

Abstraction > Issaquah Schools Foundation

 isfdn.org/abstraction-reference-materials



Abstraction is a huge word that can mean any number of different things. Abstraction, for the purposes of teaching elementary students, is used to talk about art that is based upon a recognizable object which has been simplified to reveal some underlying form or basic characteristic. Sometimes all of the recognizable attributes of the object will be removed.

Abstract artists can use anything for a subject -- a person, an object, a feeling or an idea. Sometimes we think of Abstraction as a modern idea, but Abstraction has been around for a long time. Many ancient and medieval works of art are abstracted from real objects.

Abstraction came back into vogue, as Abstract Expressionism, in the early part of the 20th century due to the invention and popularity of photography. As photographers became the primary portrait makers (a job previously held by painters) artists were freed and inspired to create work that didn't look like something specific. Sometimes we can recognize something in the work of art; other times, we can't. With abstraction, it is not important.

Look at the slides and talk about what (if anything) the artist has used for a subject. Ask what they like best about a work of art (the color, the shape, the idea, etc.) What does the artwork make them think about?

Teaching note: Many of the pictures below are not from the "Abstract Expressionism" movement – some are from Dadaism, or Surrealism, etc. For the purpose of teaching elementary students, this reference material covers all sorts of non-realistic modern movements, all of which manipulate the image and for the sake of simplicity we are calling them Abstract.

Sample Projects:

- [Mondrian's Primary Colors](#) (Kindergarten) art lesson.
- [Monochromatic Abstract Painting](#) (4th Grade) art lesson.
- Make Jackson Pollock rip-offs. Make sure there is a lot of space and a lot of paint!! The subject of this abstraction is the paint and color itself!

- Do a cubist portrait. Take a picture of each child and have them cut it apart and rearrange it in an abstract manner.
- Make marble paintings. Dip marbles in paint then roll them around on a piece of paper.
- Have each student bring two similar magazine pictures (like two similar-sized faces). Cut each to the exact same size and cut in strips with a paper cutter (one horizontal and one vertical) and then weave together.

Examples of Abstract Art:

Calvin & Hobbes



Agbatanal II, Frank Stella (American), 1968.
Color and shape as subject.

Harlequin Carnival, Miro, 1924. Creates surreal mood and event by using simple lines and colors.

Solid Sculpture, Horstsobetta, 1977. Pure form and exploration of the material.



Composition 238 Bright Circles, Kandinsky, 1921. Color and shape as subject.



Red Model, Magritte, 1932. Mixing ideas -- surreal

Seated Woman, Picasso, 1909. Looking with a new perspective.

Convergence, Jackson Pollock, 1952. Color and paint as subject.

Blue Monochrome, Yves Klein, 1961. Ultimate Abstraction
– color only as subject, design, concept, etc.



