
Art Masterpiece: Wassily Kandinsky, *Composition: Storm!**

Keywords: Line, Color, Abstract, Mood

Grade: 1st – 2nd

Activity: Abstract Watercolor
Crayon Resist

*Most of Kandinsky's "Composition" artworks would be fine as an alternative.



Meet the Artist:

- Wassily Kandinsky was born in Moscow, Russia in 1866. As a boy, he was a good student and took drawing lessons. He loved to draw, but eventually became a lawyer.
- In 1896, at the age of 30, Kandinsky gave up a promising career teaching law and economics to enroll in art school in Munich. He was not immediately granted admission, and began learning art on his own.
- Kandinsky is known as the father of abstract painting. (Abstract artworks focus on shapes, color, and line to express ideas or objects, instead of representing objects realistically.) He discovered he liked abstract art by observing a painting one day -he noticed "its' extraordinary beauty and glowing inner radiance," only to realize it was one of his paintings that had been turned upside-down!
- Music was important Kandinsky's art since music is abstract by nature (it does not try to represent the exterior world, but expresses inner feelings.) Kandinsky sometimes used musical terms to identify his works; he called his most spontaneous paintings "improvisations" and described more elaborate works as "compositions."
- Kandinsky believed that true artists could express their inner feelings through lines, shapes and especially color. He felt all colors and forms had

meaning and carefully planned each painting to express the feelings he wanted to communicate.

- Kandinsky retired in Paris and died in 1944 at the age of 78.

Possible Questions

- What colors do you see? Are they light or dark?
- Do you think colors can make you feel a certain way?
- Did the color in this picture create a certain mood? Mood is the way you feel. Have you ever been in a good mood? A bad mood? An excited mood? A tired mood?
- Sometimes we think of emotions as having a color. For example, if you're feeling "blue" it means you feel sad, you might be "green" with envy, yellow often means happiness. What other colors remind you of emotions?
- What kinds of lines do you see? All art begins with a line. Can you trace some lines in *Composition*?
- What ways can lines effect mood? On the classroom whiteboard, demonstrate how different lines might represent different emotions. For example, "happy" lines might be puffy and bumpy, "angry" lines might be jagged and bold, "confused" lines might wander around and then fade off, "sneaky" lines might lie low and be squirmy. Encourage the students to think of other emotions and what sort of lines they might be represented by.
- Kandinsky called this painting, "Composition: Storm!" In a storm, the wind blows all directions. Does anything in this painting remind you of being in a storm? Explain.
- What would it feel like to be standing in the middle of this painting? Is there a place where you would feel restful?

Activity: Abstract watercolor crayon resist

Tell the students we are making our own "Compositions" by tracing objects and putting lines and patterns inside of the objects. The lines and the colors we choose will create the mood.

Materials Needed:

- Watercolor paper (or white cardstock), 9" X 12," one per student
- Watercolors, one set per student
- Brushes, one per student
- Cups, for water
- Crayons, one set per student
- Paper towels (optional)

Procedure:

1. Pass out papers and remind students to write their names on the back of the paper.
2. Have the students trace classroom objects on their paper with a crayon. Encourage them to use many colors, including white! Some objects they could trace are their hands, a ruler, a scissors, etc.
3. With their crayons, add lines inside the traced objects. The lines can be straight, or curly, or they can use dots, or shapes. (They shouldn't color the traced objects in solidly.)
4. With the watercolor paints, tell students to choose colors that help create a mood. Show them that they can lightly "wash" or paint over parts of their composition. They should use more than one color and when they are done, no white should be showing. Remind them not to paint different colors over colors they've already painted or they will end up with a sludgy-looking composition.
5. Show students that if they have more water on their brushes, the color will be more transparent and lighter. The less water they use will make the paint more intense and darker.
6. When students' compositions are dry, hang to display.

Examples:



Parent Note:

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