

Dots Can Make a Big Difference for Other Dots

Pointillist Painting – a Lesson for Life

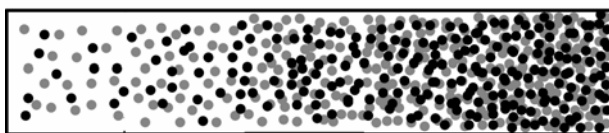
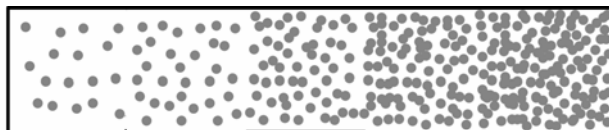
Lesson Plan in Six Steps

Step One Introduce Pointillist painting and describe the artistic world in which Seurat lived. (This would include brief comments about 1. the Academy's stranglehold on painting at that time, 2. how Impressionism was a reaction to the Academy, 3. the fear that Impressionism was becoming a brief fashion instead of period in Art History, 4. and how Georges Seurat reacted to this fear and what he added to Impressionism.) The introduction should provide a background for understanding why Seurat created Pointillism. Large visual examples should be used for each kind of painting.

Step Two Define Pointillism. Pointillism is a technique for portraying the play of light using tiny brushstrokes, or dots of contrasting colors. Georges Seurat used this technique to create huge compositions with tiny, detached strokes, or dots of pure color too small to be distinguished when the entire work is looked at, but made his paintings shimmer with brilliance. Instead of mixing colors on his palette, Seurat would place small dots of pure colors next to each other and allow the eye to mix them at a distance so a bright, pure dot of red placed next to a brilliant dot of yellow would mix optically to create orange. Visual examples large enough to show Seurat's dots or close-ups of his work should be presented as visual referents to the definition.

Step Three Apply and analyze Pointillism exploring and practicing painting techniques that it uses. We are using oil pastels because they are very soft, have a sticky nature, and come in bright, powerful colors. Ideally there should be one set for every student, but you can easily get along with two students sharing one set. Each student should have two sheets of good drawing paper that has as rough of surface as possible. Desks or tables should be protected with old newspapers or butcher paper because crumbs of the oil pastels will stick to everything. Demonstrate to the students how to efficiently make dots with the oil pastels (apply a small amount of pressure to the tip of the oil pastel, give a slight twist, and lift the oil pastel off of the paper).

The teacher should demonstrate each of the following steps before the students try them to show appropriate techniques. Have the students create a small field of dots of a light color about an inch square. Don't fill the area with dots; just add a few. To the right of this using the same color make an area of dots the same size but using twice as many dots. To the right of the second square and using the same color again make an area of dots the same size but with twice as many dots again. Moving to the right again continue this process until an area is almost completely filled with dots of the same color. As you look at the band of color that you have made, notice that the color grows darker the closer dots are together and the more dots there are. Now take a darker color and return to the first square you made. Add a few dots of the darker color to it and in the next one add twice as many as the first and to the next one twice as many as that, and continue until you reach the final square. Notice how much more powerful the shading effect has become (see illustration below).



On a clean area of the same paper try creating a secondary color (green, orange, purple) by placing dots of two primary colors (red, yellow, blue) next to each other. Keep this area to about an inch to two inches square because this will take a little more time. Are equal amounts of each primary used to arrive at a secondary? Are some colors more powerful than others and should be used in smaller amounts? Experiment to see how much of each primary will create the best secondary color. It is easy to see that colored dots influence each other and change them slightly one way or another. If you were a colored dot, which color would you like to be? Why? When we get together in small groups, do the individuals of the group influence the group? What happens to the group when one of its individuals is sad, or angry, or sick, or sleepy? Discuss the dynamics of this influence.

Step Four On a new piece of paper have the students draw very lightly the outlines only of the group of fruit closest to them. (Depending on their age and experience, have them include cast shadows and the shapes of shading on the fruit as well.) Using the techniques of Pointillist painting we have just learned, have them try to recreate the colors of the fruit within their outlines. Just using the Pointillist technique to capture the colors of the fruit is their first goal. Have them also try to make their images of the fruit appear to have form or to turn in space. This is done by copying the shaded areas on the fruit by adding darker dots or by leaving more of the white of the paper showing between dots. Shading or creating the illusion of form is their second goal. Have them make their colors more expressive by adding dots of different colors to their images of the fruit. They could make the colors seem more powerful, calm them into a harmonies, make the fruit express their moods today, or take them any direction they chose. Expression is their third goal. Have the students compare their paintings with the teacher's examples or the visual examples at the front of the class to see if they are proceeding correctly.

Step Five They students should decide if their paintings are successful. In a discussion of their own paintings or of each other's paintings have the students rephrase each of their three goals in question form. Have I used the Pointillist technique to capture the colors of the fruit? Do the pieces of fruit in my painting appear to have form or dimension? Does my painting express what I wanted it to say? What does my painting say to you?

Step Six Have the students imagine a simple object and draw its outlines on the paper. (For more advanced students, have them try to chose an object that would lend itself to the Pointillist technique.) Using their knowledge of this technique, have the students paint these imagined objects with the same three goals they had for painting the fruit. Continue the discussion of how each individual can influence their groups. Enlarge the discussion to how different environments can influence how groups should behave and how individuals can make a positive impact for the groups' appropriate behaviors. Discuss how groups need to change their behavior for different places (church, basketball court, library, picnics, grandma's house) and how powerful an individual can be in making the color of her group be bright and beautiful as in a Pointillist painting.

This lesson would probably take three 45 minute to one hour sessions to complete everything suggested. In the process of doing all of this you would cover objectives in all four of the Standards of the old core (making, perceiving, expressing, and contextualizing). I have also broken the six steps of this lesson plan to roughly match the six learning activities or phases of the up-coming core (which will be Identify/Experience, Explore/Contextualize, Build Skills/Practice, Analyze/Connect, Construct/Produce, and Mastery/Service). There is overlap in several of the learning activities or phases; but using your Classroom Project Plan sheet you will be able to see how the six steps of this lesson easily fit into them. Although I have created a sequence that matches the six learning activities, there is no sequence required. All this will become clearer as the new core comes into focus and you receive inservice for it. Love-TW