Portraying Nature
Being Awake, Aware, & Alive

Deliberate art making, exploring elements of nature inspired by the writing of Henry David Thoreau.

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“To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake...We must learn to reawaken and to keep ourselves awake...”

“Life in us is like the water in a river.”

Lesson One - Paper Marbling - Water
Objective:
Students will create marble paper covers for their sketchbooks by exploring and examining the element of water and acrylic paint.

Essential Questions:
What is water? How can we describe water using our senses?
What skills do we need to become keen observers of nature?
What do you notice about water?
What do you notice about the paint in the water?
What do you notice about how the paper absorbed the paint from the water?

Materials:
Shallow pan for water
Water + Corn starch (prepare ahead of time by dissolving in hot water)
Acrylic Paint
Pencils
Watercolor Paper or heavy bodied papers

Paintbrush or toothpick for swirling
Sketchbook & various drawing tools i.e. pencil, crayon, marker

Procedures:
Begin with the quote from Henry David Thoreau. Continue with a conversation about water and have students describe water. List words that come to mind about water on the board. Have students sketch a picture of water in their sketchbook before beginning the marbling art lesson. In a shallow pan pour water and cornstarch mixture. Have students choose from a variety of acrylic paints and begin pouring paint into tray of water, one color at a time. Have students write down observations or do quick sketches in their sketchbooks as they observe the paint in the water. Have students continue to add acrylic paint colors and then use a paintbrush handle or toothpick to swirl colors together. Gently lay paper onto the surface of the water and gently peel the paper away from the surface of the water. Have students record their reactions to this in their sketchbooks. At the end of the process have students reflect on what they saw and how water played a role in their art making process. Students will let the marbled paper dry and then attach it to the front of the sketchbooks.

Assessment:
Teacher observation.
Individual question and answer session with teacher about sketchbook entries.
Student self-assessment and reflection in sketchbook answering one or more of the essential questions.
“Nature has taken more care than the fondest parent for the education and refinement of her children. Consider the silent influence which flowers exert, no less upon the ditcher in the meadow than the lady in the bower. When I walk in the woods, I am reminded that a wise purveyor has been there before me; my most delicate experience typified here...”

**Lesson Two - Printmaking - Walking Outside in Nature**

**Objective:**
Students will become observers of nature by taking a walk outside and sketching what they see in nature. They will use their sketches to create a linoleum cut print.

**Essential Questions:**
- What is nature?
- What skills do we need to become keen observers of nature?
- What distracts you from being awake?
- When we’re always thinking about things that happened yesterday or things that might happen tomorrow, how can we stop to notice what’s around us right now?

**Materials:**
- Sketchbook
- Case to hold drawing materials: Pencil, Marker, Colored Pencil, Eraser
- Linoleum Printmaking Block
- Lino cutting tool
- Printmaking Paper
- Marker

**Procedures:**
Begin with the quote from Henry David Thoreau. Continue with a discussion about walking outside. Create a list of words that come to mind when students think about walking outside or when they think about the word nature. Give students 10-15 minutes to sketch in their sketchbooks words and images that come to mind. Students will take a walk around the outside, exploring the nature around them. Students will be asked to draw at least three or more things they observe from the nature. Students may, if they choose, write about what they are observing about nature. Students will choose one sketch to create a linoleum cut (rubber stamp) for printmaking. Students will transfer their chosen image from their sketchbook to the linoleum. Students can do this by drawing with pencil directly on the linoleum and use a cutting tool to carve out the lines of the linoleum. Students will print their image by coloring over the linoleum with marker and then placing paper on top and rubbing carefully. Once they peel back the paper, their image should be transferred. Have students title and sign each print.

**Assessment:**
- Teacher observation.
- Individual question and answer session with teacher about sketchbook entries.
- Student self-assessment and reflection in sketchbook answering one or more of the essential questions.

Linoleum Prints
“Talk of mysteries!—Think of our life in nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?”

“The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it.—”

Lesson Three - Found Object Mobile - Wind

Objective:
Students will think about the wind and how they experience that element. Students will create a mobile of objects that they find outside, thinking about how the wind will affect the objects that hang from their mobile. Students will sketch their mobile and the wind.

Essential Questions:
What is wind? How do we experience wind or air?
What skills do we need to become keen observers of nature?
What would happen if we weren’t always in such a hurry?
What person in your life is most “awake” and how would you describe his or her behavior?

Materials:
Sketchbook
Case to hold drawing materials: pencil, marker, colored pencil, eraser
5 objects found outside in nature; rocks, leaves, sticks, feathers etc.
String, large stick and scissors for construction of mobile.

Procedures:
Begin with the quote from Henry David Thoreau. Continue with a discussion about wind. Have students give words that come to mind when they think about wind. Give students 10-15 minutes to work in their sketchbook, drawing and writing about wind. After this the teacher will share some ideas for building a mobile; including items to look for on our walk outside, how to hang those items i.e. in a pattern, or sporadic. This will enable students to brainstorm some ideas. Students will then take a walk around outside, exploring and focusing on the wind or air. Students will be asked to draw at least two or more things that come to mind when they listen and feel the wind or air. Students may also write about what they are observing about the wind or air. Students will collect items (at least 5) that they would like to use to create a mobile. Students must collect a large stick to hang their items from. Once sketches are complete and all students have collected their objects, they can begin constructing their mobiles outside. Students will be given string and scissors and they must figure out how to construct their mobile in an interesting way. Students will then be asked to sketch a picture of their completed mobile and share with the class their completed mobile, telling their classmates what items they chose and why and how their mobile is affected by the wind.

Assessment:
Teacher observation.
Student self-assessment and reflection in sketchbook answering one or more of the essential questions.
Completed Mobile.
Student presentation of mobile to class.