

Block Printing

IMPRINT ON THE WORLD
Grand Prize • Grades 7-9



“Sunflower”

Andrea Colbourne

Lesson Plan

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Theme

Printmaking: Relating Word and Image

Purpose

Students select or write a poem that is descriptive and visually rich, and illustrate it with an original multicoloured block print.

Materials

- Speedball® Speedy Cut® Blocks
- Speedball Lino Cutters
- Speedball Brayers
- Speedball Water-Soluble Block Printing Inks
- Speedball Bench Hook
- Speedball Baren (or wooden spoons)
- Inking Trays
- Drawing Paper
- Sturdy White Paper (Light Tag)
- Pencils
- Ballpoint Pen
- Carbon Paper

Time Required

Depends on the number of layers the student decides to print. Usually planning will take two periods; carving and printing each layer of color takes three periods; labeling and mounting, one period or less.

Lesson Plan

Process

A. PLAN THE IMAGE

Select or write a poem that is evocative, highly imaginative, or very descriptive. Research imagery related to the poem for the print. Take care that images used are altered substantially or are combined with others to ensure originality.

Predraw using thumbnail sketches, simplifying and abstracting so the design is powerful. Concentrate on filling the space, including movement and a center of interest, and the development of shapes rather than line alone. Consider the mood of the poem and try to match line, shape, and movement to the mood, i.e., angular for powerful or disturbing images, curves for soft, lyrical pieces. Select the most interesting and effective thumbnail sketch. Redraw to fit the plate size. Colour planning may be done at this time, or later during print development.

B. TRANSFER THE IMAGE

Place carbon paper between the drawing and the Speedy Cut block and trace the design to transfer it, or redraw it with a pen.

C. CUT THE BLOCK

Once the image is transferred, cut away the areas that are to remain the color of the paper. Usually, the paper is white, therefore, the areas cut out will expose the white of the paper when it is printed. Be careful to cut safely away from your hand. Use a bench hook to hold the block steady, if desired.

D. SET UP REGISTRATION

Pre-cut paper for the entire edition of prints, allowing an edge at least 2” larger than the print size. Pin the papers together to a registration block to establish pinhole registration; plan to return each piece of paper to its original position for each colour printed.

E. INK THE BLOCK

Roll the ink out on an inking tray until it becomes satiny and evenly textured. Ink colour choice should relate to the mood of the poem, although for beginners, using light colours for the first layer is suggested. Variegated layers of ink add to the complexity of the print.

F. PRINT

Pin a sheet of paper in position on the registration block. Position the inked plate against the registration guide, and press the paper onto the inked surface, rubbing the back of the sheet with the baren or wooden spoon to ensure the image is transferring. Re-ink and repeat for each piece of paper in the edition. Printmaking technique includes keeping paper and edges clean and achieving accurate registration.

G. RECUT AND REPRINT

Because this is a production print, the same plate is used throughout the process, with the plate gradually being recut and reprinted. Repeat the carving and inking layer after layer, exposing previously printed colours until the print is complete.

H. LABEL AND EXHIBIT

Label the prints according to tradition. Mount them with the poem.

Evaluation

- The print is an interpretation of the poem.
- The planning drawing is original, well-thought-out, and refined from the thumbnail stage.
- Line, shape, and colour choices contribute to the mood of the print.
- Technical steps were followed:
 - A. Skill in cutting the plate
 - B. Setting up/using the registration board
 - C. Using care in inking and printing
 - D. Gradually, thoughtfully reducing the plate’s surface
 - E. Keeping the paper clean
 - F. Labeling and editioning correctly
- The print and poem are presented effectively.

The poet is credited as part of the presentation.



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