

The Noisy Paintbox



An Experiment in Sound and Color

Suggested Grades: 3-5

Kate Hagen

National Core Arts Standards

#8 – Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Objectives

- Compose a percussion piece based on art of Kandinsky.
- Explore similarities between sound and color.

Materials

- Book – The Noisy Paintbox
- Artwork of Wassily Kandinsky
- Classroom Percussion Instruments
- Tablet or Computer for student use



KATE HAGEN

Kate currently teaches in the Iowa City Community School District, K-6. She has a master's in music education and is a National Board-Certified Teacher. Kate is one of the Educational Architects for Music ConstructED

Suggested Teaching Process:

Lesson 1 – The Noisy Paintbox

Read the story The Noisy Paintbox

Lesson 2 – Kandinsky Sound and Color

1. Review the definition of synesthesia and ask students to describe how this affected how Kandinsky created art.
2. Play the clip from the movie Ratatouille to illustrate how multiple senses might interact with each other.
3. Show students Kandinsky's artwork
 - *Use personal preferences to choose which artworks to share with your students. Your choices will determine which piece of art you decide to have students create their sound composition to in the next step.*
4. Discuss which classroom instruments we could use to express each piece of art's colors and why those sounds might fit with each color.

Lesson 3 – The sound of Composition VIII, 1923

1. Display a picture of **Composition VIII, 1923**
2. Identify different shapes, lines, elements, colors within the work
3. Discuss how students might play a single element within the work using a classroom instrument.
4. Have each student choose a single element in the work they want to represent with sound.
5. Students choose the instrument they want to use.
6. Students practice playing the element they choose in the artwork.
7. Cover the entire painting – *see below*
8. Gradually uncover the painting – revealing the artwork – while students play the previously chosen element.



9. When the complete artwork is displayed, all students will be playing their chosen element.
10. Experiment with uncovering the artwork in different directions – top to bottom/ left to right/ diagonally – and then discuss how it changes the sound.

Covering a screen can be accomplished in several different ways depending on the software you are using. On SMART Boards, there is a "screen" that you can use to cover the slide and then drag to uncover. In PowerPoint, you can use animation and set the timing to reveal the slide slowly. If you want to go completely old-school – you can project the picture using a document camera, then cover the artwork with a piece of paper, and then drag it across to reveal the painting.

Lesson 4 – Chrome Music Lab: Kandinsky

1. Students create their own Kandinsky compositions
2. Give a quick tutorial on how to use the app.
 - a. Lines and Boxes Create melodic
 - b. Triangles are percussive
 - c. Circles are vocal
 - d. Click play and listen to your creation
 - e. Click the bi-colored circle to change the sounds
 - f. Click the Undo button to fix "mistakes."
 - g. Click reset to start a new canvas

Extension:

At my school, this is a combined third-grade lesson with the art teacher. Students study vertical and horizontal lines using different widths, lengths, and weights. When finished, I take photos of their artwork, and each student chooses how they want their artwork played.

We record the musical composition and then attach a QR code to each painting so parents and students can "listen to" and look at their artwork.

References:

Chrome Music Lab: Kandinsky. (n.d.). Retrieved January 18, 2021, from https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/kandinsky-service/?ln=nl_BE

Rosenstock, B., & GrandPré, M. (2014). *The noisy paint box: The colors and sounds of Kandinsky's abstract art*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf.