

Elk Grove Unified School District
Visual and Performing Arts Resources
Art

Grade 4: Lesson 3

Title: Positive and Negative Space

Standards Addressed

Artistic Perception

Processing, Analyzing, and Responding to Sensory Information Through the Language and Skills Unique to the Visual Arts

1.2 Describe how negative shapes and positive shapes are used in a chosen artwork.

Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts

2.6 Use the interaction between positive and negative space expressively in an artwork.

2.7 Use contrast (light and dark) expressively in an original work of art.

Time: 60 minutes

Floor Plan: Place students in groups of four for independent practice.

Materials Needed:

- 8 ½ x 11 or 9 x 12 white construction paper
- Markers/crayons
- Classroom objects (chair, desk, globe, vase of flowers) or seasonal objects (Christmas tree, cornucopia)
- Overheads:
 - #1 *Cups for Picasso*, by Jasper Johns
 - #2 *Cups for Picasso*, by Jasper Johns
(Both pieces have the same title, yet the use of positive and negative space is different.)
 - #3 *Portrait of a Young Woman*, by Jan Vermeer

Purpose:

The students will learn how artists use positive and negative spaces to add interest to their artwork. The students will reverse the positive and negative spaces to add interest to their own artwork.

Background:

The students have always drawn both positive and negative spaces. Their background or negative space has been filled in to make their artwork stand out. However, the students have been so accustomed to focusing on the positive space, that they will see things very differently with this lesson.

Key Questions:

- How do artists use space to give the illusion of depth and interest to a flat surface?
- How do artists create illusions using positive and negative space?

Vocabulary:

- * *Space*—element of art that refers to the area between, around, above, below, and within objects. It is the air around an object.
- * *Positive space*—the objects, shapes, or forms in art.
- * *Negative space*— the empty space that surrounds objects, shapes, and forms. When there is a large area of negative space in artwork, loneliness or freedom is expressed.
- * *Shape reversal*—when a shape or positive space starts out as one image and then can turn into negative space.

<u>Steps of the Lesson</u>	<u>Thoughts for the Teacher</u>
1 Set up purpose/goals The students will see the importance of negative space in art.	How are you making your purpose clear to the students? Through the use of overheads.
2 Engage students By using overheads, the students will clearly see negative and positive space.	How can I effectively get the students interested in the content of the lesson? Through the discussion of overheads.
3 Learning Sequence See actual lesson sequence below.	What are the BIG idea(s) of your presentation? How will students understand/experience the material that you present? The use of negative space adds interest to artwork. Artists never neglect negative space.
4 Assessment The students will create an image using shape reversal.	How will you allow your students to deepen their understanding of content presented? (Reflect, revise, retell, refine, practice) By deciding, analyzing, interpreting, and making decisions about their art piece with a partner.

Actual Lesson Sequence

1. Begin by placing one overhead of Jasper John's lithograph. Ask the students what they see. As students see both profiles and the cup, tell them that this artist used optical illusions to add interest to his art. He has arranged shapes and color in such a way to show more than one view of the same thing.
2. Show the next overhead. *How is this one different? What types of shapes do you see in both? Describe the area around each shape? How does he use the rainbow differently?* You may wish to switch back and forth between the two overheads to compare and contrast.
3. Show the students the overhead of Jan Vermeer's, *Portrait of a Young Woman*. Tell them this is very different from Johns' pieces. There is no optical illusion here and you are not seeing two different objects. But the two artists used the same thing to add interest to their art. They both used positive and negative space. Pointing at the girl, tell the students that positive space is the object. The young girl is the positive space. She is what your eye is drawn to.
4. Now point to the black background. The negative space is the empty space that is around objects, shapes, and forms. *Why did the artist use a black negative space for this painting? Was it to make the young girl stand out?*

5. Go back to one of John's pieces. Tell them the positive space is the vase. Ask students what colors are in the negative space? Point out that Johns made his negative space into an object as well. This is called shape reversal. It means the positive space starts off as one image and then turns into a negative space.
6. The students will now create an image using shape reversal. Tell them they will look at the object at the front of the room. They will look at an object much like Jasper Johns did because they will focus on the negative space rather than just the positive space. They will only color in the negative space or the area around the object. They will color in the area above, below, and around the object. This is opposite of what students usually do.
7. Model the project by taping a piece of white paper to the board. With a marker, crayon, or oil pastel, begin by filling in the negative space above the object. Fill in the negative space to the side of the object. Discuss your thinking and strategy with them as you go around the bends, lines, and curves of your object. Tell the students they may add shading by hatching, cross hatching, stippling, or shading if they have learned this in a previous lesson.
8. Pass out paper and markers or other medium. If using crayons, remove the paper around the crayon in order to shade in the negative space.

Closure:

When the students have completed their artwork, pair them up with a partner to discuss the following questions:

- a. Describe: Describe the positive shape in your drawing.
- b. Analyze: How is this different than how you usually draw?
- c. Interpret: You reversed the positive and negative shape. How did it affect your drawing?
- d. Decide: Do you like the way it turned out when you reversed the positive and negative spaces?