



Yearlong Objectives

- Express oneself in words and art.
- Work as an ensemble.
- Understand the power and importance of uniqueness.

Essential Questions

- What are the types of conflicts and how can people respond to them?
- What is empathy and why is it important?
- How can watercolors be used in different ways?

Lesson Objectives

- Interview another classmate and demonstrate empathetic listening skills.
- Create a portrait using abstract ideas and concepts.
- Define empathy and explain why it is important.

National Arts Standards

- Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art. *(VA:Cr1.2.6a)*
- Design or redesign objects, places, or systems that meet the identified needs of diverse users. *(VA:CR2.3.6a)*
- Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work. *(TH:Cr2-6.b)*



Materials needed

8.5 x 11 watercolor paper, watercolor pans, paintbrushes, cups, lined paper to record information



Time needed

90 minutes



Vocabulary for this lesson

Social-Emotional: *conflict, resolution, empathy, unique*

Visual Arts: *watercolor, abstract, portrait*

Theatre: *ensemble, setting, character*



Warm-Up Phase (15 minutes)

Circle: Open-ended question: *Who do you admire most? Why?*

Optional follow-up question: *How are you feeling right now? Use an emotion word and explain why.*

Team-building game: Zip Zap Zop, Level 4 (see [Team-Building Games](#))



I Do/ We Do (20 minutes)

Explicitly Teach

- Access prior knowledge. Discuss types of conflict, conflict styles, and outcomes.
- Introduce new vocabulary word: *empathy*. *Empathy is the ability to understand and share feelings with another person. Empathy is important because without it, we would all believe that the universe centered around us, and that no one else was important. Still, empathy can be really difficult. It is about being able to recognize that everyone around you is just as much a person as you are, with emotions—comfortable and uncomfortable—just like you have. In our uniqueness, not everyone will feel the same way you will around emotions. Emotions are neither right nor wrong; it's how we respond to those emotions and our behaviors that matter.*
- Have students brainstorm a list of times that empathy would be especially important. *Without empathy, everyone would be forceful and aggressive in their conflict styles. Without the ability to recognize other peoples' feelings, it's impossible to see the importance of compromise.*
- Explain that the classroom ensemble community requires a lot of empathy. *Everyone in this room has emotions. Sometimes it's difficult to remember that. Today we will be practicing empathy by learning about and listening to each other.*
- Introduce art concept: *abstract art*. *Usually, a portrait is an exact representation of how a person's face looks. Today, we'll be stretching the definition to be more abstract.* Revisit the definition of *abstract art*.

Keep in Mind

- Go over norms for an art space. *Art space needs to be safe and calm. What needs to happen to ensure everyone feels that way?*
- Discuss the difficulties surrounding abstract art. *Some abstract art takes a long time, and some takes less. Why do you think this is?*
- Describe the importance of supply care. *We'll be using real watercolor pans today, and it's important to keep the light colors and dark colors separated. Why?*



You Do (55 minutes)

The project, step-by-step

- Students will work with partners. Ideally, partners are selected randomly, so students get to learn about someone new.
- One partner will be the reporter and one will be the subject. Then they will switch.
- The subject begins by telling the reporter something the reporter doesn't know about her. The reporter writes down what the subject is saying.
- The reporter asks follow-up questions and writes down responses. The reporter practices nodding and saying affirming things. (Examples: "That's interesting" or "I see.") The subject digs deep to tell the reporter information about her life, things that make her unique. This should go on for 10 minutes.
- The reporter and the subject switch roles. This should go on for 10 minutes.
- Each person creates a watercolor portrait of the other person, but without painting their subject's face. Instead, they will paint details—abstract and concrete—from the information they gathered about their subject. (Example: A portrait of Tasha might include images of carrots, her favorite food, and a big yellow swirl to show that Tasha thinks she has a sunny personality.)
- Continue working in watercolor until the entire canvas is filled.

Extensions: Write a detailed explanation of the portrait representation.

Closure: Students pair up with a new student and explain their portrait representation to each other.

Optional Writing Prompt: How did today's project inspire empathy? What else can you do to practice empathy in your daily life?



Big Picture

Next class we'll work together to brainstorm ideas about using empathy and self-knowledge to solve conflicts safely and respectfully with each other.