**Expressive Drawing for Critical Thinking: Teaching Philosophy in the Visual Arts**

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This lesson can be adapted for any age group and skill level and can be used as either a one-off or an introduction into a larger unit of work.

Consider your **learning outcomes**, and then develop activity tools beforehand – **create a visual aid** that you introduce at the outset of the lesson;

1. If it’s a **group-work focus**

* Develop a set of rules to apply, i.e. open, respectful communication, inclusive participation, active listening, negotiating/considering all task inputs and outcomes

1. If it’s **developing arts’ language/critical language**
   * Create a glossary of words on which you wish to focus, i.e. context, intensity, emphasis etc.
2. It may be a focus on **the elements of art (example attached)**
   * Create a glossary of the elements and some words that might be used to express the nature of the elements in use, i.e. tone (dark, light), colour (complimentary, harmonious) etc.

Learning Outcomes

* This lesson comprises a formative mark-making exercise undertaken in groups that promotes the development of personal cognitive links between emotion and visual language and also self-awareness about these relationships.
* This exercise aids in the development of a personalised visual language, encouraging students to start to develop critical language to use to think about composition and expression in visual art.

Inquiry Skills

* By undertaking this exercise as a group activity students are freed from the fear of making a mistake of verisimilitude (accuracy) and the tyranny of the blank page.
* The expressionistic nature of this exercise also allows for students to develop personal confidence in their artistic capacities.
* This structured group work allows for creative conversations to take place, students to test their ideas with one another before sharing them with the whole class and risk taking in a more anonymous setting.

Social Skills

# Stimulus

Within the structure of the activity students develop their own **stimulus material**. This will then be used to facilitate philosophical learning. Students do this because Expressionism needs to be drawn from personal experience and also there can be a tendency for students to imitate a visual stimulus – by asking students to develop their own stimuli creativity is only bound by their personal limitations rather than external expectations.

# Materials

I cannot overstress how important **good quality materials** are. Great paper with a satisfying tooth (the bite of the texture of the surface) looks and feels better to use. It will give a professionalism to the work that improves the confidence of the students. I tear up roughly 20cm x 20cm pieces of 300gsm rag and give students a choice of black markers, charcoal, compressed coal, graphite pencils, erasers and rags for rubbing. *Please don’t use printer paper for drawing!*

* Hand out a piece of (**GOOD QUALITY**) paper to every student
* Provide a range of media (charcoal, pens, markers, pencils)
* Allocate a feeling to each group secretly so that other groups don’t know what the others are doing (on pieces of paper),
  + Joy,
  + Confusion (for those students that might struggle with the task),
  + Anger,
  + Peace,
  + Love,
  + Loneliness,
  + Fury
* More intense emotions so that the students can isolate links more clearly
* 10/15 mins – circulating to support the various groups

Lesson Activity 1

* *Working in groups you will each create a drawing that expresses a feeling*
* *I will allocate a feeling to each group that you will draw/evoke with your materials – please keep your group's ‘feeling’ a secret from one another*
* *You* ***can’t*** *draw an actual thing, a pattern, or use text, or emoticons – you* ***can*** *use shapes, lines, textures etc. to communicate the feeling.*
* Model the process talking out load to myself.... *if my feeling was Happiness I would ask myself... what does happiness feel like... it's wide and warm and soft etc. Or I might draw shapes that make me feel happy – or that I think look happy to others, or make a rubbing of a surface texture that I like – I won’t do a smiley face or anything obvious*
* *Are there any questions about that?*
* *When you have each come up with the drawing you need to put all the drawings in your group together to make a single composition*
* *You will need to talk to each other and work out how the pieces fit together to make an overall composition*
* *You will have about 10 mins to work together to create your drawings and group compositions and then come back and share them with everyone*

Lesson Instructions

# Presentations and Reflections

* Introduce the lesson visual aid tool (see attached) – encourage students to add their own words to the tool
* Use either live feed projection/ or a presentation area and have each group take turns presenting their work (take a still of each composition)
* By standing as a group all participants support one another but become accustomed to the arts’ practice of *defending their work*.
* Ask the class if they can guess what the emotion is that is being conveyed*, why do they think that? Can you explain why you think that is?* *What parts of the drawing give a clue to the emotion?*
* Model the language and justification if they miss obvious things or appear to be struggling with the activity, i.e. *I get a sense of isolation when I see this dark point all on its own in the corner, was that a deliberate choice? Wow, there are holes in the paper and these sharp jagged marks give me a real feeling for the anger used to make these marks.*
* Encourage the class to use the glossary words etc.
* Invite the groups to speak about what they have done using the set words/ visual aids
* Ask the groups
  + *Did you discuss what you were going to do as a group first?*
  + *Did you work as individuals and then bring the work together afterwards?*
  + *What is it about your drawing that you think is most successful?*
  + *What might you change given more time*
  + *Does the feeling of the composition change if a move some of the drawings around? (*shift 1 piece*) How does that make us feel about the work?*

Lesson Activity 2

Depending of the nature of the lesson (starter or stand-alone);

* **Group debrief:** You can lead a centralised class discussion reflecting on the overall activity (junior/middle years)
  + *How did people feel about making art together?*
  + *Was it easier/harder/different/fun?*
* **Personal debrief:** Spend time documenting their creative thinking process (senior years)
  + *How did you feel about the process?*
  + *Where you surprised by the outcomes?*
  + *Identify elements of your work you would like to explore further*
* Introduce students to a unit of work that is built on the starter drawing or the starter process. Examples of expressionist art would be introduced in the *next* lesson for discussion and analysis (senior years)

Lesson Close

### **Form and Shape Words**

* 2D, flat, abstracted, simplified, stylized.
* 3D, realistic, natural, sense of depth and space
* Sharp, detailed.
* Blurred, obscured, overlapping, indistinct.
* Distorted, exaggerated, geometric.
* Linear, long, narrow.
* Hard-edged, soft-edged.

### **Tone Words**

* Dark, light, mid (middle).
* Flat, uniform, unvarying, smooth, plain.
* Varied, broken.
* Constant
* It changes, Graduated.
* Contrasting

### **Composition (Layout) Words**

* Arrangement, layout, structure, position
* Landscape format, portrait format, square format, circular, triangular
* Horizontal, vertical, diagonal, angled.
* Foreground, background, middle ground.
* Centred, asymmetrical, symmetrical. Balanced, unbalanced, lopsided.
* Overlapping, cluttered, chaotic. Separate, spacious, empty.
* Free, flowing, fragmented
* Formal, rigid, upright, confined.
* Negative space, positive space.

### **Texture Words**

* Flat, polished, smooth
* Raised, rough, coarse
* Cut, incised, pitted, scratched, uneven
* Hairy, sticky
* Soft, hard
* Shiny, glossy, reflective. Semi-gloss, satin, silk, frosted, matte
* Marks made with a knife, brush

### **Mark Making Words**

* Visible, impasto, blended, smooth
* Thick, thin, Bold, timid, Heavy, light. Edgy, smooth.
* Glazes, washes, scumbling, dry brush, stippling, hatching, splattered.
* Layered, flat.
* Precise, refined, regular, straight, systematic. Quick, sketchy, uneven, irregular, vigorous.
* Regularity, patterned

### **Mood or Atmosphere Words**

* Calm, content, peaceful, relaxed, tranquil.
* Cheerful, happy, joyful, romantic.
* Depressed, gloomy, miserable, sad, sombre, tearful, unhappy.
* Aggressive, angry, chilling, dark, distressing, frightening, violent.
* Energetic, exciting, stimulating, thought-provoking.
* Boring, dull, lifeless, insipid.

(Source: About Home, *Art Words List*, http://painting.about.com/od/art-critique/tp/art-words-list.htm

Words for Different Tones

|  |  |  |
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| Darkest |  | Black, inky, pitch-black, jet, stark, intense, dramatic, midnight, coal |
|  |  | Dark, heavy, brooding, gunmetal, slate, leaden, deep |
|  |  | Strong, charcoal, powerful, moody, glum, gloomy |
|  |  | Grey, shadowy, drab, depressing, melancholy, sad |
|  |  | Mid, dove, murky, overcast, dull, bleak, twilight |
|  |  | Silvery, pallid, cloud-like |
|  |  | Pale, indistinct, dull, muted, soft, gentle, pearly, foggy |
| Lightest |  | colourless, light, bright, vivid, frosty, ivory, transparent |