

Poem Painting

K-5

Objective: Have students practice their listening skills, and stretch their imaginations as they use auditory and visual skills to interpret a poem, and communicate expressively about their interpretation.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion: black history, historian, poetry, illustration.

Materials: heavy media paper/watercolor paper, pencils, erasers, paint, paintbrushes, water, poems!

PREPARATION: Choose between 1-5 poems from this site- and print them ahead of time.

Poems from the African American Experience:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/collections/101640/celebrating-black-history-month>

(I have included a few on the following pages, in case you do not have time to choose and print your own.)

Opening Activity: February is "Black History Month," a time to commemorate African-Americans who have changed the world. The tradition of celebrating Black History began in 1926, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard Ph.D., initiated "Negro History Week." Dr. Woodson, a historian, chose the second week in February because it included the birthdays of [Frederick Douglass](#) and [Abraham Lincoln](#). In 1976, the Bicentennial (200th birthday) of the U.S.A., the week-long observance was extended to the entire month of February in order to have enough time for celebratory programs and activities.

Core Activity: In this exercise you are going to DRAW and PAINT what you hear!

Listen to the poem or poems read to you by the staff. First, on a separate piece of paper, write down your interpretation of the poem. Here are some questions to get you thinking! What do you think the poem is about? What ideas or themes did you hear in the poem? What words jumped out to how? How did the poem make you feel? What did you like about the poem? What didn't you like about the poem? What did you hear that you DIDN'T understand?

Now, you are going to take your understanding of the poem and create a work of art ABOUT a work of art! Start with pencil, sketching out a scene, image or representation of a feeling from the poem. Use the WHOLE piece of paper. If you want to draw/re-write specific words or phrases from the poem, or the title of the poem, ask your staff person for support with spelling or with remembering any of the parts of the poem you want to include. Then, use paint to add color to your illustration, and set it aside to dry.



Reflection: Is it different to respond to poetry with a painting? Did you listen to the poem differently because you were making art out of your listening experience? Did you like the poem, or dislike the poem?