

Which One Are You?

Dale Wayne

In elementary school there are many firsts: the first lost tooth, the first day of school, the first grade. On the first day of art with my elementary students, I try to choose a non-intimidating project that will let students tell their new classmates and me a little about themselves. Many times I do what I call "alphabet soup" and choose illuminated letter projects based on students' own initial. For the past two years, I have varied that with the first grade, and have them base their artwork on the number one.

Transformations

I photocopy a large numeral one and a small numeral one for students to

use. I begin the class by asking students why they think I have chosen the number one as the basis for our project. "Oh," they respond, "The first day of school!"

"Our first art class!" "The first grade!" Using a projector, I ask for suggestions on how I can

transform our shape into something else. I demonstrate, based on one or two of their suggestions, how to alter the shape to create a seahorse, a dog, or whatever else they suggest. Next, I turn the number horizontally and suddenly we have a whole different set of possibilities: "A train!" "A bridge!" "An airplane!"

Starting in Sketchbooks

Students are always eager to use the sketchbooks we require as part of their school supplies. I demonstrate

how they can use their pencils to trace over the shape of the small number one and suggest they use it

to make two or three different ideas for their final project. Finally, I show them how to trace their large number one when they have decided on an idea. Now they are set to explore the unlimited possibilities their imaginations will yield.

I begin the class by asking students why they think I have chosen the number one as the basis for our project.





Left to right: One Elephant, PenguiOn, One High Horse, One Giraffe Mom with One Baby

Elaboration

Next, students trace over their drawings with black permanent marker. Since students are working in their sketchbooks, the photocopy can serve as a blotter so that the ink will not bleed through and make marks on the clean pages of their sketchbooks. After they are finished outlining, students use construction paper crayons to color the drawings, making certain to complete the background of their illustration. Any crayon will work, but I like the pastel look of the construction paper crayons and they are new to most students.

Final Steps

The final step is to use either liquid or pan watercolor paints to wash over their crayon and complete the drawings. I prefer liquid watercolor since the students will not water them down too much, allowing the colors to remain vibrant. It also prevents

applying the pan variety too thickly and making a sticky opaque color that covers their drawing and ruins the paints.

This year we taped their completed projects into black mats. Students decorated the mats with construction paper crayons, which show up nicely on the black. I added dots of glue with glitter to add a touch of dimension. When all was said and done, we congratulated one another: "Nice one!"

Dale Wayne is director of visual arts education at the Geneva School in Winter Park, Florida. dalesglassart@mac.com

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

WEB LINK

Dalewayne.com

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- use their imaginations to transform a shape.
- become familiar with art materials.
- conceptualize a setting for their illustration.
- get to know each other through visual expression.

Materials

- 9 x 12" (22.5 x 30 cm) white drawing paper
- construction paper crayons
- pencils
- black permanent markers
- liquid watercolor paints
- black pre-cut mats and masking tape (optional)
- glue and glitter (optional)