



Basic "BLOCK" Building

Sharon M. Morris

This lesson came about as I anticipated budget constraints as a result of the economy. I decided to get back to basics with art supplies and allow my kindergarten students' imaginations and drawing styles to guide their creations. What emerged was a lesson in which students discovered how to cre-

ate a neighborhood block while learning about the elements of art and their community. I was delighted to hear how they enjoyed talking about their neighborhoods and was very pleased with their enthusiasm in deciding what their community drawings would look like.

The Composition of a Community

To begin, I asked students what makes up our community. They were encouraged to think of their parents' occupations and places they visit regularly. Responses were abundant! Included in the list were pet shop, bank, restaurant, houses, schools, grocery store, police station, post office, hospital, church, and library.

I then asked, "What else makes up our community?" This is the most important part of any neighborhood." Together we determined that the answer was people. Our neighbors, friends, and families working together are what make our neighborhoods functional and fun.

Looking at Paintings

Next, we looked at artist Romare Bearden's collage, *The Block*, focusing

Objectives

Students will:

- identify and draw types of line and basic shapes
- identify colors
- observe and analyze artwork by artist Romare Bearden and/or other artwork or photographs of cities
- recognize buildings in the community
- write building names
- compare and contrast his/her neighborhood with other neighborhoods
- use watercolors to paint the sky

Hailey Swink

lar, or slanted rooftops, then chimneys, satellite dishes, and antennas as desired. Students worked their way across their papers and drew the last building going off the page. They added shapes for signs above the doors of businesses, using colored pencils to add names, sounding out words and spelling as well as possible.

After we reviewed different kinds of lines, students added windows and doors all over the place. Some drew buildings with one window while others drew many more. Shingles could be added with wavy lines or many rectangles drawn on the rooftops. Buildings could be made to look like brick or wood with the addition of shapes or lines as well.

Adding Final Details

Students used colored pencils to draw people or things in the windows and colored the buildings with crayons. After I showed and discussed pictures of blue skies, colorful sunsets, and rainy days, students used watercolors to paint the skies, being careful to go around the buildings. (If watercolors are not available, crayons can be used.)

Extensions

Charts could be made for students to fill in how many and what kinds of each shape he or she used in the artwork. Students could give their cities names and/or write sentences or dictate stories about their drawings. Another extension would be to recycle small boxes or cardboard to construct a three-dimensional city. Maybe it could include a spa. Just a thought. ☺

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand perspective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

www.childrensbookpress.org/our-books/multicultural/my-block

on colors and shapes. I showed students photos of city blocks in U.S. cities and we identified the states on our map. We also looked at various color images of houses and cities around the world.

The Block, a book written by Langston Hughes, puts poetry to Bearden's collage. Another book, *On My Block: Stories and Paintings by Fifteen Artists*, edited by Dana Goldberg, is a compilation of city block and neighborhood paintings specifically for early elementary students. We compared and contrasted these paintings and talked about how they were different and how they were the same.

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The Block Party

On 12 x 18" (30 x 46 cm) white drawing paper, students chose a vertical orientation for tall buildings or horizontal for shorter buildings. Their neighborhoods could be realistic, make-believe, or historical settings.

We decided the ground was a good place to start building. Students drew a ground line two inches from the bottom of the paper, all the way across the page. On top of the ground, students started the first square or rectangle of a building, away from the edge, then added more buildings with squares and rectangles.

Next students added flat, triangu-