

What's in a Name?

Helaine Schechtman

Nothing interests high school students more than things that are about them. Because of this, I begin this lesson with a discussion about the meaning of their names. Some of them are aware of what their names mean; others have no idea. I request that students ask their parents or guardians about their names, and then do some further research.

Who Are You?

To get students started, I give each student a slip of paper with the meaning of his or her first name. (A good source for this is babynames.com.) Telling the story of my own ancestors as an example, I explain that we each have a heritage. I suggest that students research any of their names (first, middle, or last) to generate ideas for their artworks. I charge them with visually depicting the meaning of their names in simulated stained-glass compositions.

Next, I show students a variety of examples of stained glass, from church windows to light fixtures to jewelry boxes. I point out that in this kind of glasswork the subject matter is broken down into simplified shapes that are held together by lines of lead. No two pieces of glass, in real stained glass, ever touch without a lead line between them.

Lead Lines

After creating a number of possible sketches, students choose one. They select paper in a format that best fits the layout of the composition. Leaving a small border, students lightly draw their desired images in pencil, making sure that all shapes touch each other and ultimately connect to a border.

Students then trace over the pencil lines with a wide permanent black marker to simulate the lead lines. They draw a thick black line around every object, connecting each object and the border. No shape “free floats” in the middle of the composition.

Finally, students use fine point permanent markers to make sure all of the heavy black lines connect cleanly and evenly. The lines should be con-



Above: Alicyn Faller, Waterfall. Top right: Danielle Bjorlo, Clearing in the Meadow. Bottom right: Rachel Lee, Sheep.

sistent in width and should appear to flow evenly throughout.

Adding Color

Next, students add color using watercolor pencils. I encourage them to practice and play a bit on another piece of paper first. I explain that the goal is to apply color so it creates a translucent effect. If they apply a heavier layer of color around the edges of each shape and leave the centers of each shape white, they can blend these areas with water to create a lighter, more “see-through” appearance.

Color from the pencils must be applied in a fairly smooth and even direction to produce great results. The color can be blended or reworked when dry if students feel more color application is needed.

My students always love this assignment. They learn color mixing, practice using watercolor pencils effectively, and, most importantly, learn about themselves! 🌈

Helaine Schechtman is an art teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School in Flemington, New Jersey. hschecht@hcrhs.k12.nj.us

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

WEB LINK

www.moosartgallery.com/watercolorpencils.html

Materials

- newsprint
- heavy white drawing paper
- pencils
- watercolor pencils
- markers—chisel tips, fine tips, extra-fine tips

