

Clay Lesson with 3rd to 6th Classes

'Is This a Martian?'

Gemma Mc Girr

Curriculum Strand: Clay (Visual Arts Curriculum p. 54, 72)

Objective: *Make sturdy figures in clay using the medium expressively and with imaginative detail (p.54)*
Use clay to analyse and interpret form from observation (p.72)

Linkage: **Paint and Colour** > *Express his/her imaginative life and interpret imaginative themes using colour expressively (p.50, 68)*
Drawing > *Express his/her imaginative life and interpret imaginative themes using inventive pattern and detail (p.48)*
Draw imaginative themes using inventive pattern and detail (p.66)

Integration Possibilities:

Oral Language: *Discuss reactions to poems. Experience and enjoy playful aspects of language (p.44)*
Express individual responses to poems and literature and discuss different interpretations. Experience and enjoy playful aspects of language (p.56)

Science: *Become aware of the names and structure of some of the body's major external and internal organs (p.61)*

Develop a simple understanding of the structure of some of the body's major internal and external organs (p.83)

Geography: *Recognise that the earth, its moon, the sun, other planets and their satellites are separate bodies and are parts of the solar system (p.82)*

Developing this Activity in Class:

Getting Started: Before I start an art lesson I find it very helpful to do a little exercise with the children to unlock their imaginations and to create a safe environment in the classroom for them to show and discuss their work without fear of ridicule. Mankind's imagination got us out of the caves and onto the moon!! Anything can happen in our imagination if we only let it! "Close your eyes and imagine a big door. It can be any colour you like. Written across the door in big capital letters is the word IMAGINATION. Now reach out and slowly open the door, let your imagination out! Open your eyes and let me see the sparkle! Now we can do anything, our imaginations are at work and we are all different!"

Materials Needed: Potter's clay
 Wooden boards or strong card (to work on)
 Clay tools or lollipop sticks
 Tea strainers (push a small piece of clay through to make very thin strings of clay)
 Poster paints or acrylics (to decorate when dry)
 Plastic bucket with tight fitting lid, or plastic bags for storing the clay

Stimulus: **The Planet of Mars**
 On the planet of Mars
 They have clothes just like ours,
 And they have the same shoes and same laces,
 And they have the same charms and same graces,
 And they have the same heads and same faces....
 But
 Not in the
 Very same
 Places!
Shel Silverstein

"Imagine meeting a Martian! Where do you think its eyes might be? Its nose? Elbows? Teeth? Where might it wear its shoes? How do you think it might move? Where might you see its ears? What shape do you think its head might be? What type of clothes do you think it might wear?"

Activity:

The children manipulate the clay to make their Martian, using the clay tools and found objects to add detail and texture. Encourage them to be inventive and explore balance with their pieces. It might take a few lessons before the children are happy with their creations. Keep the clay moist with a plant spray and by wrapping a damp cloth over them between sessions. When they are dry the children could paint them if they wish.

Evaluation/Looking and Responding:

This will be happening as the children work. The children can then take turns describing the Martians they have made and how their ideas came to them as they worked. They might like to write a little story about their Martian!

Extension Activities: Their Martians might have friends.....

ICT Possibilities: Images of their Martians could be scanned into the computer and the children could write a little story or poem about their creations.

Using the I Am An Artist DVD:

The *Clay* programmes on the DVD offer opportunities to see and hear the children using clay as a medium for imaginative expression.

Note:

I found that using a plant spray was best for keeping the clay moist as the children were working. Keep your slip in an airtight container for future use. If using poster paints on their Martians, they can be painted over with PVA to create a glossy finish. Acrylic paints can also be used. (Make sure the brushes are washed well before the acrylic paint dries on them).

Relevant Artists:

Auguste Rodin
Antony Gormley
Moche Pottery

Relevant Websites:

Learn about the ancient Moche people and their pottery
www.museum.upenn.edu/Moche/mocheculture.html

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom
www.scoilnet.ie

Antony Gormley, sculptor
www.antonygormley.com

Gargoyles of the World
www.stonecarver.com/gargoyles/

Rodin Museum in Paris
www.musee-rodin.fr