



SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

ART IMAGE KITS - GRADES 1-6 GRADE 1

**Teacher's Guide by
M. Brière**

Activity four: ACROBATS

ARTWORKS:

KABOTIE, Fred (Catalog #1.16)

CRETAN Art (Catalog #1.5)

SEEING ART ACTIVITY

Teachers should familiarize themselves with the historical background of the two art works that will be presented to the children.

CLASSROOM SCENARIO

Today, children, I have two very interesting art reproductions to show you. I wonder what you will make of these.

Q: Do you think there are similarities, that is, things that look alike, in these two pictures? Yes, Danny, in both pictures there are some people upside down. What are those funny people doing upside down, Gwen? They're playing, you think. You may be right. They are some sort of clowns, you think. Walter. Yes, you're right. Let's look at this particular picture some more. What is happening, exactly? There is a large brown and white bull, you say, Francis. Yes, someone is jumping on the back of the bull. Do you think this is dangerous? It is! You think you wouldn't be afraid to do a somersault like that on the back of a bull, Oliver. I suspect you would be afraid if you saw the bull run straight towards you. Besides, you'd have to be quite tall to catch both horns and jump on the back of this huge bull! What else do you see besides that man on a bull's back? Yes, Dorothy, you see two other people. What are they doing? One is holding the bull's horns, right! The other one seems to have tossed the acrobat up onto the bull's back, or maybe is waiting for him to jump back down.

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Q: Now let's look at the three acrobats. You notice I call them acrobats. Do you know what an acrobat is? Jennie? Correct. Let's describe the one on the lefthand side. He's very white; that's true, Rosalie. He's also wearing stockings. His waist is tiny and his shoulders are quite broad. Is he strong? Yes, you think he is. I think you're right. He is wearing just a loincloth with a tight wide belt. They are all wearing one. They all have stockings and bracelets as well. The acrobat on the bull is dark, of course, while the others are very white. The white ones look sick, you think, Paul? Maybe they are. You find their hair very funny. It's sort of curly and long.

(The teacher encourages the children to discuss the Cretan art work.)

Q: Now, let's look more closely at the other art work. What is happening here?

You're right, Sybil, these acrobats look like jesters or jokers playing with a ladder. You suspect the one standing on the roof might push the ladder down, Phyllis. That would be a terrible thing to do. John, you think this boy is holding the ladder, not pushing it. You may be right; I hope you are. Who's watching those clowns? Sasha? Yes, those strange-looking men with a mask and a veil are looking at the jesters. Tom, you think they're dancing barefoot. You're right. Anyone else watching the scene? The ladies in front of the house. Correct. How are these Indian ladies dressed? Describe their clothing for us, Karen. John?

(The teacher encourages the children to discuss the art work in detail.)

Teacher's Presentation of Artists and Works

I'm going to tell you a little about these art works. This first one is very, very old. It was done a long time before Christ, nearly 3,500 years ago. That's a very long time ago. This painting is called a fresco because it was painted on a fresh wet plaster wall. The scene depicts three athletes. One is holding the bull by its horns. When the animal throws its head back, which it will do, the acrobat, helped by that lift, will somersault onto the bull's back, then jump to the ground, helped by another acrobat. Acrobats could be women or men. This fresco painting can be seen by anyone who visits the palace at Knossos in Crete, an island that is part of Greece. Maybe some day, you will visit Crete and see these beautiful paintings that tell us about the Cretan people who lived 3,500 years ago. We do not know the name of the artist. In those days, artists did not sign their names to their work.

We know more about this other painting. It was painted by an American Indian, a Hopi Indian to be precise. His name is Fred Kabotie. He was born in 1900. Would he be very old today? How old do you think he would be? You're right Judith : old like a very old grandpa. In this painting, Kabotie depicted games played by beings called the koshares who used to amuse spectators with their antics. They did not wear a costume: the black and white stripes are painted on their naked bodies. Their hair was tied up to resemble corn husks. They made fun of all the ways people are silly, funny, and even bad. The Hopi believe that the koshares are the fathers of supernatural beings called kachinas. These beings are very important to the Hopi. Has anyone ever heard the word « kachina » before? Yes, Jamie? You have a kachina doll at home? Tell us about it.

Q: If we had to choose a favorite picture between the two, who would prefer the Cretan bull and the acrobats? Raise your hand if you prefer this one. And who would choose the Hopi painting with its koshares and the Indians in their beautiful costumes?

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Tell me, Mary, why did you choose the Cretan bull? Because women can be acrobats and do somersaults on bulls. Well, that's a good reason. And you, Jonathan, why do you prefer the Indian painting which, by the way, is called the *The Delight Makers*? Because they seem to be having fun! That's an excellent reason. And you, David? Peter?

MAKING ART ACTIVITY

The teacher puts the art reproductions away before presenting the theme to the children.

Getting Started

The teacher asks the children to do somersaults in the school yard, so that they can observe what happens when a person is upside down, even if just for an instant. The teacher then suggests that everyone go back to the classroom and make an upside-down acrobat out of modeling clay.

Suggested Techniques and Materials

- Modeling: approximately one half pound of modeling clay per child.

SEEING Art Activity: The Childs Image

All the acrobats are placed on the windowsill for the class to see. The children discuss how they managed to represent an acrobat upside down. This is a good problem-solving activity.

Objectives

The students will:

- be exposed to American Indian art (art history);
- be exposed to an extremely ancient art work, such as the Bull Dance (art history);
- learn to make personal judgments (aesthetic appreciation);
- learn to justify their judgments (criticism);
- learn to describe works of art (analysis, criticism, visual art vocabulary);
- learn new words such as « similarity » and « acrobat » (English vocabulary);
- learn about an aspect of Hopi life (history of American Indians);
- learn about an aspect of the Cretan people (history);
- manipulate clay in order to create volumes (skill);
- discover a way to represent a person upside down (problem-solving).

QUESTIONS ?

Call Rachel Ross, Art Education Consultant, at 1 800 361-2598 or write to rachel.ross@artimagepublications.com.

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