

Art Lesson: My Symbol

Grades 4-7

Materials:

- Interpretive Wall symbols and text
- Sketch paper
- Pencils
- Acrylic or tempera paint
- Paintbrushes
- Water
- Cardboard
- My Symbol Self-assessment

Project Description:

Students will design and paint a symbol that represents him/herself using the technique of simplification.

Objectives:

Students will understand the use of symbols.

Students will understand the techniques of simplification.

Students will express words through a symbol.

EALRs:

2.1 (Art) Use the senses to gather and process information.

4.1 (Art) Use arts skills and knowledge in other subject areas.

4.4 (Art) Recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history.

Procedure:

Two 50-minute class periods

This lesson can be done at the Ndebele Wallpainting with your class or you may download information and images from the Interpretive Wall.

The Ndebele Wallpainting mural is full of symbols that reflect the Hilltop community. Each symbol stands for a place or group of people in the community. Good symbols to discuss with this age group would be the Medicine Wheel, Mount Rainier, the Railroad, and the Lotus symbols. Ask the students to guess what the symbol is, who or what it might stand for, and why they think this community or group chose this symbol to represent them. Then give the class some background from the information on the website.

Ask your students to think of symbols that are common in their own lives, and the ideas or things they represent. Point out to your students that each of the symbols is a combination of simple shapes: a medicine wheel is a circle divided into quarters, a star is two triangles, etc.

Begin a discussion of simplification by asking your students what all of the symbols have in common. Lead the discussion to the conclusion that they are all simplified and easily translated into simple shapes. Simplification is the process of making something less complex, omitting unnecessary detail. Discuss examples of this technique using symbols in the mural.

Each student will create a poem describing him/herself and use this poem to generate a personal symbol. Students can use the following outline to write their poem.

First name
3 adjectives describing yourself
I love _____.
I hate _____.
I am afraid of _____.
I hope for _____.
Last name

After the poems are written, students will come up with symbols to represent a word or words in their poems and then sketch them. Students will take their sketches and eliminate detail, simplifying them into a symbol.

Each student will paint his/her symbol on paper or canvas.

Students will then present their symbol to the class, discussing how they simplified the idea or object their symbol represents, and why they chose this symbol to represent themselves.

Assessment:

Students will complete a My Symbol Self-assessment worksheet.

Extension:

(Social Studies) Create other symbols: classroom, neighborhood, city, state, nation, world.

(Art) Hang symbols and poems in classroom, hallway, or school gallery to share with others.