

Classroom Activity

Sketchbooks and the Artist's Process

Enduring Understanding	Artists often use sketchbooks to brainstorm, edit, and think through ideas to find their unique artistic style.
Grades	K–12
Time	One class period
Visual Art Concepts	Drawing, writing, draft and revision, practice, bookmaking
Materials	Copy paper, rubber bands, popsicle sticks, scissors, and colored pencils. Optional: cardstock, collage materials (magazine clippings, construction and/or patterned paper, stamps, etc.), and glue sticks.
Talking about Art	<p>View and discuss Tim Burton's <i>Untitled (Edward Scissorhands)</i>, 1990</p> <p>What do you see? What do you think makes this drawing or this figure unique?</p> <p>What is a sketch? Do you think this was the first sketch that the artist made of this figure? What do you see that makes you say that?</p> <p>Artists often use sketchbooks to record their ideas, both visually and in words. Why might you sketch an idea first before you create the final product? When an idea pops into your head, do you write the idea on paper? Why is it valuable to record your ideas and your thinking? Why would it be useful to have all drafts of one idea in one place? What else can you use a sketchbook for?</p>
Making Art	Transform ordinary and inexpensive materials into a sketchbook using basic materials such as popsicle sticks, rubber bands, and paper. First, cut large (about 17½ x 24-inch) sheets of paper into three long, horizontal strips of equal dimension. Layer 6 horizontal strips on top of each other, one at a time. Fold the set of sheets in half horizontally as if you are folding a book. The folded edge will serve as the binding. Cut triangles from both the top and bottom corner of the folded edge. Open the book and lay it on a flat surface. Place a popsicle stick on top of the center fold. Enlist a partner to lift the book with the popsicle stick in place. String a rubber band underneath the book along the fold, using the top and bottom of the popsicle stick as anchors.

Making Art

Fold the book again and decide if you will orient your sketchbook horizontally or vertically. Now, decorate the cover using colored pencils. Remember, you will use your sketchbook to document your great ideas and thinking, so the cover design should say something about you!

If you have access to cardstock (a sturdier, thicker paper), create a sketchbook using cardstock as the cover. Hole punch the folded edge and string yarn or ribbon through the holes as binding. Use collage materials to decorate the cover.

Reflection

Find a partner and share your sketchbooks with each other. How did you design your cover? What does the cover design say about you? What do you think you might use your sketchbook for? Keep it with you wherever you go because you never know when and where you will get inspired!

Classroom Activity

Unconventional Printmaking

Enduring Understanding Prints can be made using a variety of materials on different surfaces.

Grades K–12

Time One to two class periods

Visual Art Concepts Monotype, positive and negative space, composition

Materials Pencils, Q-Tips, printing plate (aluminum foil, styrofoam plate, wax paper, or gelatin), printing paper (copy paper, construction paper, or canvas), water-soluble printing ink or acrylic paint, rubber brayers, and baby oil for cleaning brayers. Optional: collage materials (magazine clippings, patterned paper, feathers, leaves and twigs, etc.) and glue sticks.

Talking about Art Look closely at the print by Odilon Redon, *To Edgar Poe (The Eye, Like a Strange Balloon, Mounts toward Infinity)*, 1882, included in the essay and CD.

What do you see? What do you think might be happening in this scene? Odilon created this artwork as part of a series called *To Edgar Poe*, dedicated to the author and poet Edgar Allen Poe. Redon based the majority of his work on thematic subjects and was greatly inspired by literature.

What materials do you think the artist used to create this? Print-making is the production of an image on a surface, usually paper. The process was originally created to produce books and newspapers using a printing press, but artists create prints as artworks using a variety of materials. This print is an example of a lithograph, which means that the artist carved the image into a piece of stone, rolled ink on top of the stone, then turned it upside down and printed an impression of his carving onto a piece of paper. See other examples of lithographs in the enclosed CD.

Making Art A monotype is a different kind of print, although it uses the same basic printing process as lithography. However, in techniques such as lithography the artist develops a positive image by drawing or carving a picture on a blank printing plate.

For a monotype, on the other hand, the artist develops a negative image by rolling ink on the printing plate first and drawing a picture by removing paint.

Making Art

Artists usually create a sketch of the image first so take some time to think about the story your print will tell. Try drawing inspiration from literature by illustrating a verse from a poem or a scene from a book.

To produce a monotype of the drawing, use a brayer to evenly roll ink or paint onto a printing plate, such as a piece of aluminum foil, wax paper, or a styrofoam plate. To create a gelatin plate, see the recipe below. Then, draw the image on the plate with a pencil, creating lines by gently removing paint. Use a Q-Tip to create gradations like the cloudy sky in Redon's print. When the drawing is finished, choose a printing surface, such as a piece of canvas, copy paper, or colored construction paper. (If using a light-colored ink, choose a dark-colored piece of paper, or, if using a dark ink, choose a light-colored piece of paper.) Place the paper on top of the printing plate and burnish (rub) the back of the paper evenly. Begin in the middle of the paper and work out to the edges. Hold the plate firmly and lift an edge of the paper to make sure the paint has transferred onto the paper. If it has not, repeat the process, applying more pressure to the back of the paper. Pull the paper off the plate and behold your print!

Optional: If you have access to collage materials, add finishing touches by gluing on different materials or by cutting the paper to change its shape.

Consider creating a series of prints over multiple class periods that illustrates themes, verses, or scenes from a literary work.

Reflection

What was the inspiration for your print? Does your final print match your original sketch? How is it similar? How is it different? Share your print with others.

Gelatin Plate Recipe

Mix two tablespoons of unflavored edible gelatin for every cup of water. A higher concentration of gelatin is needed to create a firm printing surface so determine the amount of water needed to make a plate between $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. Boil half of the water needed and keep the other half cool. Stir the gelatin powder slowly into the cool water. Next, stir the gelatin solution slowly into the hot water until it is dissolved. Pour the solution into a non-stick pan or container. Use paper scraps to remove any bubbles. The gelatin will harden without refrigeration, but keeping it cool will extend the life of the plate for up to a couple of weeks. Do not put solution down the drain.