



Lessons from the Salvadori Classrooms
LESSON TITLE: Mind's Eye
PREPARED BY: Dida Stadler and Kubi Ackerman (revised by Michael Bettencourt)
TOPIC: School
SSLAM: School / Language Arts / Pull Apart
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Mind's Eye

Content Focus: Language Arts

- Writing: Literary Response

Content Focus: Art - Visual

- Techniques: Model-Making







Content Focus: Built Environment

- Architectural Drawing / 2D
- Model-Making / 3D
- Scale/Proportion

Performance Outcome(s)

- Design a stage set for a scene from a piece of literature.

Standards/Interdisciplinary Connections

					
S	S	L	A	M	T
Science	Social Studies	Language Arts	Art - Visual	Math	Technology

How To Read The Symbols: The symbols in **bold** indicate the subject standards that this lesson satisfies.

Lesson Outline (multiple-lesson project)

1. Motivation
2. The Challenge
3. Choose A Passage
4. Design A Stage Set
5. Make A Model Of A Stage Set
6. Present
7. Reflect
8. Extensions And Variations
9. Middle School Standards



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Salvadori Prerequisites

- FOUNDATION - BASIC SKILLS: Architectural Drawing / 2D (Activity #2); Scale (Activity #3); Model-Making / 3D (Activity #1, Activity #2)
- Students should be reading or should have recently completed a novel or short story

CONCEPTS

- Recognizing the role of the imagination in interpreting fiction can help students respond to and appreciate works of literature from a subjective, personal perspective.
- Recognizing and employing key adjectives can enrich student's reading experiences as well as provide them with a powerful tool for their own descriptive writing efforts.
- Stage design is a complex art form in which a concrete sense of place is invoked in such a way as to elicit abstract thoughts and feelings.

RESOURCES

On-Line

- <http://artwork.asu.edu/arts/teachers/lesson/drama/drama3.htm> - Understanding Stage Design: Using Visual Elements to Provide Information to an Audience
- <http://www.siu.edu/ITDA/gallery>: A great resource for seeing the work of professional stage designers.

Books

- Bang, Molly, *Picture This: How Pictures Work*, SeaStar Books: New York, New York, 2000

MATERIALS

Facilitator

- ●: Q&A

Students

- Paper, pencils, colored pencils or markers, rulers, utility blades, foamcore or cardboard and other material to make set models.



MOTIVATION

Write at least 10 adjectives describing emotional states on the board. Use these examples or come up with others:

- Exhausted
- Frustrated
- Furious
- Giddy
- Haughty
- Lonely
- Nostalgic
- Suspicious
- Ecstatic
- Quirky

Do you know the meaning of all of these words?

Solicit definitions from students.

Choose one of these words. Think about how you might communicate its meaning visually, without using words.

On a piece of paper, sketch an interpretation of the word. Do not write the word itself or use any letters. Try not to draw facial expressions or actual objects. What kinds of lines, colors, or shapes would be most appropriate to communicate the feeling of the word?

Because your drawing is abstract (meaning that it does not depict actual things in real life), this exercise does not depend on how well you can draw.

Once students have finished, have them exchange their drawings and try to determine which of the words their partners chose to depict.

- *Was this a difficult exercise? Why or why not?*
- *What were some strategies you used to draw your word? Did they work (did your partner guess which word you had chosen)?*
- *Did this exercise make you think about these words in a different way? Why or why not?*
- *Why do you think you were discouraged from drawing facial expressions? ●:Q&A*



THE CHALLENGE

Your challenge is to design and build a model of a stage set for the passage you have chosen. Imagine that your class will be performing a play based on the book or story you are reading. What things will you include in your set to give the audience a clear picture of where the scene is taking place? How will you communicate the feeling of the scene?

CHOOSE A PASSAGE

Think about the book or a short story that you are reading now or that you have read recently. [if the whole class is reading a book together, this is a good opportunity for them to reflect on it.]

- *When you think of the book or the story, do you have an image that pops into your head? Do you imagine a particular scene from the story?*
- *Is the scene you think of a particularly memorable or important one?*
- *Why does the scene stand out in your mind?*

Find the passage in the book that describes the scene.

Students find the passage they are looking for and read it to themselves.

- *Do you have a mental image in your imagination of what the scene looks like? What are some words or phrases that best describe the physical setting for what is going on?*

Students identify the words and phrases in the passage that describe what the physical surroundings look like and underline these with a colored pencil.

- *What else do you know about the physical setting of the scene? Are there words or phrases that describe the setting through other senses besides the visual?*

Students identify these words and underline them with a different color.

- *What is the tone of the passage? How do you know?*
- *What are the feelings that it brings up in you? Do you think the author meant to convey a specific feeling with their description?*

Identify the words or phrases that set the tone or feeling of the scene and underline them with a pencil of a third color (sometimes the same words or phrases can evoke both the physical surroundings and the emotional tone, so feel free to underline those twice).

Share your findings with a partner.



Students pair up and take turns describing their chosen passage and a few words or phrases that they feel evoke the physical setting and set the emotional tone.

- *What parts of speech are the words that you identified?* ●: Q&A

DESIGN A STAGE SET

Students return to their passage and review their underlined descriptive words and phrases.

Carefully read the passage and take a minute to fully imagine the physical surroundings.

- *Where does the scene take place? What is the environment?*
- *What are the objects in the scene that are crucial to the action?*
- *What are some details that add life to scene?*

Students write a paragraph describing the setting in as much detail as you can. They can include descriptive words or phrases from the passage if they want, but encourage them to use their imagination as their secondary source of inspiration.

Students make a sketch of the setting for the scene as they imagine it. They do not have to include characters or props.

Now look through the passage again to remind yourself of the tone. Choose 1 or 2 descriptive words that you feel best express the mood of the scene.

- *Does your sketch express the same feeling that you get from reading the passage? If so, how? If not, how could you change it to make do so?*
- *What are some strategies you can use to communicate a feeling through visual means?*
- *How could you use color to evoke different moods?* ●: Q&A
- *How could you change the forms of the objects in the scene to evoke different moods (i.e. what the objects look like)?* ●: Q&A
- *How could you change the composition of the scene evoke different moods?* ●: Q&A

Be creative with your thinking! Set designs do not have to be realistic – you can exaggerate or leave out certain features, or even have a completely abstract set.

Students make a second sketch of the scene, concentrating on evoking a specific mood.

Students partner up to discuss their sketches and get feedback on how the preliminary designs could be made more effective. Encourage them to concentrate on the overall mood of the design rather than on drawing skills.



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MAKE A MODEL OF A STAGE SET

- *What are some things that you have to consider when making a stage set?* ●: Q&A

Using their sketches as a guide, students draw a plan and an elevation of their stage set. The plan should be to scale. Scale can be indicating by showing the size of an average student on the drawings. Students can decide on the size of the stage they would ideally like to work with (within reasonable limits – most stages in play or opera houses are 30 to 60 feet long and 20 to 50 feet deep).

Students make a detailed model of their set design. If they choose, they can add a proscenium, a curtain or other theatrical accessories.



Some examples of set designs





PRESENT

Students present their models to the rest of the class. If the class has read the book or story in which the scene is set, have students try to guess which scene each set is designed for.

REFLECTION

- *What made you choose the scene that you ended up designing a set for?*
- *Did anyone else choose the same scene? If so, how did their design compare to yours?*
- *Did the other students' sets look similar to how you imagined the scenes they depicted when you first read the passage?*
- *How well did you meet your challenge? What would you do differently next time?*

EXTENSIONS AND VARIATIONS

- Cooperate with the drama teacher in your school to design and make an actual set for a play based on a piece of fiction your class is reading.
- If your class is reading a well-known piece of literature, have students do research to find as many illustrations of the story as possible. They can then compare and contrast different representations to determine which aspects of the story each illustrator chose to highlight.
- Students choose a particular space or setting in or around the school building and write a skit or short play that creatively uses the setting as a theatrical set. They can include a description of the actual setting in their skit.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STANDARDS

Language Arts

- Writing (E2b)
- Literature (E5a, b)

Art- Visual

- Media, Techniques, and Processes
- Structures and Functions
- Subject Matter, Symbols, and Ideas
- Connections Between Visual Arts and Other Disciplines

MOTIVATION

- Why do you think you were discouraged from drawing facial expressions?

Students' first impulse when presented with a challenge like this is often to draw facial expressions because they are so readily associated with emotions. Because expressions are a means of communication, they constitute a form of non-verbal language, especially when represented in drawing. Depicting emotional states in purely abstract form presents a more difficult, and for the purposes of this exercise, a richer challenge. As a side note, a comparison of conventions for drawing facial expressions in different cultures (Japanese comics are a good example) shows that they are culturally specific.

CHOOSE A PASSAGE

- What parts of speech are the words that you identified?

Many of the descriptive words that establish the setting and the tone for a piece of writing are likely to be adjectives.

DESIGN A STAGE SET

- How could you use color to evoke different moods?

The stage designer's choice of colors can have a large effect on the mood of a scene. Ask students to identify the effects of darker vs. brighter colors, calming vs. jarring colors, and monochrome vs. multihued sets.

- How could you change the forms of the objects in the scene to evoke different moods (i.e. what the objects look like)?

The stage designer must choose how to depict the object to be included in the scene. Ask students to identify the effects of having forms with soft, rounded edges vs. sharp angles, of having realistic vs. abstract forms, and of including large and overwhelming vs. small and intimate forms.

- How could you change the composition of the scene evoke different moods?

Ask students to identify the effects of a balanced vs. an imbalanced composition, a symmetric vs. asymmetric composition, and dense and claustrophobic set vs. a sparse and empty set.

MAKE A MODEL OF A STAGE SET

- What are some things that you have to consider when making a stage set?

There are many things that stage designers must consider when designing a set. Since students are building model for a set that will not necessarily be constructed, they do not have to worry about structural and safety issues. They should however, consider how the set would relate to the actors and the actions they would have to perform during the scene (do they have enough space?), the visual relationship between the actors and the set (to make sure the set would not overwhelm them), and lighting (they can experiment by shining one or more flashlights onto their models.)