



Left to right: Second-grade artwork, Painterly Creature. Second-grade artwork, Friendly Forever Creature. Second-grade artwork, I Can Fly Too Creature.

Create a

CREATURE

Karen Skophammer

While looking at *Portrait of a Woman* by Frans Hals, my second-graders became enthralled by the questions, “Is this lady sitting inside a picture frame or behind an oval window? How do you know?”

We talked about the picture being

flat, but that artists have ways of creating a sense of distance and space in their paintings. Artists can take you any place they want to in their art. I explained that, they, too, as young artists, could take people on imaginary journeys and invent make-believe creatures. There was no limit as to

what they could create with their imaginations and a few art materials.

A Hole in the Wall

This led to a discussion of the hole in the wall in the back of the room. “What if a bug or creature from your imagination could come through that



hole in the wall in the back of my room? What would it look like? Why would it be hiding in that hole? What color would it be? What shape would it have?"

There was a flurry of discussion as to why there would be a bug/creature inside my art wall and why it would be living there rather than any other part of the building. Reasons included that my room is the most fun and the creature would always have something to do and could always change its colors.

Designing Creatures

I explained that students would be designing the bug/creature in the wall. We talked about the design elements and how students might use them in their drawings. We talked about how they would need to use flat shapes since they would be work-

ing on a flat surface. They might use organic or natural shapes or use a combination of the two. They might use different kinds of lines to outline the shapes of their bugs, or to suggest movement within shapes.

We discussed the use of tempera paint and color as I wanted the students to use color to establish the mood of their subject. I reminded students that color aids in the expression of personal emotions and feel-

ings. By using bright colors their bugs could be happy or flashy, and by using "dull" colors the bugs would seem more subdued or quiet. They could also add white to a color to make a lighter "cheerful" tint, or add black to make a more "gloomy or mysterious" shade.

Talking About Texture

We also talked about texture. The creatures could have a somewhat smooth texture or have a different texture by stippling or applying the paint

All of this came from a discussion of one painting we saw in a textbook that led to a discussion about a hole in my wall.

Objectives

Students will effectively:

- draw and paint an imaginary creature.
- use the elements of art and principles of design.
- mix tempera paints to make tints and shades.

Materials

- 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) white drawing paper
- crayons or pencils
- tempera paints and brushes
- palettes and containers of water

in another manner. I also wanted students to use the entire 12 x 18" drawing paper space for their creatures, running the creature edge-to-edge or designing the background to make a pleasing presentation.

I passed out materials and students got down to work. When the creatures were finished, I thought my second-graders had done a phenomenal job. Just think—all of this came from a discussion of one painting we saw in a textbook that led to a discussion about a hole in my wall.

You take your learning opportunities where you find them and build on them. This was a lesson my students are still talking about! 🌀

Karen Skophammer is an art teacher for Manson Northwest Webster Schools in Iowa.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/frans-hals-portrait-of-a-woman-marie-larp