

Sea-ing More Clearly

Developed By	Stephanie Dean-Moore
Suggested Length	Four 30 minute lessons
Suggested Grade Level(s)	Primary, 1, 2
Subject Areas	Visual Arts, Social Studies, Drama, Language Arts, Music

Overview

Our relationship to water and the sea is both pragmatic and spiritual. This unit will explore how water is a source of food, life, and inspiration.

Note that some activities may need to be adapted for younger learners.

Links to Curriculum Outcomes

Students will (be expected to)

- describe how people depend upon and interact with different natural environments (Social Studies)
- experiment with language choices in imaginative writing and other ways of representing (Language Arts)
- explore colour, shape, line, and texture and the principles of pattern and repetition in the visual environment (Visual Arts)
- develop and play roles (Drama)
- experiment with sound sources to communicate moods and feelings (Music)

Links to Telling Stories: Themes / Key Words

- Marine / ships / sea
- Colours and emotions
- Rural life

Art Works

- *Codfish Drying P.E.I.*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1430
- *Sands of Dee Sketch*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2384
- *Landscape near Arnprior*, Robert Harris, CAG H-8275
- *Old Andrew*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2370

Context

This unit works with the theme, “Water’s Ways”. Lessons focus on the practical and emotional roles that water and the sea play in our lives.



Lesson #1: Fishy Poetry

Objective Students will examine the historical importance of fish as a food source. They will explore texture, colour, and sculptural techniques to create their own “fish”, and compose accompanying poetry about this water creature.

Related Art Work(s)

- *Codfish Drying P.E.I.*, Robert Harris, CAG H-1430

Materials

- newsprint
- masking tape
- white glue
- glue brushes
- tissue papers
- paper
- pencils
- string

Activities / Explorations

Harris’ drawing of a man drying fish on a dock presents a practical look at how people used to feed themselves. Fish was a basic element of nourishment for coastal communities, sustaining life during long winters, when the ice and ground were frozen.

1. Discuss the different shapes of fish and how you would “build them” (are they long, narrow, round, pointed?).
2. Create the shapes by compacting newspapers, layering and taping them together as you go. Students should end up with firm, well-taped shapes when finished.
3. Using watered down glue, brush sections of the shape (an area at a time) and then apply small squares of tissue paper on top. Continue brushing the tissue paper with glue and layering. Note: Shapes

must be finished and cannot be reworked at this point. New tape WILL NOT adhere to the wet paper!

4. Continue to work until everything is covered with colour. Let dry.
5. Have students write a poem about their fish (e.g., "Ode to a Cod!"). Use this as a chance to discuss different styles, rhythms, structures of poetry. Encourage them to explore the subject from different perspectives – the fisher's, the fish's, a hungry person's in winter. Using string, attach the poems to the fish.

Ideas for Assessment

Create a class "drying rack" using string, and suspend the fish and poems. As a class, discuss the colours, textures, and energy of the fish. Have each student read their poem aloud and discuss.



Lesson #2: A Chorus of Waves

Objective Students will explore the dramatic tradition of the Chorus, inspired by Greek theatre. They will construct masks and create a play featuring the "Voice of the Sea".

Related Art Work(s)

- *Sands of Dee Sketch*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2384

Materials

- heavy paper
- coloured / decorative papers
- glue sticks
- scissors
- crayons, coloured pencils, markers
- ribbons, string

Activities / Explorations

1. Robert Harris' painting depicts a man and boy out at sea in a small boat, inches above the water and the sea whose whims surround them completely. Discuss what it must be like to be so vulnerable at sea.
 - What is the man thinking about?
 - What is the boy thinking about?
 - What dangers lurk just below the water's surface?

2. Ancient Greek theatre features “the Chorus” as a vital character. It can be the voice of the supernatural, of the gods, of nature, of the sub-consciousness, unfolding to the audience mysteries unknown to “mere mortal” players.
3. As a class, create a play about the man and boy in Harris’ painting. Compose simple dialogue for the Chorus, which will be the “Voice of the Sea”. As the fishers are tossed about and the weather changes, what is the sea thinking? Is it playing with them? Will it keep them safe?
4. Using heavy paper, create a simple mask template for each student. Have them decorate their masks to represent elements of the sea. Discuss colours, subjects and textures that are appropriate. Encourage them to extend beyond the template – have fish jumping overhead and waves crashing against cheeks. Once done, attach ribbons or string so that the masks can be worn.
5. Perform the piece, encouraging the chorus to speak in unison. Emphasize the power and force of the “Voice of the Sea” compared to the two individual fishers.



Lesson #3: Reflecting Beauty

Objective Creating designs in mirror image, students will compose a collage that explores colour, shape, composition, and emotion.

Related Art Work(s)

- *Landscape Near Arnprior*, Robert Harris, CAG H-8275

Materials

- paper
- construction paper
- paint
- brushes
- glue
- scissors
- papers of all sorts (optional)

Activities / Explorations

Looking into a calm body of water, we experience the beauty of a reflection. As water moves and light changes, the reflection distorts, yet it is still there. This natural mirror presents us with an interpretation of the world.

1. Examining the Harris painting, discuss how the land and its reflection seem to become “one”. Indeed, it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. The atmospheric nature of the painting, with its soft colours and gentle lines and textures, emphasize a sense of union between the two.
2. Using plain paper, have students paint an atmospheric background for their collages. Each student should decide upon a “feeling” created by water – stormy, angry, calm, happy, excited. Encourage them to use colours and movement in their painting that reflect their chosen emotions. Remind them that this is a background and not the entire piece. Abstract, emotive painting will be more effective than images.
3. Folding pieces of construction paper in half, have students cut out shapes of the sea. These could be underwater animals or plant life. As they cut their shapes, the folded papers will provide two versions of the original.
4. Once the paint has dried, they glue their cut designs onto their background papers. Encourage them to think of the piece as a “reflection”, gluing the pieces so that each “original” touches its “reflection”.



Lesson #4: Sea-ing Inside

Objective Students will explore visualisation, imagination, and emotion as sources of inspiration as they paint the sea. They will express these emotive qualities through paint, colour, and texture.

Related Art Work(s)

- *Old Andrew*, Robert Harris, CAG H-2370

Materials

- paper
- tempera paint
- palette knives (or plastic cutlery)
- music (optional, though suggested)

Activities / Explorations

Water holds us powerfully in its grasp. We depend on it for existence. It is the primary element within us. Its tides and levels affect our moods and emotions. We are intrinsically connected.

In Harris' painting, a man is sitting contemplatively by the sea. The colours are happy and the setting is both joyful and peaceful. The mood of the man, like that of the sea, is quiet and contented. As viewers, we feel a sense of serenity.

1. Using different styles of classical music as a background, have the students create passionate paintings of the sea. Encourage them to begin by discussing the music, whether it is happy, violent, serene, etc. Using the palette knives, have them paint in a very direct, fluid manner. Encourage the flow of emotion and energy, rather than focusing on images and details. These paintings should express the individual's feelings at the moment of creation (Expressionism).
2. If music is unavailable, inspire the students by describing scenes seaside. Have them close their eyes and give them as many details as possible of the weather – wind and rain, sun and warmth, ice and cold. Describe the sounds. Describe the isolation or crowdedness of the setting. Have the students open their eyes and create a new painting for each new scene.
3. Alternatively, have students create their own emotive music using musical instruments on-hand or ones that they create themselves. Allow small groups of musicians the chance to play while students paint. Change the flavour of the music, and the groups, often.

Wrapping up the Learning

Have the students write and perform their own play about the sea and its power. They can create the backdrops using emotive, expressionistic painting that reflects the text. Music and costumes can be created to accompany the performance. A Greek Chorus can be the Voice of the Sea. This style of choral presentation will encourage and include even the most timid of students. Present the play to another class.

Possible Extensions

Use actual sea elements, such as seaweed, sand, rocks and shells, to paint with. Explore how these new tools can produce unexpected and exciting results.

Read a poem about the sea. Have the students listen to it with their eyes closed. Encourage them to visualise the scene. Discuss and explore the similarities and differences that the written word can inspire. Have them draw or paint their personal interpretation of a scene from the text.

