

Outside My Window



Literacy Draws Upon Art



Introduction

How do we help learners observe the ordinary and turn what is right outside our windows into extraordinary learning opportunities? Challenge children to notice details and imagine several answers to a question. This lesson helps children generate more than one idea and expand their perspectives, making the ordinary extraordinarily interesting.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- imagine whatever they observe outside, whether buildings or natural scenery, as characters with personalities;
- use the four creative processes: create, present, respond, and connect to represent and present imaginative characters and to connect their art with original stories;
- use SEEK™ to read artwork and respond to each other; and
- connect the creative process they used to learning more about character development and identifying what is real versus imaginary.

Vocabulary

observation	stories	illustrator
buildings	real	author
characters	imaginary	dramatize
personality	represent	

Essential Questions

- How can discussing what we see help learners identify what is real and then use those observations to spark their imaginations?
- Why do questions like “What if...?” help children think of imaginary traits and give inanimate objects human-like characteristics?
- How can art help children make their thinking visible and strengthen their story-building skills?
- What types of questions help young writers, storytellers, and artists articulate their intentions, revise, and add to their work?

Guiding Questions

- What is seen outside the window? How do the SEEK questions help everyone think about observations, what is known, and what else people would like to know?
- What lines, shapes, and colors will be used to sketch the scene outside the window?
- What if some of the objects in the sketch acted like people? What changes or additions could be made to the art to add personality to them?
- What story does the picture tell? Describe the beginning, middle, and end of the story.
- Share the story with others. What changes could be made to the story and art based on others' responses?

Supplies

- Paper (can be scrap paper, newspaper, or drawing paper)
- Crayola crayons
- Crayola markers

Prepare

Encourage children to make decisions about how to organize their workspace and develop rules for clean-up. An important part of the learning process is having children plan and assess their own work.

Applying SEEK to this Lesson

Ask children to look closely at the art on this page and discuss using SEEK.

SEE: What real and imaginary images do you observe in the art?

EVIDENCE: What specific characteristics of the buildings did the artist invent to create personalities?

EXPLAIN: How did the artist's choices of color and shapes help you imagine that the buildings are characters?

KNOW: What do you know and want to know about the buildings' relationships by looking at this scene? Can you imagine what might have happened before the pictured scene and what might happen next and build a story about it?





Use observations of what is going on outside the window to inspire an illustration and story. Ask learners to imagine that the buildings, bushes, or bridges have personalities, just like the people. Invent a story that tells about their personalities, relationships, and goals.

- Use SEEK™ to explore the images provided in this lesson or other outdoor pictures that are available.
- Have children draw buildings, first as a realistic sketch and then a more detailed piece of art that shows objects interacting with each other as story characters.
- Ask children to imagine what story accompanies their drawings. Urge them to invent more than one narrative that goes deeper than the first or most obvious story line so they think about the Why, Who, What, When, Where, and How that shape an imaginative story.
- Optional: Extend the story by dramatizing it. Any story can be performed by adding character voices and simple sound effects. Children can create simple costumes using draped fabric and create an imaginary setting with boxes or more sketches.



- Identify an audience for the presentation. Children could, for example, “play teacher” and present to an audience of pretend students.
- Plan a presentation of the art and story that will interest the audience and invite them to the presentation.
- Present the work, answer questions, listen to comments, and respond to suggestions.
- Consider revisions or extensions of the work as a result of the feedback.



Have children respond to:

- the original art using SEEK questions;
- their work as it develops by stepping back to consider what changes could be made and why;
- feedback from others by answering question and discussing possibilities, then revising and deepening the work; and
- the process by asking what else could be created and explored.



- Have children think about ways to connect with others’ stories while they are working from a distance. How could they use phone, photos, and digital devices to share ideas?
- Ask children to connect this lesson to the work done by illustrators, authors, storytellers, and actors.
- Discuss how the characters they created connect to or resemble the relationships they know. How might the characters they drew help one another, solve problems together, and deal with differences of opinion?
- Expand the existing story to explore a math or science challenge using the characters in new ways.

For Younger Children

- To help young children prepare for this activity, remind them of similar situations that they would understand, such as thinking of stuffed animals as having personalities.
- Observe young children’s developing art skills as they draw the same scene several times, each resulting in a different outcome.
- Join the discussion and show young children how you enjoy the imaginative process. Thinking aloud as you sketch your thoughts is a great way to demonstrate the power of visualizing ideas.

For Older Children

- Add a layer of higher-order thinking to this activity using similes or metaphors to compare the objects in the drawings to historical or current characters.
- Expand the drawing and story into a graphic novel.
- Use the children’s drawings to convey real-life problems that can be solved using mathematical calculations, expressions, and equations.
- Introduce a science-based problem for the characters in the illustration to solve, such as forces and energy or engineering designs.



Child Reflections

- How were the SEEK questions helpful in reading the art?
- What was learned about character traits? Representing characters through art?
- Describe how the art was a springboard that helped create a story.
- When does using imagination help to stretch thinking skills?
- What other stories could be dramatized?

Adult Reflections

- How did this lesson help children meet the learning objectives? What could be improved?
- What unexpected information and insights were learned during the project?
- Which essential questions and guiding questions were most helpful?

Standards and Skill Development

Educators and families work together to engage learners in hands-on experiences that align with educational standards—the outline of what children should know and be able to do in each subject area. Standards outline the concepts and skills that progress on a continuum and challenge learners to advance to higher levels of knowledge. The activities in this project can be used to address the following standards:

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visual, quantitative, and oral.
- Present information, findings, and supporting evidence in ways that allow listeners to follow the line of reasoning and ensure that the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

MATHEMATICS

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Use appropriate tools strategically.
- Look for and make use of structure.
- Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes.

SCIENCE

- Make decisions about scale, proportion, and quantity to recognize proportional relationships.
- Generate and compare multiple possible solutions to a problem based on how well each is likely to meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
- Ask questions, make observations, and gather information about a situation people want to change to define a simple problem that can be solved through the development of a new or improved object or tool.
- Use evidence to support the concept that behaviors can be influenced by the environment.

VISUAL ARTS

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
- Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.
- Perceive and describe aesthetic characteristics of one's natural world and constructed environments.
- Determine messages communicated by an image.