

WISH WALL MURAL

Day 1: Ideas and art

The Connection:

Hello fourth graders. My name is Kelly Sherman. You might remember me from last week, when I sat in on your Writers' Workshop. For the next few weeks, I'll be visiting to talk with you about ideas and art, and to look at some pictures with you. At the end of the visits we are going to make something together but I'll tell you more about that later.

The Teaching:

Today what I want to talk about are ideas and art. Ideas and art.

Lets start by talking about ideas. Let me remind you exactly what an idea is. An idea is a thought that exists in your mind. When you say: "I have an IDEA!" You say it because you have a thought that exists in your mind. Chances are that you have a lot of thoughts in your mind at one time. Let's picture your mind for a moment and imagine that it is a room. Picture this room with a bunch of ideas all hanging out and existing together. An idea is a thought that exists in your mind. Take a moment to think and we'll see what thoughts come into our minds.

Teacher and students are silent for a moment.

I had a thought in my mind that there are lots of colorful posters in this room. Did anyone else have any other ideas that they want to share?

Students share thoughts.

OK. Ideas are very important for making things. Remember last week during Writer's Workshop when you were revising the verbs in your stories? In order to change a verb you had to have an idea for a better verb. In fact, in order to write your stories at all, you had to have an idea of a good story to write.

Before you started writing, you had an idea for a story. Try to remember the idea your story started with. Do you remember? Now, once you wrote down your ideas, you had an actual story. As you wrote the story down, your idea became a real story with real characters and real actions. Your real story may even be different from your original idea for the story. Try to remember if your story changed from what your original idea was.

Now art is the same way. You might have an idea for a drawing that exists in your mind. When you make the drawing the idea changes: it becomes a real drawing, maybe in crayon on paper. Again, your real drawing may even be different from your original idea for the drawing.

Some artists like the idea for their drawing as much as they like the real drawing. Some artists like the idea for their drawing MORE than they like the real drawing. For this reason, there is some art that is about ideas. It is called Conceptual Art. I will give you an example of Conceptual Art that will help explain how art can be about ideas.

Show image of Joseph Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs."

This is an artwork titled "One and three chairs." It was made by an artist named Joseph Kosuth. Actually this is just a photograph of the artwork. I once saw the artwork in person and—as you can see—it shows a dictionary definition of the word CHAIR on the right and a photograph of a chair on the left. And here in the middle, it shows a real-life, actual chair that someone could sit down on. Again, the title of this artwork is "One and Three Chairs." Let's think about this title for a minute. One and three chairs. Now ask yourself: "Why did the artist give his artwork this title? What is interesting about this artwork?" Now if you have nay ideas to answer those questions, write them on your cards and then we'll try to figure out what is interesting about this artwork together.

Students write ideas on note-cards.

Does anyone want to share his or her ideas?

Students share thoughts.

Good thoughts. This artwork is about different ways to show ideas. This artwork shows you one chair and three different ways of picturing this same chair. Showing a dictionary definition of the word CHAIR is one way. When I read it I imagine a chair in my mind. Showing a photograph is another way to picture a chair. And showing a

real-life, actual chair that someone could sit down on is still another way to picture a chair. This artwork shows you one chair and three different ways of picturing this same chair.

Now ask yourself: "How are the chairs the same? How are they different?" All three versions are good ways of showing a chair but they are also very different too. This artwork makes me think that there are many ways an artist can show his or her idea of a chair.

The artist thought this was very interesting. He thought that the way an idea is shown is interesting. In fact, he thought that this IDEA was more interesting than the chair itself. The idea is the most important thing about this artwork, which is why it's called Conceptual Art. This artwork is about different ways to show ideas.

Active Engagement:

Now I'm going to show you another example of Conceptual Art.

Show image of Robert Rauschenberg's "Erased de Kooning Drawing"

This is an artwork titled "Erased de Kooning Drawing" and it's made by an artist named Robert Rauschenberg. I also saw this artwork in person and it looks just like this picture. There is a frame around the artwork and a white border, and the title typed out below it. And the center piece of paper has some marks on it but, really, it looks just like this.

Again, this artwork is titled "Erased de Kooning Drawing." The artist made this artwork by taking a drawing that was already made by another artist. He had the IDEA that he could create a new artwork by erasing this drawing that someone gave him. What we see here is the result of his idea.

Now I want you to think about what you see, what I've told you about the artwork, and about the title: "Erased de Kooning Drawing." I want you to ask yourself: "Why did the artist give his artwork this title? What is interesting about this artwork?" Write your thoughts about those questions on your cards and then we'll try to figure out what is interesting about this artwork together.

Students write ideas on note-cards.

Does anyone want to share his or her ideas?

Good thoughts. This artwork is about how ideas are just as important as drawings. The artist thought that his ideas were just as interesting as drawings. To prove it, he made this artwork by erasing a drawing, so that the only thing left on the paper to think about was his idea. This artwork is about how ideas are just as important as drawings.

The Link:

You've done a great job, everyone. Now you have a sense of what Conceptual Art is and how Conceptual Art is all about ideas. Remember that whenever you see any artwork you can always start to understand it by asking yourself: "Why did the artist give his or her artwork this title? What is interesting about this artwork?"

Next week we will talk about other kinds of art. We'll talk about the different kinds of paintings or murals that you see around the neighborhood, painted on the sides of buildings. Maybe this weekend and throughout next week you can keep a look out. See if you can find paintings on the sides of buildings and then we can talk about them together next week.