

JOURNEY IN... YEAR ONE ENDINGS ART

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Change—a mix of beginnings and endings—is an inevitable part of existing in this universe.
- Change brings big feelings: sometimes it feels good, sometimes it's painful.
- Change is necessary for growth.

Lesson Materials

- Images of well-known paintings, preferably of realistic subject matter. You can get lots of these from clearance calendars early in the year.
- Flat trays or pieces of acrylic, large enough to do a painting on—say, 12 x 14 inches.
- Tempera paints
- Brushes
- Paper that fits into the tray

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time—for your own reflection

When I was green, everyone loved me. Bees crooned my sweetness: butterflies made me their own. But then something called time began to drag me away and I became curled up and brittle and brown.

These lines you read are what an oak leaf wrote, following a storm that dragged it over the snow—complaining and kicking. "I don't want to forsake my tree. Help! Where did my sisters go?"

When spring comes, a whole new cast will have the stage and I will huddle where winter threw me away, but wherever I am the soil will be bitter because I remember how lonely it was when I tried to stay.

This farewell comes from a forgiving leaf that skipped with the others and then found a lucky storm that brought me here. Listen—hold on as long as you can, then thrust forth: make truth your home.

— William Stafford

One day as I was about to step on a dry leaf, I saw the leaf in the ultimate dimension. I saw that it was not really dead, but that it was merging with the moist soil in order to appear on the tree the following spring in another form. I smiled at the leaf and said, "You are pretending." Everything is pretending to be born and pretending to die, including that leaf.

— Thich Nhat Hanh

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born and a time to die;

A time to plant and a time to reap;

A time to kill and a time to heal;

A time to destroy and a time to rebuild;

A time to cry and a time to laugh;

A time to mourn and a time to dance;

A time to cast away stones and

a time to gather stones together;

A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

A time to get and a time to lose;

A time to keep and a time to cast away;

A time to rend and a time to sew;

A time to be quiet and a time to speak;

A time to love and a time to hate;

A time of war and a time of peace.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5-10 minutes

- Allow each child to select one work of art from a number of paintings. Let them spend some time examining it, maybe a minute or two.
- Ask the children if anything pictured in their painting could last forever. If a child points something out as lasting forever, agree with that child's assessment and ask them to explain why they think it could last forever. Invite other children to ask "What if...?" questions if you think the group can respect one another's right to hold an idea.
- Ask the kids to imagine that the picture could start moving. What would happen next? What would change?
- What if the artist had chosen to paint the subject in a different season or at a different time of day?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY

PRINTING MONOTYPES

🕒 40-45 minutes

- Monotypes are prints created from an image worked in ink on copper plates. Unlike other prints, the image is in the ink, not on the block. The ink, which is not absorbed by the plate, is worked using brushes or fingers until the image is satisfactory. Then, the paper is laid to the plate and the image is printed. Once it's printed, the image can't be printed again, as all the ink is on the paper, hence the name *mono*-type.
- We're not going to work with ink, as it's a permanent pigment, nor with copper plates, as they're expensive. Instead, we'll use tempera on acrylic or plastic. The artist can work the paint with brushes or fingers. It can be removed with dry paper towel. The less paint the better—as always! *Really – the less paint the better!*
- Invite the kids to consider a couple different subjects for their art. First, ask them to start with their own image of a tree, to help connect the theme of trees and growth that is present in the other lessons in this cycle. After they create that first monotype, invite them to create prints of things in their lives that have changed: maybe they've moved, or a new sibling was born or they lost a tooth. Let them make as many prints as they choose to make while remaining conscious of their process.

Framing the Metaphor

Offer these ideas to the kids, in language that works for the age group, as you give the instructions.

- Life is filled with things that change and fraught with decisions to be made; both changes and decisions come with beginnings and endings. Monotypes can change and change and change until the point at which you decide to print them. When you print your monotype, it changes, too – from something changeable to something not changeable. The creative process is ended and the new piece of art is born. It's a good way to pay attention to what's in the "present" and what's in the "past".

As the children finish, help them to hang it to dry and encourage them to clean up their own workspace.

Wondering Together

Gather the children into a circle or around a table. Discuss these or similar questions.

- I wonder what you decided to paint?
- How did that change in your life make you feel?
- I wonder if you changed your image a lot or just a little before you printed it?
- I wonder if you're happy with the way they came out in the end?
- I wonder how long these prints will last?
- Why do you think _____ (talk about an image from a child's artwork) changes?
- I wonder what it would be like if _____ lasted forever?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

⌚ 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words:

Just as the seed holds the beauty that the flower later shares,
and just as the acorn holds the strength that the tree later provides,
we, too, hold in our hearts the growth of our many gifts.

May we offer our gifts to each other and everyone.

Let's change the world with our kindness,
let's bless each other with compassion,
and let's grow, with all things, in love.

Amen.

- Bill Neely