

imag'nation

LESSON PLANS

HELEN FRANKENTHALER: THREE POSTERS



Solar Imp

LINCOLN CENTER SALUTES
NEW YORK CITY BALLET



Mary, Mary

THE SAMUEL B. & DAVID ROSE BUILDING
LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



Aerie

MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADES VISUAL ARTS STUDY

Lincoln Center | **institute**
Developing Skills of Imagination, Creativity, and Innovation

Dear Educator:

The design and content of these Imagination Lesson Plans represent LCI's inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. This approach develops in the learner the Capacities for Imaginative Learning*, defined outcomes for your students' work that align with the national Common Core Standards. The Capacities and Common Core Standards listed at the beginning of each Lesson Plan are the ones addressed in the plan.

Imagination Lesson Plans are initially rooted in the study of works of art and employ four main concepts: art making, questioning, reflection, and contextual information and research. Each is based on a specific line of inquiry, which is a guiding question that gives the Lesson Plan its framework. Plans were developed for Elementary, Middle, and High School levels, and can easily be adapted for the specific grade you teach. They are intended for you to use as written or modified—used as a springboard for new ideas and further development, depending on your interest and curricular goals. You can complete the whole Lesson Plan in the course of several days, or spread it out over a number of weeks. As well, depending on the duration of your classroom period, any one lesson may be completed within a period or carried over to another day.

However you choose to adapt the lessons to your needs, we encourage you to conduct experiential lessons before you engage your students with the work of art; ask open-ended questions to guide students' noticings throughout the Lesson Plan; and teach further experiential lessons after you have viewed the work of art—the goal of these post-viewing lessons is to lead students to a synthesis that helps them acquire a deeper understanding. The Imagination Lesson Plans are designed to develop imaginative thinking abilities and creative actions that lead to innovative results for all students, and prepare students for greater in-depth learning in all subject areas.

We are eager to support imaginative learning in your classroom, and participate with you and your students in the joy of learning.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Noppe-Brandon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Scott Noppe-Brandon
Executive Director

**Please refer to the PDF of the Capacities that accompanies this lesson plan.*

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THESE LESSONS

NOTE: These connections to the Common Core Standards are based on the general grades 6–12 Standards. Identify the grade-specific Standard that is appropriate for your class that also relates to the general Standard numbers below.

Reading Standards for Literature

Key Ideas and Detail

Standard 2

Standard 3

Craft and Structure

Standard 4

Standard 6

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Standard 7

Standard 9

Writing Standards

Text Types and Purposes

Standard 2

Standard 3

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Standard 9

Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration

Standard 1

Standard 2

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

Standard 4

Standard 5

CAPACITIES FOR IMAGINATIVE LEARNING ADDRESSED IN THESE LESSONS*

Noticing Deeply
Questioning
Making Connections
Embodying
Identifying Patterns
Living with Ambiguity
Creating Meaning
Reflecting/Assessing

*For the definitions of the Capacities, refer to the PDF that accompanies this lesson plan.

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Students will:

- Learn to work collaboratively.
- Deepen their skills of observation, analysis, and description.
- Develop a descriptive vocabulary and practice using it both verbally and in writing.
- Deepen their understanding of symmetrical and organic or non-symmetrical shapes and their relationships and connections to everyday life.
- Gain insight into the idea of change occurring through sequence.
- Enhance their understanding of concepts found in other subject areas by connecting them to concepts that they will explore during the study of the three Frankenthaler paintings.
- Understand that mood and movement can be interpreted from visual abstraction.

PREPARING FOR FRANKENTHALER POSTERS LESSONS

SUPPLIES AND CONTEXTUAL MATERIALS

NOTE: Watercolor paint or craypas, wide markers or water-soluble crayons, can be substituted for colored pencils.

Lesson One

Supplies:

A 2'-long piece of string connected at its ends (1 for each student)

Images from magazines and newspapers that represent types of shapes (advertisements are good for this)

8.5 x 11 unlined white paper (2 for each student)

Pencils (1 for each student)

Drawing tools—including rulers, compasses, triangles, templates, etc. (a selection shared among students)

Contextual Materials:

From *Foundations of Art and Design* by Lois Fichner Rathus, chapter titled *Types of Shapes*:

“Organic shapes are derived from those found in nature—the world of living things. Because straight lines are somewhat of a rarity in nature, organic shapes tend to have a curvilinear quality that suggests growth and movement.”

—Fichner-Rathus, Lois. *Foundations of Art and Design*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008.

Lesson Two

Supplies:

Colored pencils (a selection for each student)

8.5 x 11 unlined white paper (1 for each student)

Lesson Three

Contextual Materials:

Helen Frankenthaler—born 1928

Mary, Mary—1990

Aerie—2009

Solar Imp—2001

Lesson Four

Supplies:

- Colored pencils (a selection for each student)
- 8.5 x 11 unlined white paper (1 for each student)
- Index cards (1 for each student)

Lesson Five

Contextual Materials:

NOTE: Teachers may want to have websites set up on computers, if available.

Two quotes by Frankenthaler about abstraction:

“My paintings are full of climates, abstract climates. And not nature per se but a feeling.”

“It isn’t the image that works for me, it is that they are great abstract paintings. I leave it (image) out of my pictures more and more as I become increasingly involved with colors and shapes. But it is still there.”

Materials on Artist, Process, Genre — these are suggestions; you do not have to use the complete list

Websites:

<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-frankenthaler-helen.htm>

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,957902,00.html>

<http://www.observer.com/node/40117>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helen_Frankenthaler

<http://www.findingdulcinea.com/features/profiles/f/helen-frankenthaler.html>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PsoaxUcwp3s>

<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/frankenthaler-helen>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstract_expressionism (Wikipedia entry on abstract expressionism)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_field_painting (Wikipedia entry on color field)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Post-painterly_abstraction (Wikipedia entry on post-painterly abstraction)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyrical_abstraction (Wikipedia entry on lyrical abstraction)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wash_%28painting%29 (Wikipedia entry on wash painting)

<http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,839975,00.html#> (1969 Time Magazine review)

http://www.askart.com/AskART/artists/search/Search_Repeat.aspx?searchtype=IMAGES&artist=30037 (Frankenthaler images on askart.com)

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122609409221009463.html> (2008 Wall Street Journal article about Frankenthaler’s technique)

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/F/frankenthaler.html> (Frankenthaler bio on artchive.com)

Books:

Action Painting: Jackson Pollock. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008. Purchase. Find in a library.

Barnes, Rachel. *Abstract Expressionists*. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2002. Purchase. Find in a library.

D'Arcy, Hughes A, and Hebe Vernon-Morris. *The Printmaking Bible: The Complete Guide to Materials and Techniques*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2008. Purchase. Find in a library.

Frankenthaler, Helen, and Karen Wilkin. *Frankenthaler at Eighty: Six Decades*. New York, N.Y: Knoedler & Co, 2008. Purchase. Find in a library.

Greenberg, Jan. *Action Jackson*. Diane Pub Co, 2005. Purchase. Find in a library.

Herskovic, Marika. *American Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s: An Illustrated Survey : with Artists' Statements, Artwork and Biographies*. New York: New York School Press, 2003. Purchase. Find in a library.

Hess, Barbara, Uta Grosenick, and Michael Scuffil. *Abstract Expressionism*. Hong Kong: Taschen, 2009. Purchase. Find in a library.

The History of Printmaking: Prehistoric Prints, Calligraphy, Engraving, Etching, Posters, and Comic Strips. New York: Scholastic, 1996. Purchase. Find in a library.

McDarrah, Fred W, and S McDarrah. *The Artist's World in Pictures: The Photo Classic That Documents the New York School Action Painters*. New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1988. Purchase. Find in a library.

Rose, Barbara. *Frankenthaler*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1972. Purchase. Find in a library.

Spilsbury, Richard. *Abstract Expressionism*. Chicago, IL: Heinemann Library, 2009. Purchase. Find in a library.

The work of art, Helen Frankenthaler: Three Posters, and contextual materials are available on the LCI website. Contextual materials include web and database links. Visit www.lcinstitute.org and log in with your user ID and password (please contact us if you have forgotten your user ID or password).

NOTES TO TEACHERS

Wall Journaling

We encourage you to write on large paper posted on walls (vs. on a less permanent black board or smart board) when documenting during your study of the work of art. This way, wall journaling can be brought forward and referenced in subsequent lessons throughout the plan. As well, students can reflect on their past experiences, responses, connections, and questions as they enter each new experience.

NOTE: some lessons may specifically reference past wall journaling.

Portfolios and Displayed Student Work

We recommend that all student-generated art, writing, and other evidence of their process and learning be posted in the classroom throughout the duration of the plan—or, if there is a lack of space in the classroom, that student work be saved in a portfolio or container (large folder or binder) to reflect on during the plan, and even after the Imagination Lesson Plan is completed, if you like. As with wall journaling, this is another way for students to reflect on their experiences and learning.

NOTE: Lessons may revisit prior art making. The Celebration of Student Work lesson at the end of the plan, can involve a reflection on all wall journaling and student-generated materials as a way of honoring student work and reflecting on the learning and connection making.

What You Will Need to View the Posters

For each Frankenthaler Imagination Lesson Plan (ILP), you will receive:

- A securely packed, heavy-duty mailing cylinder containing the three high-quality posters by Helen Frankenthaler (*Mary, Mary*; *Aerie*; and *Solar Imp*).
- One box of twelve (12) display clips and one box of twenty (20) push pins (mailed separately from the posters).

For detailed instructions regarding the use of display clips and push-pins, please see a second attachment to the email in which you received this ILP.

Poster Display

- **Begin by flattening the posters.**
- **It is recommended that you have the posters professionally framed.** Hang them in a place with sufficient indirect light to view the poster clearly without glare.
- **If professional framing is not available, a bulletin board with a minimum depth of 1/2 inch will be needed.** The display clips and push pins provided with the ILP will allow you to display the posters on a bulletin board in a classroom or hallway setting without damage to the posters. The bulletin board needs to be thick enough to allow for the push pins to enter it deeply enough to hold and secure the weight. Most bulletin boards will be just fine for this purpose; however, the slim types that are 1/8" to 1/4" narrow strips will not be sufficient as the point of the push pins is 1/2" long.

Please remove all other papers and objects from the bulletin board. The poster(s) should be the only thing hanging on the bulletin board.

- **Once the posters are ready, easels are another option for displaying them.**

THE THREE FRANKENTHALER POSTERS LESSONS

Line of Inquiry*: How does Helen Frankenthaler, in her abstract paintings *Mary, Mary, Space Imp*, and *Aerie*, use both symmetrical and organic shapes, as well as color, to suggest movement and mood?

* A line of inquiry is an open, yet focused question that incorporates elements and concepts found in a specific work of art, and is related to the concerns of students and teachers. It invites questioning, guides our exploration throughout, and serves as the framework for constructing experiential lessons.

LESSON ONE: Symmetrical and Organic Shapes: Typing and Creating a Sequence of Change

Activity #1: Symmetrical and Organic Shapes

Ask students to look in their backpacks for objects with interesting shapes, and to choose one object.

In groups of 4, students list the names for the shapes of the objects each chose on the piece of paper.

Ask groups the following, and capture responses on the wall. Note both the name of the shape and a list of descriptive words for each different shape.

- What are the names of the shapes you chose?
- How would you describe the shapes?

Additionally, ask and document responses on a new list(s):

- Are any of these shapes symmetrical?
- What makes a shape symmetrical? Describe.
- When is a shape not symmetrical?
- Where do we see non-symmetrical shapes in our everyday lives?
- Are there any shapes in nature that are perfectly symmetrical? Non-symmetrical?
- Were any of the shapes from your backpacks non-symmetrical?
- What are some different words you would use to describe shapes that are not symmetrical?

Introduce the term “organic shapes” and lead a discussion about the meaning of the word “organic.” Ask students for associations and definitions.

Ask:

- Why might the word “organic” be used to describe non-symmetrical shapes?

- In what ways might an organic shape be different from a non-symmetrical shape?

This discussion can lead to the definition below (from *Foundations of Art and Design*, by Lois Fichner Rathus, chapter titled *Types of Shapes*):

“Organic shapes are derived from those found in nature—the world of living things. Because straight lines are somewhat of a rarity in nature, organic shapes tend to have a curvilinear quality that suggests growth and movement.”

—Fichner-Rathus, Lois. *Foundations of Art and Design*. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008.

Activity #2: What Happens as a Shape Changes from Symmetrical to Organic and Back Again?

Each student is given a long piece of string connected at its ends.

Working individually, students choose a shape from their group’s list, and form its outline on a flat surface using the string.

Then, students are asked to experiment changing the string from a symmetrical to non-symmetrical shape and vice versa.

In pairs, students watch each other change their shapes from one to the next and are asked to notice 1 or 2 things about their partners changing shapes to share with the class.

Ask whole class:

- What are one or two things you noticed about the way the shape changed?
- What did your partner do to change the shape?

Activity #3: “Typing” Shapes

Ask a student to draw on chart paper on the wall, the symmetrical shape they just made with their string, and next to it draw the same *type* of shape, but non-symmetrical (or “organic”).

Ask the class:

- What makes these the same *type* of shape?
- What do these two shapes have in common?

Each student is given a selection of magazine, newspaper or other pre-selected images.

In pairs: Students find examples of a shape that is symmetrical and the same type of shape that is non-symmetrical (that is, organic. For instance, the wheel of a car and a tomato.)

Ask the whole class to share back:

- How are your two shapes the same, how are they different?

- What would have to happen for one of your shapes to change into the other?
- Can you describe what that change process might look like?

Activity #4: Creating a Sequence of Change Between 2 Shapes of a Type

Each student is given 2 pieces of 8.5 x 11 unlined white paper, a pencil, and a selection of drawing tools (including rulers, compasses, templates, etc.).

Individually: Students draw a brand new symmetrical shape on one piece of paper and a type of the same shape which is more organic in form on another piece of paper.

Ask the class:

- If your two drawings represented the beginning (the symmetrical shape) and end (the organic shape) of a sequence of change, what would 2 stages of change in between look like?

Students proceed to create 2 drawings that represent what they imagine to be the process of change between their first and last drawings.

Activity #5: Reflecting on Our Sequences

Students are asked to lay their drawing sequences out on their desks and to notice deeply their own work.

Ask the class:

- What do you notice?
- What shapes do you see?
- In what ways does the first shape change from the beginning of your sequence to the end? Describe.

Students are asked to individually physically embody moving through their sequence from beginning to end.

Ask the class:

- What new things do you notice about your sequence as a result of creating it through movement?

Looking at individual embodied sequences.

Ask the class:

- What do we notice?
- What shapes do we see?
- How do they change? Describe this sequence's movement.
- What type of feeling does it convey?
- What might this sequence represent? What does it remind you of?

- What connections are you making to anything you have studied in other subject areas?
- If you were to ask a question of this thing, what might it be? (Encourage students to pose questions rather than make statements.)

LESSON TWO: Exploring the Relationships Between Color, Shape and Mood

Activity #1: Color and Color Mixing

Each student is given a selection of colored pencils and a piece of 8.5 x 11 unlined white paper.

Ask students the following question to prompt individual exploration:

- What are different ways you can mix colors?

Ask students to form groups of 4 to share their discoveries about color mixing, and ask for some of these discoveries to be shared aloud with the whole class.

Activity #2: Making Choices about Color Inspired by a Shape

Students select one of their sequence shapes from Lesson One and silently consider the following questions:

- How would you like to use or mix color to re-create that shape?
- In what ways does your shape inspire these choices?

Whole class discussion: Students share their thoughts on the above questions.

Students work on applying color to their shapes.

Activity #3: Reflecting on our drawings

All color drawings are posted on the walls: Ask students to silently observe the drawings and consider the following:

- What is one question that occurs to you about color or shape as you observe your classmates' drawings?

Ask students to take their seats and write on the following:

- a) The question you just had about color or shape as you looked at the drawings
- b) One thing you discovered about color today
- c) One question you have about color and mixing color

Ask students to share some of their responses aloud with the whole class.

LESSON THREE: Viewing The Works Of Art: The Three Frankenthaler Posters

Viewing the Works of Art

NOTES:

Looking at each Frankenthaler painting individually, ask various questions from the choices below. Additionally, after viewing the first painting, you can compare and contrast the paintings. For example: What are some things we are seeing in this painting that we did not see in the last? How does the use of color or shape differ?

Activity #2 can be used once at any of the works.

Activity #1: What do you notice?

Ask the whole class:

- What do you notice about this painting?
- How would you describe this painting?
- What colors do you see? Describe.
- Where in the painting do you think the artist may have mixed colors to achieve the color you see? What makes you say that?
- Where do you see colors combined or overlapping?
- What are some shapes that you see? Describe.
- Where do you see symmetrical shapes? Organic shapes?
- Where would you identify a sequence of a shape changing from one shape to another?
- How would you describe its movement? Use your arms to show what that movement looks like. What do we notice about this arm movement?
- Where else do you see movement in this painting?
- What choices did the artist make to show movement in the painting?
- Do you notice any patterns in this painting? Are there any patterns that are unusual or surprising—maybe a different way of thinking about “patterns?”

Ask students to reflect on all that has been said about shapes, color, sequences, movement and patterns, and ask:

- What kind of mood do you think the painting expresses?
- What do you imagine the painting is about?
- What would you title this painting? Why?

Share the following contextual information with students, regarding the artist’s name and date of birth, the titles of the paintings and the dates of their creation:

Helen Frankenthaler—born 1928

Mary, Mary—1990

Aerie—2009

Solar Imp—2001

Ask:

- How does knowing the titles add to your noticings of the works?
- What questions arise?

Activity #2: Writing About Mood

Ask students to individually:

- a) choose one of the paintings on which to focus
- b) write down 4 key descriptive words
- c) write down a mood or feeling they get from this work

Next, ask students to write a short paragraph about the painting and its mood they have identified that includes their 4 key descriptive words somewhere in their writing.

Ask a few students to share their writing in front of their chosen painting. After each reading, lead a brief discussion that encourages the class to reflect further on their own experience of the paintings. (These writings will be used in Lesson Four)

Activity #3: Posing Questions

Ask the class:

- Write down one question you are left with about these paintings?
(These questions will be used in Lesson Five.)

LESSON FOUR: Interpreting Mood from Descriptive Writing and Translating it Into Shape, Color and Visual “Movement”

NOTE: The Frankenthaler posters are again exhibited in the room.

Activity #1: Expressing Mood through Shape, Color, and Visual “Movement.”

Ask students to exchange with a partner and read each other’s Mood paragraphs (from Lesson Three).

Then, ask the whole class:

- What is the mood or feeling being written about?

Focusing attention on the Frankenthaler posters on the wall and reflecting on Lesson Three’s viewing, ask:

- What are some of the ways we interpreted mood by noticing how the artist used shape and color in her paintings?
- In what ways does her use of shape and color suggest movement?

Each student is given a selection of colored pencils and a piece of 8.5 x 11 unlined white paper.

Ask the following question to prompt the students' art making:

- How can you create a new drawing that expresses the mood of your partner's writing using the following 3 elements (written on the wall)?
 - Shape
 - Color
 - Movement

Students work on their mood drawings.

Activity #2: Reflecting on Mood Drawings

Ask each student to write the mood of their partner's paragraph on an index card, and then post their drawing on the wall with the index card underneath.

Lead a discussion with the entire class at different drawings:

- What relationship do you see between the mood on the card and the drawing?
- How did the artist (the student) use color and shape to express her or his mood?
- Where do we see movement in this drawing? What about the way the artist drew suggests movement to us?
- How do the artist's choices support her or his intended mood?
- What other mood(s) do you think the drawing expresses? Why?

LESSON FIVE: Contextual Information

The Frankenthaler posters are exhibited in the room.

Activity #1: Quote on Abstract Expressionism

Introduce one or both of the following quotes from Frankenthaler on abstraction in painting, and lead a discussion that reflects on the quote(s) in relationship to the paintings.

“My paintings are full of climates, abstract climates. And not nature per se but a feeling.”

“It isn't the image that works for me, it is that they are great abstract paintings. I leave it (image) out of my pictures more and more as I become increasingly involved with colors and shapes. But it is still there.”

Activity #2: Sharing Past Questions and Posing New Ones

While focusing attention on the Frankenthaler posters, ask each student to share the question he or she posed at the end of their first viewing of the works (Lesson Three).

After each student shares, lead a discussion based on the following question:

- What would you predict as an answer to the question you just shared, or how might you respond to your question based on your experiences with these works of art?

Ask students to write a new question they now have about the paintings, the artist, the genre, etc.

- What are you still curious about?

Activity #3: Contextual Research

Introduce selected contextual materials (you may wish to choose from Contextual Materials for Lesson Five, pages 5-6)

NOTE: You may also have web sites set up on computers in the room.

Students are asked to take notes on one or two things (pieces of information) that stand out to them or are of interest to them, to later share with the class.

Students share with the whole class what they learned from the research.

LESSON SIX: Celebration and Self-Assessment

The Frankenthaler posters are exhibited in the room.

NOTE: You may want to invite parents for this celebration and self-assessment. During this event, students can ask their parents “noticing” questions about the artwork, as well as speak to their own work and describe for the parents what they were exploring. Students can share contextual information they found in Lesson Five.

Celebration

Display all student art and wall documentation from the plan.

Lead a walk-through, and, at each area, have students speak about their memory of that moment and/or the different things learned, explored, and experienced.

Self-Assessment

Ask students to write three “What I learned...” statements and share them with the class.

Lead a discussion about the different things learned.



Helen Frankenthaler

Photo of Helen Frankenthaler by Marabeth Tyler-Cohen

Special thanks to Karen Davidson, Director of List Print and Poster at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, for all her help.