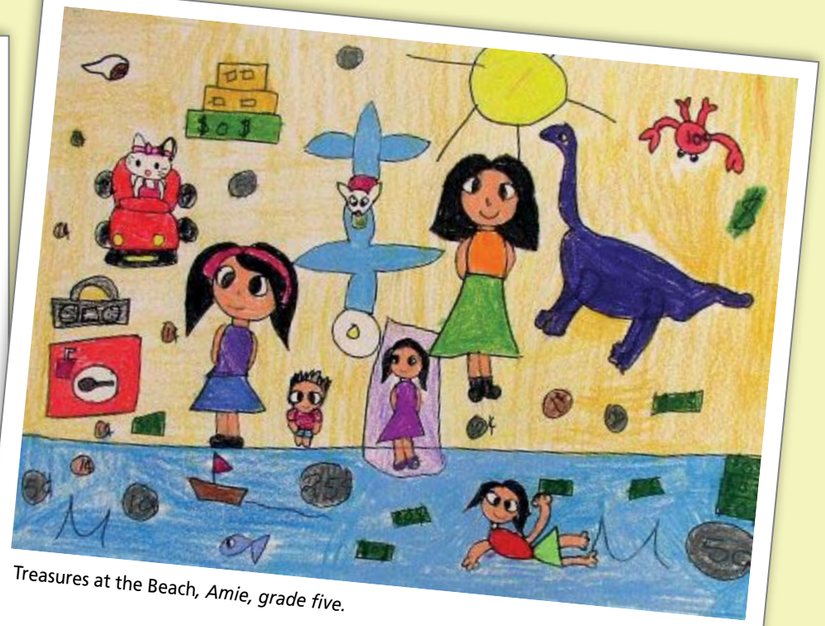
Wish You Were Here, *Abby, grade five.*



Treasures at the Beach, *Amie, grade five.*

# Toys on Vacation

***Marcia Scurfield***

If visual culture is the visual world surrounding the child, then fast-food restaurants and the film industry would have to be two major influences on that visual culture. Whenever possible, I want my students' art to reflect their own experiences. We often begin the semester with a drawing which is my answer to the ubiquitous essay, "What I did over my vacation." This drawing utilizes the three major types of drawing: observation, memory, and imagination.

I have a large collection of kids' meal toys which I have purchased very inexpensively from garage sales or have been donated by parents. Most of these are plastic figurines that promoted movies such as *Monsters Inc.* or *Toy Story*. These toys are great objects to draw because they are familiar and popular subjects and they are virtually indestructible.

**We begin an adventure illustration that portrays the students with one or more of the toys in a real or imagined vacation setting.**

## Toys as Simple Subjects

Day one of the project begins with students drawing several of the toys which are in bins numbered to go on my six art tables. Students use black ball-point pens (so they can't erase) on photocopy paper. I encourage them to look for all the details in their figure and try drawing it from different angles.

## Toys on Vacation

On day two, we discuss places students went and activities they experienced over their vacation. We begin an adventure illustration that portrays the students (and possibly others) with one or more of the toys in a real or imagined vacation setting. For this illustration on 9 x 12" heavy white drawing paper, I let students sketch their ideas lightly with pencil before tracing over them with the ball-point pens.

Usually, the toy enters the child's world, but two of my favorite drawings involved the child entering the world of the toy. Daniel drew Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head from *Toy Story* and himself as their son, also a Potato Head, relaxing on the beach. A third-grade boy drew a shelf of action figures in boxes—Buzz Lightyear and Woody, but also himself, Guapo, as an action figure.

## Color Skill-Building Exercise

By day three, some students have filled all their space with the black lines and are ready for colored pencil. A quick skill-building activity begins the day. On a strip of 2 x 6" paper, students draw three boxes about 1" (2.5 cm) square with the black pens. In the first box, we color in a light, even layer of red pencil followed by a heavy layer of yellow. The second box has a light layer of light or turquoise blue, followed by a heavy layer of yellow. The third box has even layers of blue and red. A discussion of light and heavy color application and blending of colors all comes from this five-minute exercise.

At the beginning of the fourth session, I put the artwork on the white board with magnets and we ask questions about how students' drawings are meeting the standards, which are posted above the white board. Whose drawings show that they are controlling their materials? Whose drawings are filling the space with line, shape, and color? Whose drawings are including important details about themselves, the toy, and their vacation spot?

## Using a Word Bank

Students who finish their drawing before the others can write the story that their drawing illustrates. I make up a graphic organizer with a word bank: words that describe my toy, words that describe me, words that describe the vacation place. The word bank is followed by prompting questions: Where did we go? What did we see? What did we do?

I find this project to be an ideal way to begin the semester, because it combines observational drawing with creative imagination and storytelling. It's a great way for students to share their experiences with each other. Second through fifth graders are all successful. Examples of our results can be seen at our Artsonia gallery.

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**NATIONAL STANDARDS**

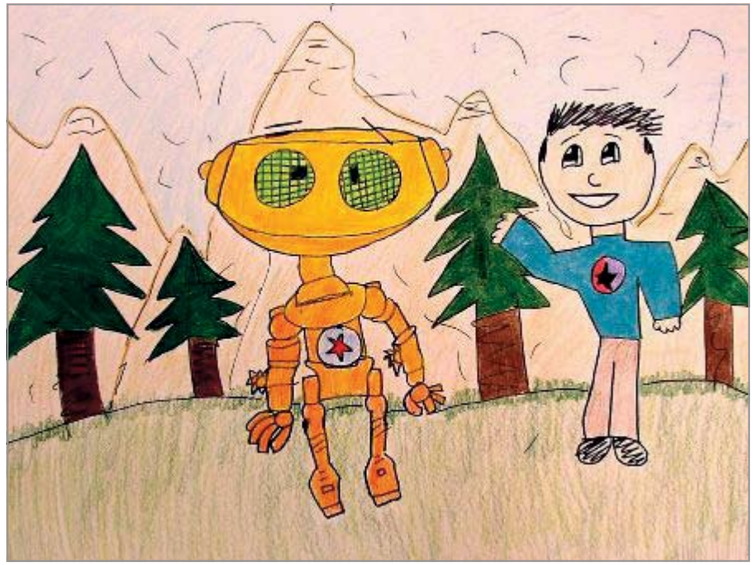
*Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.*

**WEB LINK**

*www.artsonia.com/museum/gallery.asp?exhibit=51394*

**Materials**

- kids' meal toys in numbered tubs
- photocopy paper
- 9 x 12" (23 x 30 cm) heavy white drawing paper
- 2 x 6" (5 x 15 cm) drawing paper
- pencils
- black ball-point pens
- colored pencils



Greetings from Colorado, *Spencer, grade five.*