

Art About Me

Vocabulary

Appearance	Outward or visible aspect of a person or thing.
Culture	A shared system of values and beliefs.
Skin Color	The unique shades of a person's body.
Features	A prominent or distinctive attribute, often with physical appearance.
Difference	When things are not alike.
Similarity	When things are alike.
Unique	Having no like or equal.

Activity: Read *The Skin You Live In*

In this reading activity students will read the book *The Skin You Live In*, and then re-construct the meaning after the reading.

Materials

The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler

Butcher paper

Markers

Procedure

1. Before reading the book ask the students what it means to be “the same” and “different” to assess prior knowledge. Ask students who are wearing similar clothing (jeans, shirt color, etc.) to stand in front of the class. Ask the other students what is “the same” and “different” about these students. Document the students’ responses.
2. After this exercise is over look at the cover of *The Skin You Live In*. Ask what is the same and different about the children on the cover of the book. Tell the students that this story is about skin. Hold up your hand and ask the students to do the same. Tell them what color your skin is. Take note with the children that everyone’s skin color is a different shade.
3. Read the book aloud to the students. Pause after the page which has the text: *Your butterscotch gold skin, your lemon tart bold skin; your mountain high apple pie, cookie dough rolled skin!* Say that you’re going to reread that again at the end and think of it further. Finish reading the book.
4. Return to above segment and reread the rhyme. Ask the students to think of what food is the same color as their skin. Give them an example with your own skin (e.g. my skin is tan colored with freckles so I look like a chocolate chip pancake!). Listen to all of their answers and write them down.
5. After this exercise continue with reading the rest of the book. Ask the students how many different colors of skin they saw in this book. If you like you can go back through and count the different skin colors of the characters with the class.

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Alignment with State Goals

State Goal 1

Read with understanding and fluency.

State Goal 4

Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

Activity: Food Self-Portraits

In this hands-on activity students will bring an item of food from home that they think matches their skin color and use it to inspire self portrait painting.

Materials

Food item from students' homes

Paints in all different skin shades and other colors for clothing and background

Paper for children to paint on

Brushes

Smocks

(Substitute other art materials if you want)

Procedure

1. A few days before you do this activity send a letter home to parents and ask them to help their child find an item of food that matches his/her skin color. On these letters you can write the food that the child said during the discussion of *The Skin You Live In*. This can help give the parents ideas, but remind them they do not have to bring that exact food in if they do not have it at home. Any food of a similar color is fine.
2. When the children bring in their food, sit in a circle and share what they have brought. Have the students hold their items up next to their arms or hands and see how well they match. Take some time to notice all the different colors of food you have.
3. Next, ask the children to bring their items to the tables with painting materials available (before this, mix many different shades of skin color and provide each table with a small amount of each color). Tell the students that they will now draw themselves as their piece of food. They can paint the food as their head and put facial features on it or paint of picture of them eating the food—or something completely different!
4. To conclude this activity stress again all the different colors in the paintings and how we all look so different, yet are so similar.

Extension activity

Make sugar cookies with your class in the shape of people (cookie cutters can be bought in the shape of people). Then take white icing and add food coloring to make it all different colors. You can stick with natural skin colors, or make whatever colors the children would like and let them decorate their own cookie to eat for snack.

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Alignment with State Goals

State Goal 4

Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

State Goal 26

Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

Activity: Handprints!

Every child is unique! This is very clear to them when they can see their own thumbprint in comparison with the other students in the class.

Materials

Jumbo washable stamp inkpad
Butcher paper
Magnifying glass
Other art materials, such as markers or paint

Procedure

1. Tell the children that they are going to make handprints today. Encourage all the students to look at their fingers and hands closely and, while they are looking, tell them that everyone in the world has different fingerprints—no two are alike!
2. Help each child press his or her hand on to the washable ink pad and then on to the big sheet of butcher paper (all in different areas of the paper). Write each student's name by his or her handprint
3. Give all the children magnifying glasses to look closely at all the different lines that make up their handprints. Then encourage them to look at each others' and see the differences. During this process ask the children: Why do everyone's handprints look different?
4. After they have looked closely, give them the markers and/or paint and ask them to turn their handprint into a picture. They can turn it into anything they want (such as a self portrait, animals, bugs).
5. This combined handprint and painting piece will turn into a class mural to hang on the wall for everyone to admire!

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Alignment with State Goals

State Goal 11

Understand the processes of scientific inquiry and technological design to investigate questions, conduct experiments and solve problems.

State Goal 26

Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.

Activity: Collection Boxes

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Children naturally collect things they find beautiful or interesting. In this activity, students can organize and showcase things that are special to them. This activity is inspired by Joseph Cornell, an artist famed for collecting and creating intriguing shadow boxes.

Materials

Empty cardboard boxes with one side cut off

Plastic Wrap

Glue

Collage Materials

Tape

Interesting odds and ends like bottle caps and buttons

Alignment with State Goals

State Goal 26

Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced

Procedures

1. Sit in a circle and talk about what a special treasure is. Show something of yours that is special to you and explain that you keep it on your desk or in your house, etc. because you think it's beautiful and important. Ask about what treasures students have collected and give them time to share ideas with the whole group or turn and talk to a neighbor about them.
2. Send a note home to parents explaining that students will be making art using special things they've collected. Ask them to gather with their child any small things like a rock, feather, small toy or other item that is treasured.
3. Find a place in your classroom to store the special items students bring in until you're ready to finish the project. Supplement the activity with some of the materials listed above plus any you have handy.
4. When you're ready to start, give each student a box with one side cut off in order to see in. Give students the things they've collected and set out additional materials.
5. Have students arrange their special things inside and glue them into place. Set heavy things on the bottom, if you think they won't stay when the box is stood upright. Encourage them to continue to decorate the boxes with other materials using whatever they find pleasing to them.
6. After the glue dries, wrap the top of each box with plastic wrap in order to make a viewing window. Secure with tape.
7. Once finished, set out all the boxes on display and have students dictate an explanation of the box's contents. Invite another class to see your beautiful new collection!

Activity: Portrait Alphabet

Children learn better when they connect personally to new knowledge. Present or Practice letters using a portrait alphabet that's unique to your class, and show your students that a portrait of them is something so lovely that it should be up on display.

Materials

Camera and printer
Sturdy paper
Crayons or markers

Procedure

1. Take a picture of each student and print them out. Mount them onto sturdy paper with lots of additional room for writing letters.
2. Have everyone sit in a circle and pass out pictures to each student, giving each their own.
3. One by one, have each student stand in the middle of the circle and hold up his or her picture. Repeat this rhyme using the name of whoever is in the middle:

This is my friend Adam

He's as good as they get

Adam starts with A

That's part of the alphabet

This is my friend Lily

She's as good as they get

Lily starts with L

That's part of the alphabet

4. Continue until each student has a chance to be in the circle. Encourage the students to join you as you chant
5. Have everyone return to their seats and write the letter that their name starts with onto the extra space beside their photo. If they're able, encourage them to also write their name
6. Hang the finished portrait alphabet up in the classroom, stacking multiple letters vertically.
7. As a class, brainstorm what you should take a photo or draw a picture of for the missing letters. Take a walk around the room and see what you can add!

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Alignment with State Goals

State Goal 1

Read with understanding and fluency.

State Goal 2

Write to communicate for a variety of purposes.

Extension Activities and Ideas: *Multiculturalism*

There are endless ways to make multiculturalism part of the classroom! Here are just a few ideas:

Provide paint and crayons for the classroom in “real people colors” so that when children draw or paint pictures of themselves they can have many options as well as become aware of all the different skin colors around them.

Many companies have a multiculturalism set of paints and markers as well as colored paper which you can set out in your classroom. Encourage the children to mix the pre-made colors if they do not quite match that student’s skin color in order to make everyone feel welcome and validated.

Respond to differences that children notice. Address the misconceptions and untruths with accurate answers about race. Do not ignore children’s natural curiosity about their own and/or others’ race or ethnicity. Intervene if children use negative racial words or exclude other children due to race, culture, class or language.

Create opportunities for your students to question and process racial and ethnic topics and activities. Lead open discussions about race and cultural customs in the classroom in order to nurture and encourage children’s curiosity and knowledge.

Value each child’s family and culture by asking parents or grandparents to come in and teach about their holidays and traditions and what makes their family special. Display pictures of students’ families around the room. Ask students to share their families’ unique cultural traditions.

Create group activities where the entire class has to work together to achieve one goal. This will encourage a community within your classroom. Try making a classroom traditions quilt. All the students can design their own squares with the help of their families. They can illustrate special family traditions on the squares.

Become familiar with your own racial and ethnic identity and talk to friends and fellow teachers about their family history. This will help you better understand your own individuality as well as be aware of what the children are experiencing.

Art About Me Resources

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Books For Students

- Anderson, Sara. *Some of My Best Friends Are Polka Dot Pigs*
- Couric, Kaite. *The Brand New Kid*
- Hallinan, P. K. *A Rainbow of Friends*
- Hamanaka, Shelia. *All the Colors of the Earth*
- Katz, Karen. *The Colors of Us*
- Mitchell, Lori. *Different Just Like Me*
- Parr, Todd. *The Family Book*
- Parr, Todd. *It's Okay To Be Different*
- Simon, Norma and Dora Leder. *Why Am I Different?*
- Skutch, Robert and Laura Nienhaus. *Who's in a Family?*
- Staub, Leslie. *Whoever You Are*
- Thomas, Pat and Lesley Harker. *The Skin I'm In: A First Look at Racism*
- Tyler, Michel. *The Skin You Live In*

Books For Educators

- Bisson, Julie. *Celebrate! An Anti-Bias Guide to Enjoying Holidays in Early Childhood Programs*
- Kendall, Frances E. *Diversity in the Classroom: New Approaches to the Education of Young Children*
- Maggio, Rosalie. *Talking About People: A Guide to Fair and Accurate Language*
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*
- Sarich, Vincet and Frank Miele. *Race: The Reality of Human Differences: Roots and Wings*
- Shadd, Adrienne. *Talking About Difference: Encounters in Culture, Language, and Identity*
- Teaching Tolerance Project, The. *Starting Small: Teaching Tolerance in Pre-school and the Early Grade*
- York, Stacy. *Revised Edition: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs*
- Maggio, Rosalie. *Talking About People: A Guide to Fair and Accurate Language*

Websites

www.naeyc.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children

www.nameorg.org

National Association of Multicultural Education

www.pbs.org/readytolearn

PBS Teacher's website

<http://clas.uiuc.edu/index.html>

Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Early Childhood Research Institute

www.splcenter.org/teachingtolerance/

A non-profit educational foundation developed the Teaching Tolerance Project to help children overcome hatred and prejudice