

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: EXPRESSING MOOD IN ART

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How do artists create portraits that capture a mood?
GRADES	3–6
TIME	One class period
ART CONCEPTS	Mood, color, foreground, background, composition, portraiture, wax resist
MATERIALS	Pencils, oil pastel, watercolors, brushes, watercolor paper, cups, paper towels
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>German artists of the Weimar Republic favored portraiture. Their portraits tend to be unsentimental and un-idealized, though their depictions frequently departed from what their subjects looked like in real life. Instead they used portraiture to say something about their subject and communicate a mood.</p> <p>Analyze Georg Schrimpf's <i>Child Portrait</i> as compared to Mary Cassatt's <i>Mother About to Wash Her Sleepy Child</i>. What do you see? What questions do you have about these paintings?</p> <p>Compare the overall feeling or mood of each artwork.</p> <p>Discuss differences in color, brush strokes (soft in the Cassatt vs. hard brushstrokes in the Schrimpf), expressions, setting, and composition. The two paintings have very similar arrangements, but each evokes a very different feeling. What do you see that might contribute to these feelings?</p> <p>Discuss different dark and light moods that can be expressed by a work of art. Ask students to demonstrate a sad face, a frustrated face, an anxious face.</p> <p>Make a list on the board. Describe how these moods can be communicated in art through colors, setting, style, and composition.</p>
MAKING ART	<p>Create a “moody” portrait using watercolor and wax resist.</p> <p>Write a dark or a light mood (for instance, sad, cold, lonely, or anxious, or happy, warm, or relaxed) on the back of your paper and then choose a partner. Ask your partner what mood they chose, and then, keeping that mood in mind, quickly draw him or her in light-colored oil pastel on his or her paper. Then have your partner do the same for you.</p> <p>Exaggerate the mood by exaggerating the drawing. Press hard with your oil pastel to make the face feel more stressed or anxious, or make soft, wispy lines for a more relaxed portrait.</p> <p>Remember, this is not a realistic drawing. Use simple lines and large shapes. No filling in details! Make sure the portrait fills the page from top to bottom.</p>

Decide what your background will be and how it will help create a mood in your drawing: bedroom, forest, city street? Outline the background in oil pastel.

When you're finished with your drawing, you can begin filling it in with watercolors. Start by painting the background and then fill in the face. Use darker colors for a dark mood, or brighter colors for a happier mood. Use less water for darker colors or more water for lighter colors.

REFLECTION

Share your art and have other students guess the mood depicted. What feeling do they get from your artwork?

CURRICULUM CONNECTION

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING

3–6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners.

6.4 Present claims and findings, using pertinent descriptions and details.

CCSS.READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE

6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text (artwork) and how it is conveyed through particular details.