

Water Paintings

Discover the way watercolour paints behave on wet paper and work on some graphic designs for special occasions. This activity also encourages children to work quickly and be decisive.

Materials

A4 cartridge paper - thick/good quality if possible
Clean water
Watercolour paints
Selection of brushes - sizes 4 & 6
Paper towels/kitchen roll
Examples of simplified images e.g. greetings card designs.

Method

- Look at a range of greetings card designs and focus on those that use simplified shapes and designs. Discuss which designs are most effective and how far an image can be simplified yet still be recognisable.
- Teacher demonstration is essential so that the children learn the techniques properly and can see what to expect when they work with the paints.
- Mix a very watery shade of blue and paint a leaf shape on the paper filling the shape in completely (see Fig. 1).
- Rinse the brush and pick up a little yellow paint on the brush and touch the tip to the wet leaf. Show the children how the water on the paper makes the yellow paint spread. As it reaches the edge of the wet shape the paint stops and cannot travel any further (see Fig. 2).
- Go back to the paint and pick up a green then touch the brush to one end of the leaf only. The green will spread along the leaf leaving some yellowy/green at the other (see Fig. 3).
- If the paint puddles too much rinse the brush, wipe it on the paper towel and pick up some of the excess paint on the brush. Allow to dry.
- Repeat the process experimenting with different shapes such as simplified flowers, butterflies or even animals.

Troubleshooting

1. If the paper dries too quickly dip the brush into clean water and brush it over the painted area to re-wet it then continue as normal.
2. If the colour applied is too dark blot immediately with a paper towel to lift the colour off the paper.
3. If the paper is too wet and has crinkled dip the corner of the paper towel into the puddle of water and let it absorb. Leave to dry for a moment or two before resuming.



Taking it Further

Work collaboratively on a large sheet of paper or a strip from a roll of cartridge paper. Produce a series of images on a theme e.g. autumn, so all images fit together and reds/oranges can be included. Work on a giant scale with big brushes to create over-sized images.

This is a good opportunity to teach children an additional technique which will give them much more confidence when using watercolours. If they can learn to control the paint it will boost their confidence and enable them to produce a wider range of imagery.