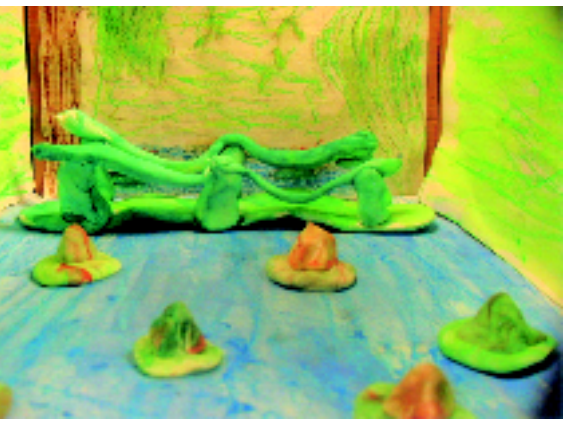
Thinking Inside the Box

Ingrid C. Gronbeck

The challenge presented to fourth graders was to interpret famous two-dimensional works of art as three-dimensional sculptures inside a shoebox.



Essential Concepts

- Careful inspection of an artwork to determine the artistic techniques of the artist as well as the details.
- Exploration of the work of one artist in depth.
- Understanding of foreground, middle ground, and background.
- Expression of individual interests and making choices.

Materials

- A broad selection of art reproductions. One shoebox for each student.
- Available art room materials such as tagboard, oil pastels, watercolors, plasticine, or self-hardening clay
- Found objects such as pinecones, sticks, dried flowers, plastic toys, fabric swatches.
- Tacky glue and glue guns

Guiding Practice

1. Discuss and demonstrate basic processes needed to be successful going from two dimensions to three dimensions.

2. Share a teacher-made example.

3. Review concepts of foreground, middle-ground, and background so that students can decide where the parts of the artwork will be placed in the shoebox and how this placement affects the size, color, and definition of objects.

4. Ask students to decide on the position of the viewing hole at either the end or the long side of the box, depending on the horizontal or vertical format of the artwork. An opening for light should also be cut in the lid of the box. The teacher should do this using an x-acto knife.

5. Encourage students to remove the lid of the box when arranging the objects inside. Remind students not to attach parts to the inside of the box until all pieces are completed and positioned. Keep in mind that people might be picking up the boxes to look inside, so be sure that the objects are securely attached with glue and cardboard tabs.

Assessment

Pass around the finished products for an informal critique. Ask students to comment on the effectiveness of foreground, middle ground, and background spaces in their classmates' works. Display the three-dimensional boxes along with the two-dimensional prints. Ask students to describe at least one construction problem and how they solved it.

Submitted by Ingrid C. Gronbeck, an elementary art teacher in the Clear Creek School District in Colorado.