
See Shells

(1 hour 15 min)

Purpose

- Analyze things of nature.
- Perceive and describe the sensory and formal qualities of a sea shell.
- Draw, through careful observation, a portion of the shell.
- Demonstrate watercolor painting techniques in a decorative or realistic painting.

Docent Provides

- 1 sea shell for each student
- 1 black permanent markers for each student
- 1 blotter for each student (the large, water-resistant papers to cover desks)
- 1 watercolor paper for each student (12"x12")
- 1 watercolor practice strip for each student (3"x12")
- 1 box of watercolors and brush for each student
- 1 water container for each student
- 1 roll of paper towels
- 1 water pitcher
- Salt shakers (for docent use only)
- Water bottle sprayers (for docent use only)
- Sample art work & Georgia O'Keeffe print of enlarged shell (in yellow portfolio bag)

Set Up

- Give each student a blotter paper, shell, 12"x12" square watercolor paper, and practice stroke strip. Have them take out a pencil.
- Display the Georgia O'Keeffe print and sample art work

Introduction (about 10 minutes)

1. Show and talk about the Georgia O'Keeffe Prints.
 - Georgia O'Keeffe, an American artist, could be classified as an abstractionist painter even though the subject matter of her painting is clearly recognizable. A lily, hollyhock, iris or shell enormously enlarged to cover a whole canvas... all cleanly reduced to line and pattern, rendered in brilliant color, and executed with an intense lyricism that is very feminine. She is placed among the so-called "immaculate", a tendency of the 1920's because of the extreme simplification of form and sharp edged clarity of design.
2. Examine your Shell - Explore its sensory and formal properties.
 - How would you describe its TEXTURE? Smooth, rough, ribbed?
 - What type of LINES would be used to draw these shells? Curved or straight?
 - What kind of SHAPES would you end up with? Ovals, circles, triangles?
 - Discuss the COLORS found both inside and outside of the shell. Do you see many SHADES of one color? (Art vocabulary: HUE + BLACK = SHADE)
 - Most shells have very delicate colors with soft TINTS. (Art vocabulary: HUE + WHITE=TINT)
 - The VALUE of a color is its lightness or darkness. Look at the transition from one color to another in the same shell. Is it very gradual or abrupt?
3. Find a portion of the shell with an interesting design:
 - Take time to look closely!
 - Does your shell have a spiral at the end?
 - Does it have a hinge and ribs?
 - What part of your shell would make an interesting design?

Pencil Sketch (about 15 minutes)

1. Tell the children what they will be doing.
 - Drawing with pencil
 - Outlining with permanent black markers
 - Painting shell with watercolor
 - Adding a finishing *surprise* touch
2. Show samples in box of the three stages of our shell paintings.
3. Demo the pencil drawing, then have the kids do their own.
 - Draw BIG on your 12"x12" piece of watercolor paper. Show 'as much of' or 'as little of' the shell as you wish.
 - Sketch out your shell using pencil.

- Drawing must touch 3 sides of the paper. It can touch all 4 too.
- Show every 'in' and 'out' of the shell.
- Really study the shell. Draw slowly and carefully.
- Try contour drawing...watching the shell instead of your paper as you draw.
- Check students drawings and offer help where needed.

4. Demo the marker outlining.

- Pass out black markers and blotters.
- Use the black markers to outline the main contour lines and *some* of the details. Too much black marker will muddy the painting, so it is better to outline less rather than more.
- Set drawings aside in a safe place and collect blotters and markers.

Practice Using Watercolors (about 20 minutes)

1. Demonstrate the watercolor painting techniques and have the kids try each one as you demonstrate it.

- Use the narrow strip of watercolor paper.
- Review how to prep the paints by squeezing several drops of water into each color of paint — no black! Challenge them to only prep the red, yellow, and blue. Remind them to hug the paint off the brush before dipping it back in the water.
- Say something like: "None of the colors in our box seem to be quite right for our shells. Let's try to create some new colors and try out some new techniques to create more delicate designs on the shells."

A. Wet on wet

- Brush clear water onto your paper
- Stroke or just tip color onto wet paper; see the feathery effect it creates?

B. Fade color

- Brush across paper with a deep color, then brush over it with clear water and let the color fade out from the center. This is like a graded wash.

C. Two colors on a brush

- Load brush with one color and tip into another.
- Try loading up with yellow—then tip in red. This creates a more exciting orange. Stroke the brush across the paper to see how this creates a natural transition between the red and yellow. Don't blend the two colors on the paper, allow both of them to show.
- Try loading up with orange—then tip in blue. This makes brown.
- Remind the students that if they want a consistent color you can mix the paint colors on the lid of the paint box to dilute or create a new color.

D. One color wash over another

- Try a blue wash over a red one—you get violet.
- Try a red wash over a yellow one—you get orange.

Painting the Drawing (about 20 minutes)

- Retrieve the pencil sketch of the shell.
- Tell the kids to think about the colors they will use then try them out on the scrap paper before they put them on the shell drawing.
- Demo the different techniques on your own shell, then have the kids go to work on their own shells, encouraging them to try the techniques that they have just learned.
- Walk around and encourage the children.

Adding the Salt Crystals (about 5 minutes)

- Lightly wet the paper with spray bottle.
- Sprinkle a tiny bit of salt over the painting.
- Wait and see the mottled effect that it creates.