Porthole

Drawing people or objects from an unusual point of view is challenging and fun. I had my students incorporate into an art experience what they had learned after studying a unit on the deep seas in their classroom.

I asked students to imagine being in a submarine. They could look out through the portholes and observe the ocean world. What did they see? Keeping this information cataloged in their minds, we got out some watercolor paper to record what we had seen.

Each student sketched a porthole that completely filled a 12" x 18" sheet of paper. This porthole was complete, right down to the rivets.

Next, the students sketched the things that they had seen through the porthole on their imaginary submarine trip. Scuba divers, treasure chests, sea weed, sea shells, old junk from sunken ships, fish, sea spiders, electric eels, stingrays, manatees, ocean slugs and jelly fish were some of the items sketched inside the porthole.

I reminded the students to make a well-balanced composition. I also suggested to some of them that they should include an ocean floor in their composition so their treasure chests or sunken ships would not appear to be floating.

The students learned a lot about how to depict movement in their drawings. We had fun getting over the hurdle of drawing the scuba divers so that they didn't look stiff. Students discovered that using bands in the arms and legs of the divers helped to portray action and movement.
Paintings

By Karen Skophammer

Now we were ready to apply color! Because this was to be a crayon-resist painting, bright colors of crayons were applied heavily to the drawn objects to ready our portholes for the final step: the watercolor wash for the ocean water. The resist process works best when heavy layers of crayon are applied. Heavy crayon layers allow the colored objects to really show through the paint.

At last, it was time to apply the watercolor wash. I showed the students how to load the brush with water and then saturate the brush with color from their palettes. As the students painted, they discussed the fact that not all ocean water is a clear blue. We had some interesting color blends for our water as a result of the discussion.

After letting the paintings dry overnight, we cut out the portholes so they had oval-shaped frames with no white space around them. We decided our portholes needed to be shared with others, so I made an outline of a submarine on our cafeteria wall, and attached the portholes to the wall inside the outline. When we ate lunch, we felt like we were dining inside a submarine looking out.

Not only did we get to enjoy this porthole-painting project—all the students in school had an underwater experience as well.

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