

Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art

Cast of characters -- Lost in Space Lesson

Purpose: To help the student understand how artists use space to create

Motivation: The “Lost in Space” theme is about the way artists use the picture plane (the front wall of the picture scene) to depict two and three dimensions. As we saw in the online examples, some artists use elements of perspective such as diminishing size, atmospheric perspective, and two- and three-point perspective, to create the illusion of depth. Other artists use the picture plane like a flat billboard on which to paint images. We saw an example by:

- Abercrombie, of placement of objects to create a shallow space
- Armin, of a crowded backdrop of buildings pushing forward toward the picture plane
- Thecla, of objects floating in an infinite space.

Have the students view and discuss how these uses of space and the picture plane create a mood and either facilitate or prevent visual exploration of three-dimensional space in each painting in the online unit. Each student will choose one of these methods of creating space to implement in a painting. (Another option would be for the students to explore together one method at a time).

Grade Levels: 4-6

Time Required: One-to-two class periods

Procedures:



- 1) objects strewn across a landscape
 - Draw a horizon line at the level of their choice (according to the viewer’s position).
 - Sketch in a group of chosen objects across the landscape. Objects at a distance may appear smaller than normal in comparison with similar objects up close.
 - Choose a light source within or without the picture (a moon or a light bulb, or the direction of the sunlight.) It should also help you define the mood of the picture.
 - Paint the landscape, shading according to the light source and diminishing the sharpness and brightness of colors toward the distance.

- 2) large objects filling a space

- Choose a subject for a landscape in which there are many trees, buildings, mountains, or other large, tall objects close together.
- Sketch the composition with a foreground, middle ground, and background, with a focus on a shallow space. (The horizon line will probably be low, making it look like the viewer is surrounded.)
- Draw the large objects and choose a light source (decide the direction the light on the scene is going to come from, like the sun, moon, a bulb) for shading and highlighting the objects.
- Paint the picture, including enough details for identification of objects. Do not include fine details that take away the force of the brushstrokes or break the mood you are creating.
- Tell a story with your landscape giving the viewer a sense of the place you painted.



- 3) objects floating in space

- Choose an outdoor scene in which the figures or objects are floating. It could be realistic, like fish in the sea or astronauts in space, or it could be fantasy.

- Sketch an anchor point or place above which the characters and objects are floating (the sea floor, a planet, the floor).
- Create a composition by arranging cutouts on your paper.
- Try a color scheme that enhances the sense of fantasy or space as an environment.
- Choose a light source for shading and highlighting. It could be realistic like the sun or moon, or fantastic like an inner glow from an unknown source.
- Paint your picture.



Publication and Closure: Exhibit the paintings in the classroom or other gallery. Students may write a label with the title of their work, the artist's name, and the medium they used. It may contain explanatory notes, or the artists can tell the class about their work — the motivation, the place, the story behind it.

Assessment: Assessment is based on the appearance of the main idea (1, 2, or 3) in the paintings' compositions, and how well the medium and composition help to tell the story clearly.

Illinois State Board of Education Learning Standards Assessed:

Visual Arts:

Late Elementary: 25.A.2d: Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure-ground, value, and form; the principles of rhythm, size, proportion, and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbol and story.