



Music Blocks Lesson Plan

Synesthesia

Age:

7-12 years

Lesson duration:

90 minutes

- Introduction: Senses and Synesthesia (15m)
- Part 1: Color and Pitch (10m)
- Break (5m)
- Part 2: Other mappings (20m)
- Performance/Critique (10m)

Number of students:

Up to 10.

Rationale:

Students will build upon the concept of synesthesia to explore different ways to map color to music.

Objectives:

Students will understand what is meant by synesthesia and explore their own theories of how the senses might interrelate.

LESSON

Introduction:

Begin by asking students to sit in a circle and explain that in today's lesson they are going to explore the senses.

Go around the circle, asking each student to name a sense, e.g., touch, taste, smell. Be sure that someone mentions hearing, as music is not nearly as much fun without sound.

Are there other senses? A sense of time? A sense of numbers? A sense of rhythm? A sense of color?

Tell the story of the artist Wassily Kandinsky.

For Wassily Kandinsky, music and color were inextricably tied to one another. So clear was this relationship that Kandinsky associated each note with an exact hue. He once said, “the sound of colors is so definite that it would be hard to find anyone who would express bright yellow with bass notes or dark blue with treble.”

In fact, it was after having an unusually visual response to a performance of Wagner’s composition Lohengrin at the Bolshoi Theatre that he abandoned his law career to study painting at the prestigious Munich Academy of Fine Arts. He later described the life-changing experience: “I saw all my colors in spirit, before my eyes. Wild, almost crazy lines were sketched in front of me.”

(From [WASSILY KANDINSKY'S SYMPHONY OF COLORS](#) by Renée B. Miller)



Image from <https://www.albrightknox.org/artworks/rca19471-fragment-2-composition-vii>

As the students if they have ever experienced a connection between their senses? Do certain smells taste sweet? Do certain shapes feel sharp?

Part 1:

Exploring the color and pitch

Part 2

Variations

Can you come up with more ways to map sight to sound?

Performance/Critique:

1. Have each student perform their compositions, explaining how they mapped color to pitch.
2. Engage in a discussion about more things they could do with sight and sound.
3. Ask about the difference between mapping a note to a color vs an interval to a color. Are the color intervals?

Key events:

- Introduction of key concept: synesthesia
- The students create their own programs using sound and graphics.

Materials:

- Music Blocks software

Assessment:

- Observe participation.
- Do the programs include creative mappings?



© Copyright Walter Bender, 2020