



Surrealism

Lesson Description: Introduce students to surrealism and teach them about a famous surrealist artist, Salvador Dali. Then introduce them to an activity used by surrealists to create ideas and have them do the activity themselves.

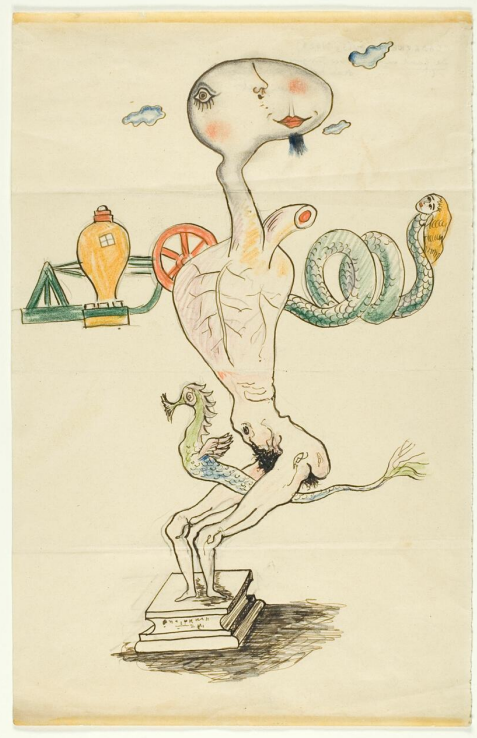
Lesson Objective: Students should learn about surrealism and Salvador Dali. They should be able to identify what makes a work “surrealist.” They should also participate in the activity and use their creativity to their fullest ability.

Art History/Theory Relation: Surrealism is defined as “a 20th-century avant-garde movement in art and literature which sought to release the creative potential of the unconscious mind, for example by the irrational juxtaposition of images.” For our purposes, it's a work of art with many odd elements– in surrealist art, you'll often see things that “don't belong” with the rest of the painting. Surrealist paintings often have a dreamlike quality– they're bizarre and hard to follow, but still somewhat understandable. Salvador Dali is one of the most well known surrealist painters. He was born in Spain in the early 20th century and studied art there. He became affiliated with the Paris Surrealists in the 1920s, a group of artists and writers who sought to establish the “greater reality” of the human subconscious over reason. To bring up images from his subconscious mind, Dalí began to induce hallucinatory states in himself by a process he described as “paranoiac critical.” One of his most famous works is titled “The Persistence of Memory.” It features what looks like melting/malleable clocks in a desert-like setting. Not only are these clocks jarringly out of place, we can see one resting on a sleeping dog and another on a tree growing out of table. Next to the tree, we can also see another out of place element: an orange dish-like object with multiple ants crawling on it. The ants show up in many other Dali works as well. The activity you will have students do is called Exquisite Corpse. It was invented by surrealists in the early 20th century to generate ideas for their artwork.



all for art

Example Pieces:





Materials Needed:

NOTE: All for Art lesson plans are always flexible with materials and students can use whatever they have on hand! We always strive to make art available to everyone, no matter how limited the resources available to them are. Thus, the following list is simply an ideation of possible materials for the above project.

1. Paper
2. Pencils
3. Optional: Markers/crayons/any other drawing tools
 - a. Students can do this project entirely in pencil. However, being able to use color is usually fun and allows kids to be more creative with their drawings.

Step-by-Step Procedure:

1. Introduce surrealism and Salvador Dali to students.
 - a. Show them this photo of Dali's "Persistence of Memory." Ask them what's "wrong" with the painting? How does it make them feel?



"Persistence of Memory," 1931



- b. The video on this website is another great introduction to surrealism and some famous surrealist websites:
<https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/explore/what-is/surrealism>
2. Introduce the exquisite corpse activity. Explain its origin and show the example pieces provided above.
3. Have students start the activity!
 - a. Have each student fold a piece of paper into thirds.
 - b. They will draw the head of their figure in the top section. Give them about 10 minutes to do so. Make sure that they continue their lines a little bit into the second section so that the next student will know where to start.
 - c. Have students trade their paper with someone else's and work on the second section, the "torso" (the paper should be folded in a way that doesn't allow students to see what the other student has drawn in the first section). Again, give them 10 minutes and have them continue their lines a little bit into the third section.
 - d. Have the students trade again (so they get an entirely different piece of paper they have not drawn on yet) and work on the "legs" or the third section.
 - e. When all sections are done, have students open up their papers and have the class look at each drawing. It's always fun for students to see what their drawing turned into or how it fits in with other people's drawings. The results are always fun and wonky and students have a great time looking at all the different drawings!
4. NOTE: Make sure to really encourage creativity in students when they are doing this activity. Really, the sky's the limit! They should feel comfortable drawing the wonkiest, craziest thing they can think of!

What Students Should Aim to Accomplish with their Final Piece:

Students should have drawn three different sections on three different pieces of paper. They will not have their own "final piece," but it will be shared instead with the other people who worked on the drawing. It's always fun to hang these up around the classroom/workspace!