

Watercolor Jellyfish

K-5

Objective: Students will design their own unique jellyfish watercolor painting.

Topics & Keywords for Discussion:

Watercolor: a painting method in which the paints are made of pigments suspended in a water-based solution. Watercolor refers to both the medium and the resulting artwork.

Materials: watercolor paper, markers, paintbrushes, water.

Opening activity: Ask students if they've ever encountered a jellyfish! Have a couple students share jellyfish encounter stories. Share with students that jellyfish are part of the food chain in the ocean: jellyfish eat many different types of things, such as small plants (phytoplankton), and fish eggs and other small fish called larvae. Some jellyfish even eat other jellyfish! . But jellyfish also have a number of other natural enemies that like to eat them. These predators include tunas, sharks, swordfish and some species of salmon. Sea turtles also like to eat jellyfish. One interesting fact is that the sea turtle nesting season coincides with increased presence of jellyfish in our coastal waters- ask students if they can explain why that might be! Have students describe what a jellyfish LOOKS like: there are MANY different kinds of jellyfish, but one trait they all share is that they are almost transparent- much like a plastic bag. One reason plastic waste in the oceans is dangerous for marine life: it mimics jellyfish and other small marine animals that BIGGER marine animals love to MUNCH.

Core Activity: Distribute the watercolor paper, and have students pick 2-4 markers for their jellyfish. Instruct students to pick ONE color for the body of the jellyfish: draw a halfcircle, a dome-like top and connect the sides with a ruffled, curvy line. Then, color in three or four THICK stripes, giving the jellyfish body white and single color stripes: make sure they DON'T color in the jellyfish completely. Then, draw 5-6 sweeping curving lines for the tentacles: some can be VERY thin, others may spiral down, some will be VERY long, others short! Once students have completed the body and some of the tentacles, distribute cups of water and paintbrushes: students will be converting their marker drawings to watercolor paintings by lightly painting with water. First, instruct students to paint with water over the body of the jellyfish, and notice how the color bleeds into the white striped spots, giving the animal it's translucent "SEE-THRU" look. Then, have students paint with water over the tentacles- giving them a softer, blurry look. Once the watercolor paintings have dried, have students go over their painting with markers ONE MORE TIME, defining the body, adding bold tentacles with crisp edges.

Reflection: Jellyfish are beautiful, useful and sometimes dangerous marine animals. It can be hard to differentiate between a stinging jelly and a safe jelly, so it is always best to avoid touching them, even when they wash up on shore. But should we leave PLASTIC alone if we see it in the ocean? Ask students to share their opinions on this question. After all, we ALL have a role to play in cleaning up our beautiful planet, and sharing its beauty with creatures of all kinds!

