

Clay Lesson with Infants (2)

'Meet My Family'

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Curriculum Strand: Clay (Visual Arts Curriculum p.21)

Objective: *Explore and discover the possibilities of clay as a medium for imaginative expression (p.21)*
Make a clay form and manipulate it with fingers to suggest a subject (p.21)

Linkage: **Paint and Colour** > *Use colour to express vividly recalled feelings, experiences and imaginings (p.19)*
Drawing > *Make drawings based on vividly recalled feelings, real and imaginative experiences and stories (p.18)*

Integration Possibilities:

Oral Language: *Focus on descriptive detail and begin to be explicit in relation to people, places, times, processes, events, colour, shape, size, position (p.20)*

SPHE: *Identify and name the people who constitute a family and appreciate that all family units are not the same (p.20)*

Science: *Recognise and measure physical similarities and differences between people (p.24)*

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. "When I was a child it took up to six weeks to send a photograph to my cousins in Australia. We can send photographs in minutes now with our mobile phones! This is because people used their imaginations and made this happen. 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
 Plastic bucket with tight-fitting lid or plastic bags for storing the clay

Stimulus: (As for Infants Clay Lesson 1) Give each child a ball of clay that fits comfortably in their hand. Encourage them to squeeze, pinch, poke, pull and twist the clay, describing what is happening to the clay as they do this. They are discovering how clay behaves and how to manipulate it. Ask the children to describe members of their family. Are they tall, small, bigger, smaller than themselves? How many family members are there? What do they like to do? Do they play games together?

Activity: As the children talk about their families, encourage them to pull the shapes of sturdy figures from the clay. Describe who is the tallest, smallest in the family. Is there a baby? Is there a family pet? It is better for the children to pull the shapes out of the clay rather than adding on arms and legs, as they tend to fall apart when dry. Allow the children

plenty of time to experiment with the shapes and to describe what is happening as they manipulate the clay. These clay figures can be left to dry and painted, if the children wish.

Evaluation/Looking and Responding:

This will be happening as the children work. The children can then take turns describing what they have done and question each other about their figures. Encourage the children to look at and respond to the work of Antony Gormley, particularly his work *Field for the British Isles*. Can they describe how he might have made all the clay figures that make up the piece? They could also be shown work by Auguste Rodin, 'Balzac' and 'The Burghers of Calais'.

Extension Activities:

The children could pull the shapes of characters from stories and books from the clay.

ICT Possibilities:

http://www.handsoncrafts.org/studio_frame.htm

This is an interactive site which allows the children to create a face jug online. (You need Shockwave on your computer.)

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. Leaving containers of water on the tables in Infant Classes can lead to rivers of clay flowing in all directions!

Relevant Artists:

Antony Gormley
Auguste Rodin

Relevant Websites:

Field for the British Isles
http://www.antonygormley.com/full_list/280x1_field_for_british.htm

Antony Gormley's official website
<http://www.antonygormley.com>

Rodin Museum in Paris
<http://www.musee-rodin.fr/>

Scoilnet, which is a portal to lots of sites useful in the classroom
<http://www.scoilnet.ie>