



Soul Searching: A Lesson About Sculpture

Grades 3-5

Time: 1 hour

Objectives

Students will identify and describe the elements of art and principles of design in a specific artwork, focusing on form, emphasis, and proportion. Students will sculpt three-dimensional objects and will create drawings both before and after creating their sculptures. Students will reflect on the success of their efforts and how their prior knowledge influences their response to art.

Instructional Materials

Image of Ibeji Figure from the Crocker Art Museum

A small, carved, wooden figure

World map or globe

Copies of the reflection worksheet "Thinking About Sculpture" worksheet

Art Materials

Homemade modeling clay or another modeling material

Butcher paper (or similar, to cover work surface)

Texturing tools (wooden sticks, plastic utensils, paper clips, etc.)

Paper and pencils

Procedure

Introduction

Show the students the small figure you brought. Explain where it came from and any special meaning it has. Talk about how it might have been created. If practical, pass it around so the students can examine it more closely.

Object-based Instruction

Display and discuss the image of the Ibeji figure. Explain that the artist is unknown, but that it comes from Nigeria. Point out Nigeria on the map or globe. Guide the discussion using the following questioning strategy, including information from the background material during the discussion and adapting the questions as desired.

Describe: What do you see in this image? Is the artwork two-dimensional or three-dimensional? The piece has a very recognizable form. What is it? (It's a human figure.) Does it depict a male or a female? What is the artwork made of? What textures do you see? How would you describe the artwork's color?

Analyze: How would you describe the symmetry? Notice how large the head is in proportion to the body. How does this show emphasis? Are there any other features that seem to have surprising proportions/emphasis? (Look at the hands and feet, for example.) Where do you see



specific details? Can you describe them?

Interpret: What kind of feeling do you get from this artwork? What are some things that make you feel that way? Why do you think the artist emphasized the features he did? How would this artwork be different if it were made of a different color of wood or a different material, such as clay? What can we learn about the culture this artwork comes from? Why do you think it was created? If the figure were to suddenly come to life, what questions would you ask him?

Judge: What do you like about this piece? Is there anything you don't like? Is there anything special about this piece?

Connect: Can you connect the things you've learned about this artwork with anything else you know about the art of Africa? How difficult do you think it is to create an artwork like this? What are some problems that might occur? What are some other ways sculptures are created? Have you ever tried to create a sculpture?

Procedure

Students will use homemade modeling clay (or another material) to create sculptures. The students will sketch what they plan to sculpt and will create contour drawings of their finished sculptures. They will also complete a worksheet reflecting on the process of creating their sculptures. This is a process-centered project; the sculptures won't be left to dry.

Before the students begin, demonstrate and explain the procedures as necessary. You may want to write some of the steps and/or expectations for the project on the board.

1. Cover the work surfaces, distribute the play dough and sculpting tools, and provide a few minutes for free exploration with the dough. Have the students try making organic (free-form) and geometric (sphere, cylinder, etc.) forms.
2. Distribute paper to the students and ask them to sketch some ideas for their sculptures. Explain that they are to create a form that includes some textural details. Remind them to consider all sides of their sculpture in their planning, and to make artistic decisions that will help make their sculptures unique. When they're satisfied with their sketches, have them create their sculptures.
3. When they've finished sculpting, distribute the "Thinking About Sculpture" worksheet. Have each student create a contour line drawing of his or her sculpture on the back of the worksheet and respond to each question in a complete sentence. Note - A contour line drawing is created by drawing as though the pencil (or other implement) is moving slowly along all the edges and ridges of the form, lifting the pencil as little as possible while creating the outline. The artist focuses on the object rather than the paper. Interior contours can be added in the same way; details can be added last.
4. Have the students clean up after the project. Collect the reflection worksheets for assessment. You may wish to collect the dough for future use, or you may prefer to send it home with the students.



Assessment

Assess the students' sculpting activity using the following rubric:

- 3 - Effective planning sketch completed. Details and texture included on all sides. Student followed all directions, worked to develop new skills, and demonstrated careful, thoughtful work.
- 2 - Planning sketch completed. Details and texture included on most sides. Student followed directions, worked to develop new skills, and demonstrated careful work.
- 1 - Planning sketch may not have been completed. Sculpture doesn't include details. Behavior and effort were sometimes insufficient.
- 0 - Did not attempt.

Assess the students' reflection worksheets using the following rubric:

- 3 - Contour drawing completed well; all questions answered in complete sentences.
- 2 - Contour drawing completed; most questions answered in complete sentences.
- 1 - Contour drawing may not be completed; some questions are unanswered.
- 0 - Did not attempt.

Adapting and Extending

The following are some suggestions for adapting this lesson to other grade levels or extending it to other lessons.

- Use a hardening compound and allow the sculptures to dry, or use a clay that requires firing, if that option is available.
- Invite a sculptor to talk about and demonstrate his or her art with the class.
- Expand on the contour drawing portion of the lesson, either teaching it yourself or inviting someone else to teach it. How-to videos and books about contour line drawings are available; consider showing some to your class.
- The Sacramento area is home to a large number of public art sculptures. Find a listing of them at sacmetroarts.org, as well as information about walking tours. Distribute the information to your students so they can visit them with their families.
- Encourage students to visit the Crocker Art Museum to view the Ibeji figure and many other sculptures firsthand.

