

Non-Art Teacher’s Art Teaching Tips: Helping students create visual impact using color in their artwork

Note: Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar Poster Contest Judges will be looking at: visual impact (use of color, contrast, and composition), creative concept, interesting expression of theme and/or unique subject, and how well any writing interacts with the art.

This volume gives teaching tips for explaining a key visual art skill that successful students use to optimize visual impact in their artwork. Use the following talking points about color to guide your discussions with your students.

By participating in the Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar Poster Contest while using the following talking points in class discussion, students will be able to practice the following Alaska State Content Standards for the Arts: A1-6, B1, 3-6, C1-4, and D1-2, 4 and 6.

Art is a Language

Art is language that, if used effectively, communicates a message. Specific words, such as impact, color, contrast, and composition are used by artists—from musicians to graphic designers—to describe the tools for effective artistic communication, regardless of the art medium.

Depending on the purpose of the art project and the audience the art project’s message is intended for, an artist may want to optimize impact in some cases (such as a dramatic film), and minimize impact in others (a lullaby song). In this case, students will be creating a poster for a calendar so the following talking points identify ways to increase visual impact in drawings using color.

Color: Visual Impact through Emotion

Color can represent emotion. What do we mean when we say “he’s feeling blue”? The phrase “stick to your colors” implies that color can represent an opinion or position; “she revealed her true colors” suggests that color can provide insight into a person’s nature or character. We might associate red with the merriment of the holidays, or the horror of violence, depending on how color is used along with shapes, textures, and subject matter. **The colors artists choose add feeling to their work’s messages.** Ask students to assign a color to their current mood and then to the mood of a parent this morning. How do the colors differ? What colors would each student assign to each of their strongest emotions?

Look at the February, 2005 Alaska Migratory Bird Calendar image. What season do you think of? What is the first feeling that comes to mind? Is it a comforting, contemplative, or exciting feeling? How many and which colors are used? Now look at the March, 2005 image. Is your feeling from this image different? Does it “wake you up”, or “make you tired”? How do the number of colors used differ in both images? What about the

kinds of colors? Why else do you think you might have different feelings from each of these images?

Now that you've thought about color and emotion, what feelings do you have when you think of this year's calendar theme, "Healthy Habitats Hatch Healthy Birds"? Is there a color that comes to your mind when you think of this feeling? (If not, that's okay too!)

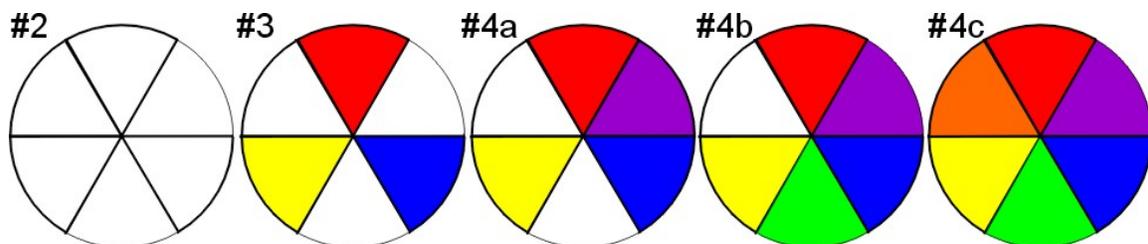
Color: Visual Impact through Complimentary Colors

Mixing of the three primary colors (red, blue and yellow) in varying amounts creates all possible hues in nature (by the strict artistic definition, hues are "pure colors" or those that have not had white or black added to them). Mixing white and black into these hues will create all possible tints and shades, respectively (such as the tint of pink or the shade of deep violet purple). Therefore, with red, blue, yellow, white and black, all existing colors (hues, tints, and shades) can be created.

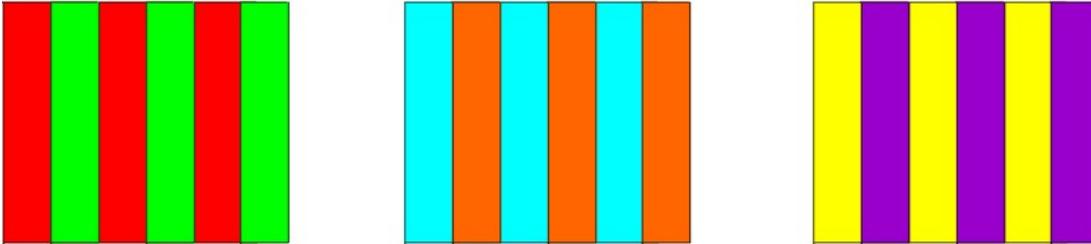
Constructing a simple color wheel with students helps them discover the relationships between hues and how **artists choose color themes to maximize visual impact**.

Instructions for constructing a simple color wheel:

1. Distribute one sheet of blank paper, and one red, one blue, and one yellow crayon to each student.
2. Draw a circle and draw lines within it dividing the circle into 6 equal pie shapes.
3. Color in one red, one blue, and one yellow pie shape, each separated from the others by an uncolored pie shape.
4. Identify the two primary colors on each side of the first uncolored pie shape. Using equal amounts of these two primary colors create the secondary color made by their combination. When finished, you should have combined the three secondary colors of purple (see diagram #4a--between the red and blue pie shapes), green (see diagram #4b--between the blue and yellow pie shapes) and orange (see diagram #4c--between the yellow and red pie shapes).
5. You have now created a simple color wheel that contains colored pie shapes of red, purple, blue, green, yellow, and orange in that order.



Holding up a completed simple color wheel as described above, point out how the color wheel places similar colors near each other. To maximize visual impact using color, students can choose to use color pairs that are across from one-another on the color wheel (red and green, blue and orange, yellow and purple).



These cross-pairs are called color compliments, because when placed next to each other, they really compliment, set off, or increase the perceived intensity of each of the colors. Identify before your class discussion regional schools and professional sports teams who use complimentary colors, such as Lathrop High in Fairbanks (golden yellow and purple) and the Miami Dolphins (orange and aqua blue). Ask the students the following: Why do you think red and green represent the Christmas holidays? Why do you think so many sport teams choose uniform colors that are compliments?

Look at the January 2005 winning entry in the AK Migratory Bird Calendar. Where do you see visual impact created by using complimentary colors? By using tints and shades? How could you use complimentary colors in your poster design?

Check back in 2006 for more Non-Art Teacher's Art Teaching Tips volumes which will discuss:

Helping students create visual impact using contrast in their artwork. Contrast increases visual impact by setting things in opposition to emphasize differences. You can use color, pattern/texture, and composition to create contrast.

Helping students create visual impact using composition in their artwork. Composition—the way in which subject parts are combined or related on the page--can add visual impact by creating strong symmetry, or by placing objects in a balanced, yet notably asymmetrical combination.