

AUTUMN Leaves

AN EXPERIMENT IN CUBISM

By Paula Slemmer



Chris Lindsay, grade 4.



Aaron Heffner, grade 4.

This fourth-grade lesson was started with a quote from Pablo Picasso—"There is no abstract art. You have to start with something." And the something in this project would be leaves.

I have presented many projects with leaves in the past, utilizing crayons, watercolor washes, felt markers and chalk—and the results were basically realistic representations of leaves. I like using objects from nature as they have a beauty all their own and no two leaves are the same.

We looked at and discussed cubistic works by Picasso, Georges Braque and Lyonel Feininger. Referring back to our



Ryan, grade 4.

quote by Picasso, the students could easily identify the "something" that these artists had used. The Braque prints were still lifes with tables, fruits, containers, etc. Picasso used many different subjects (*The Three Musicians*) and objects (*Sheets of Music and Guitar*) to create his paintings.

Many other artists can be used in connection with this lesson, i.e. Paul Klee and his painting, *Sencio*.

The artist most important to this project was Lyonel Feininger. The students again realized that the "something" that he started with were buildings. We discussed how he used his paint to shade many of the areas from light to dark.

The class was surprised when I handed out 6" square pieces of white paper. That is much smaller than they usually work. I had collected and pressed many kinds of leaves. Each student chose one—their "something." With pencils, they could trace or draw their leaves on their paper squares. Using rulers they divided their leaves and backgrounds into interesting areas.

We gathered around so I could show them, close-up, some techniques with Cray-pas®. Contrast was important. By coloring two similar colors side-by-side and then one light and one dark together, students could see how the latter made both colors stand out.

Referring back to Feininger, we also discussed how to overlap colors to get a shaded look. Pressing heavily on the Cray-pas® made the colors rich and vibrant.

It required two class periods to finish this project. By keeping it small, the students did not lose interest as every space was to be colored. Were they enthusiastic as they worked? You bet—and thrilled with the results. ■

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