

# American Abstract Expressionism

Frankenthaler and Writing  
**ART AND (Writing)**  
**GRADES: 4-6**

## BASED ON



Helen Frankenthaler (12/12/1928-12/27/2011), *American Rock Pond, 1962-63*  
Acrylic on Canvas  
The Edwin and Virginia Irwin Memorial  
1969.11

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will create a work of art inspired by American Abstract Expressionist Helen Frankenthaler.
- Students will create a poem related to their work of art.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between color and emotion.

## CONCEPT

Students will learn about the American Abstract Expressionism through the artwork of Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Motherwell and Jackson Pollock. The focus being on the artist Helen Frankenthaler. Helen had done artwork related to places and conveyed an emotion to those places. After discussing and comparing the artwork of the above mentioned artists, students will look to their own experiences and express a place outdoors which evokes the emotion of

## CLASS EXPERIENCE

happy or content. It might even be a place where they go to sort out issues or just think about life. A place they feel safe. Students will reflect this place in an abstract artwork using tissue paper and mod podge. After their work is finished, students will then write a poem about their place. (They will not write about their artwork directly i.e. I placed a warm sun in my picture because it makes me feel warm.) Their writing should not be a descriptive writing about the picture, but about the place and the emotions it evokes.

### MATERIALS

Reproductions of Pollock, Motherwell and Frankenthaler, especially Rock Pond  
 9 x 12 White Sulfite Paper  
 Assorted Tissue Paper  
 Modge Podge (small lidded containers to store between classes)  
 Brushes  
 Writing paper  
 Pencils

### VOCABULARY

**American Expressionism** – Post World War II art movement in American painting, developed in New York in the 1940's. The focus was on emotions rather than concrete subjects.

**Overlapping** – Overlapping is the covering of parts but not totally covering them

**Balanced Composition** – an arrangement of objects and color in which the “weight” is equally distributed on the page, so that when you look at it your eye wanders around the artwork equally.

### PROCEDURE

- Students think of a place outdoors where they go to sort through problems or just to think, to feel better
- Students then choose colors to reflect the place they go to sort out issues or to just feel better
- Students then do a tissue paper collage using modpodge and tissue paper to create the feelings of their “happy place”
- Students write a poem, not about their artwork but about the place they go.

### ASSESSMENT

	Art History and Culture	Aesthetic Perception	Creative Expression	Art Criticism
3 pts.	The student can demonstrate knowledge of the works of Helen Frankenthaler.	The student accurately identifies the use of color, overlapping and balanced composition.	The student's artwork clearly illustrates the use of color, overlapping and balanced composition.	The student thoughtfully and honestly evaluates own work using the four steps of art criticism.
2 pts.	The student's knowledge of the work of Helen Frankenthaler is weak or incomplete.	The student shows emerging awareness of the use of color, overlapping and balanced composition.	The student's sculpture shows some awareness of color, overlapping and balanced composition.	The student attempts to evaluate own work, but shows an incomplete understanding of evaluation criteria.

## CLASS EXPERIENCE

1 pt.	The student cannot demonstrate knowledge of the work of Helen Frankenthaler.	The student cannot identify the use of color, overlapping or balanced composition in an artwork.	The student's sculpture shows no understanding of color, overlapping and composition.	The student makes no attempt to evaluate own artwork.
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### NATIONAL STANDARDS

**VA:Cr2.3.5a** Identify, describe, and visually document places and/or objects of personal significance.

**VA: RE8.1.5a** INTERPRET ART BY ANALYZING CHARACTERISTICS OF FORM AND STRUCTURE, CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION, SUBJECT MATTER, VISUAL ELEMENTS, AND USE OF MEDIA TO IDENTIFY IDEAS AND MOOD CONVEYED.

**VA: Cr2.1.5a** Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2**

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.3**

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.2.C**

Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., *in contrast, especially*).

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Writing – Students will write a poem connecting and expressing the emotions of their place. This poem should not describe the artwork i.e. I placed blue in the sky because...

### RESOURCES

Scholastic Art, Helen Frankenthaler, Working with Abstraction, March 2006

NAEA – [www.arteducators.org](http://www.arteducators.org) Standards at a Glance

Cincinnati Art Museum