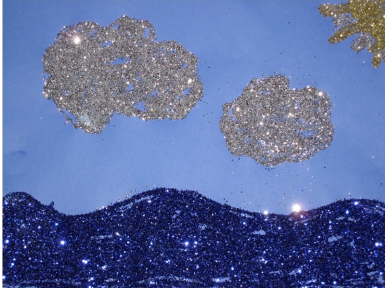


Water and Works of Art



Grade Level: 6 to 8



Developed by Hannah Griggs, Student Assistant for Museum Education, and Julie Zappia, Associate Educator for School and Family Programs, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts, and used in Grades 3 to 8.

Community Partner: Smith College Museum of Art

Overview/Rationale for Lesson: As an essential element to our existence on earth, water has served as a source of artistic inspiration for centuries. This lesson offers students the opportunity to step outside the classroom and see water creatively through the lens of the artist.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will reflect quietly and use their senses in a guided observation of water in an outdoor setting. (This class visited Paradise Pond in Northampton.)
- Students will use Visual Thinking Strategies to observe carefully original works of art featuring water from different centuries and in varied media.
- Students will discuss similarities and differences in art works and present critical and personal responses.
- Students will respond creatively to their observations of water in the environment and in art by designing original collage images.

Lesson Plan Procedure

Preparatory Activity:

Time: 20 minutes plus time to walk to and from the outdoor site

Step 1. Real Water Observations (20 minutes). At Smith College's Paradise Pond, sitting on the dock of the Boat House overlooking the water:

- Ask students to reflect quietly, and notice the environment by looking at the landscape, hearing the sounds of the environment, and smelling the air.
- Ask this series of questions aloud, threading together responses and generating a discussion:
 - What do you notice about this environment?
 - What do you see, up close and far away?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - Can anyone describe the textures that they see and feel?
 - How does it feel to sit on the dock?
 - What kinds of textures can you see in the water?
 - What colors can you notice in the water?
 - What plants do you see? What animals do you see?

- How did you feel during your reflection time?
- Why do you feel that way? (For instance, a student might say “calm and relaxed” and you might ask him/her to elaborate, “What made you feel calm and relaxed?”)

Main Activity:

Time: 1 hour

Step 2. Museum Visit (1 hour—3 stops of 15/20 minutes each)

Walk from Paradise Pond to the nearby Smith College Museum of Art . (See “Resources” for important school-group reservation information.) Begin on the second floor in the Ancient Art gallery.

At the *Personification of the River Pyramos* mosaic, follow the procedure below.

- Ask students to look at the artwork quietly and to walk up and get a close look at the detail. (*Museum rule—stay at least 6” away from art; no touching.*)
- Ask students to sit in a semi-circle on the floor, facing the artwork; lead a discussion using a series of questions such as the following (*Note: some answers are included as guides to discussion*):

Teacher Narrative:

- First let’s talk about what’s going on in the artwork. What do you notice about this artwork?
- What do you notice about the motifs, or designs, around the figure of the man?
- What is the man wearing for clothing and what is on his head?
- Why do you think leaves are featured in this artwork? (*His clothing is meant to recall flora.*)
- What do the letters next to the man remind you of? Have you seen those kinds of letters before? (*They are Greek letters.*)
- If you could make a guess based on what we’ve noticed about the materials, colors, and the figure in this work, what do you think this work might be about? (*The letters spell out PYRAMOS, the name of the river in ancient Turkey, part of the ancient Roman empire; the man is a personification, or symbolic representation, of the river.*)
- Next, let’s look more closely at the material. What do you think this work is made out of? (*It is a mosaic, made of stone tesserae.*)
- Does the material remind you of something you may have seen before? (*Perhaps a tile floor?*)
- This artwork was taken from a dining room floor of a house. Now that we know what it’s about—why might a work of art like this be in a dining room? (*In an arid climate, it would have been important to honor nearby rivers by creating artworks in homage to them. They needed water for their crops to create the feasts they would have had in this grand dining room.*)
- This was one example of how water can be represented in art (symbolically). Next, let’s look at another sculpture that used to be located on water.

Continue to the third floor to the American Art section. Stop at the ship’s figurehead *Ceres*.

You can preview the images you will visit at the Museum in a download available in Resources.



- Ask the students to approach the sculpture of Ceres and look around (*without touching!*) so they can see both sides of it.
- Then seat the students on the floor in a semi-circle, and ask the following questions to stimulate discussion:
- What do you see in this artwork?



- Does this sculpture remind you of anything you have seen before?
- What's on her head? What do you think she's carrying? Why?
- What does the wheat and the sheath in her hands say about her?
- Where do you think this was? Outside? Inside? Why?
- If she was outside, how do you think the weather affected the texture of this sculpture?
- How is she standing? Do you think she was attached to something? Why?
- What do her posture and facial expression say about her?
- Who do you think this artwork depicts? Is she a real person? A figurative person? Why? (*She is Ceres, ancient Roman goddess of grain/agriculture.*)
- In thinking about water, the weather, and the ocean, how does this work of art treat water differently and similarly to the mosaic we saw?

Continue on the third floor in the American Art section, around the corner near the window. Stop at the landscape painting *View of Northampton from the Dome of the Hospital*.

- Ask students to sit in rows on the floor in front of the painting, and use some or all of the following questions to stimulate discussion:
 - What do you see in this picture?
 - How would you describe the textures in the artwork? The trees, the surface of the water, the sky?
 - What colors can you notice?
 - Where do you think the artist was when he painted this?
 - If you were to imagine yourself in this town, how would you feel? What would the weather be like?
 - What buildings can you notice?
 - How does this town look -- modern or from the past?
 - Does this place remind you of any place you have been before? How? (*I'll give you a hint: we saw it earlier today!*)
 - How does this painting look similar to the landscape we noticed at the pond today? What has stayed the same?
 - How does it look different? What has changed?



- How is this image of water similar to, and different from, the images in the mosaic and the ship's figurehead?
- Wrap-up the looking experience by summarizing—
 - Today we saw three examples of works of art that all relate to water.
 - With the mosaic, we saw a symbolic work created to honor a river.
 - Nature was also being honored in the ship's figurehead—a woman representing the harvest placed at the front of a boat in hopes that the passengers would be successful with agriculture.
 - And the last work showed us an example of an artist who captured the beauty of his local landscape in paint.
- Return to the classroom for an activity—making water collages in response to the works of art and the site visit to pond.

Conclusion/Follow-Up to Activity:

Time: 30 minutes

Step 3. Water Collages Hands-on Activity:

- Ask the students to review what they saw at the pond and Museum. (5 mins.)
 - What were some of the words we used to describe the pond water (*smooth, glossy, wavy, rough*)?
 - Who can remind us about one of the ways that artists portrayed water?
- Students can then choose from a variety of collage materials to create their own water collage. Ask them to think about varying textures and perhaps using some symbolism, reminding them of the works of art relating to water. (20 minutes)
- When they complete their collages, ask for a few volunteers to share their work with the class and talk about what inspired them. (5 minutes)



Additional Notes on Lesson Plan

The steps above outline how this lesson was done during a field trip to Smith College's Paradise Pond and Museum of Art. The lesson can also be done at any pond, supplemented by looking at digital images of the artworks in the classroom if need be (although they are no substitute for the originals!).

Materials Checklist:

- For hands-on activity:
- Construction paper for base of collage
- Variety of water-related collage materials (tissue paper, textured papers, in water-type colors, glitter and sequins in water-type colors), glue, scissors

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Developer’s Comments on Lesson:

This lesson was created for the Clarke School for Hearing and Speech’s visit to the Museum during their “Water, Water, Everywhere!” summer program, organized by Dianne Fannelli in 2010.

Useful Links and Downloads are available at http://row.ctriver.org/?page_id=236.

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

ART (Connections to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks):

Strand: Arts Disciplines: Visual Arts (Grades 5-8)

Topic: Observation, Abstraction, Invention, and Expression

3.4 Create 2D and 3D representational artwork from direct observation in order to develop skills of perception, discrimination, physical coordination, and memory of detail.

Topic: Critical Response

5.5 Demonstrate the ability to recognize and describe the visual, spatial, and tactile characteristics of their own work and that of others.

5.6 Demonstrate the ability to describe the kinds of imagery used to represent subject matter and ideas, for example, literal representation, simplification, abstraction, or symbolism.

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