

Kindergarten Animal Discovery

Jan Navah

Kindergarten is a year of discovery, when children learn how to apply concepts of line, shape, color, and texture to create art. I use the kindergarten year to introduce these concepts through exercises, and then concentrate on drawing skills, starting with trees and flowers, gradually moving to sea creatures and birds, and eventually, to animals and human figures.

By bringing back these exercises later on in the year to serve as inspiration for a drawing project, students discover the process and make their own connections. One such "pairing" is Animal Discovery, a two-part project that makes an obvious connection to the skill-building that has taken place.

The Original Lesson

The first exercise involves students using sponges, household tools, and various texture-producing objects to create large pieces of painted paper,

à la Eric Carle. By limiting the color choices and using large construction paper and tempera paints paired in warm and cool colors, students will get good results.

After the papers have dried, I cut them up into various organic and geometric shapes and sizes. In the next lesson, I demonstrate how to

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use the shapes to "build" an animal by gluing them onto a 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) piece of white cardstock. On the board, I display posters showing many

different animals so that students will be inspired to try for something exotic.

I demonstrate how, rather than deciding on an animal and then looking (sometimes in vain) for the corresponding pieces, they should pick up a piece, turn it around, and look at it from different angles, thinking about what it could represent: A large, open mouth of a roaring lion? The long, skinny tail of a slithering snake? The sharp, pointy teeth of a scary shark?



Students are asked to use the pieces as they are, without tearing or cutting.

After I encourage students to use the central area of the paper, they are free to create their animals. Students can add a horizon line and any details (eyes, whiskers, etc.) in black marker when papers are dry.

The Follow-Up Lesson

Later on in the school year, when I am ready to teach students the basics of drawing animals using shape, line, color, and texture, I bring back their collage projects. By now, they are much more sophisticated in their drawing skills, but are able to recognize that the basic building blocks are the same.

Using their original animal collages as inspiration, students draw their animals again in colored pencil,

now refining the shapes and details using drawing techniques they have mastered throughout the year. At this stage, students are able to add appropriate details into the foreground and background to add more interest. In the spirit of self-assessment, even the most "challenged" students are encouraged by the improvement obvious in the second composition, giving them a sense of accomplishment and success.

At this young age, acquiring confidence in art skills plays a crucial role in self-esteem, allowing for future experimentation and exploration. By displaying the two pieces side by side in the annual end-of-year art show, both students and parents are able to

see not only the progression of skill level, but also how the basic elements remain constant. As this "discovery" is made, kindergarten students realize that they can continue to use these elements in the future to draw anything they choose.

Jan Navah is an art specialist at Stephen S. Wise Temple Elementary School in Los Angeles, California. Navah5@aol.com

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.

WEB LINK

www.wiseelementary.org/JNavah

