- Have students experiment with the different media on different kinds of paper—poster board, copier paper, construction paper, watercolor paper, tracing paper, kraft paper, etc. Which media work best on which papers? Does water-based media work well on all papers? Do colors look brighter on some paper than on others? Have students record their observations; they can refer back to this information throughout the year as they create their own projects.