

Jim West in MOZART, MONSTERS, & MATISSE Study Guide

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria, on January 17, 1756, and by the age of six was showing his musical genius. His father, Leopold, wrote down Wolfie's first compositions, because although he could compose wonderful music, his writing could not be read! At age six, he and his sister played for the Empress Maria Theresa and by the age of eight he had written his first four symphonies. Considered to be one of the most remarkable geniuses who ever lived, Mozart composed symphonies, operas, sonatas, concertos, and chamber works. His opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, was written with his friend, Lorenzo Da Ponte, the Court Opera Poet and was based on a French comedy. Mozart then wrote the operas *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *The Magic Flute* shortly before he died at the young age of 35.



Henri Matisse was born in Le Cateau-Cambresis in France in 1869 and unlike Mozart, who struggled with poverty, became one of the highest paid artists in France. His favorite way to limber up his fingers was to play the violin before he began to paint. In his later life he moved to the French Riviera for the wonderful light and stayed in France during World War II when many artists moved to different countries. When he became too ill and frail to paint, he would sit in his wheelchair for a few hours each day and create beautiful cutouts of swimmers, fish, birds, sailboats, trees, and flowers from brightly colored paper with scissors – in his own words, he “sculpted” the paper. Matisse died in 1954 at the age of 85.

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

In the weeks prior to the performance, play recordings of Mozart's overture to *The Magic Flute*, overture to *The Marriage of Figaro*, and the last movement of the 17th Piano Concerto in G Major as children enter the classroom and during periods when they are working quietly. They will enjoy recognizing “their” music during the performance. Find samples of the works of Matisse, especially the paper cutouts of his later years, and display them in the classroom. Using globes and large maps, show students the continent of Europe and the countries of France and Austria. (Art teachers & librarians are great resources for these displays!)

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE (*The following activities are based on the performance and are designed to assist you in expanding the performance experience throughout the curriculum.*)

MONSTERS! Discuss monsters with your class: Are they real? Can we make them up using our imaginations? Explain to the class that children in Japan have a very friendly monster who eats their bad dreams! Using the patterns and instructions included in this guide, create puppets of happy, sad, friendly, studious, or funny “monsters.” Use the monsters as the basis for creative writing; puppet plays; patterns for color, shape, and number recognition; math fact drills and alphabet and word drills. Use each child's monster creation to develop sets of materials which can be taken home and used by parents to work with their young students.

CREATE A CLASS MONSTER Ask students to describe the characteristics of a monster including its size, likes, and dislikes, weaknesses and strengths, and family life. Have students demonstrate how the monster moves, and how it sleeps and eats. Make a home for the class monster, name it, write about it, and chart its progress throughout the year as it learns along with the class.

COLORS, SPIDERS, FLIES, & SCIENCE

Color and change are strong themes in the performance by Jim West. In this activity, melting is introduced by making “crayon cookies.”

Words: melt, change, solid, hot, cool, liquid

Materials: crayon pieces, muffin tins, paper muffin cups (optional), electric skillet or other heat source

Directions: With the children’s help, peel old crayons. Place the muffin cups in the muffin tin and place tin in electric skillet. Add water to measure heat and wait for the crayons to melt – about 10-15 minutes. While you wait, list all the things the class can think of that melt – butter, chocolate, candles, ice, cheese on grilled sandwiches, etc. When crayons are melted, remove the muffin tin from the skillet and place in a larger pan of ice water. Let the children observe what is happening as the crayons solidify. Use the crayon rounds to color puppets as you play recordings of Mozart’s music!

Extenders: Obtain paint color samples from your local hardware store. Give each child several colors to match at school, at home, and in nature. Chart the items matched and share with the class.

Make a rainbow: On a sunny day, spray water across the sun’s rays with a hose. The water acts as a prism and separates the colors.

BUG CATCHER

The “Chewalotapus” monster in the shadow puppet play ate all the spiders who kept the fly in check. This activity will help to begin a study of ecological balance. Make “bug catchers” from clear plastic cups: After locating an insect, the child quickly places the cup over the bug. Slide a piece of paper under the cup. Turn the cup over, keeping it covered with piece of paper. Place a clear glass jar over the upturned cup. Remove the paper and the bug will crawl or fly into the jar. Place lid with air holes on the jar and identify the insects caught. Use the bugs and the story from the performance to begin discussions on the balance of nature and ecosystems. Where does the swan fit?

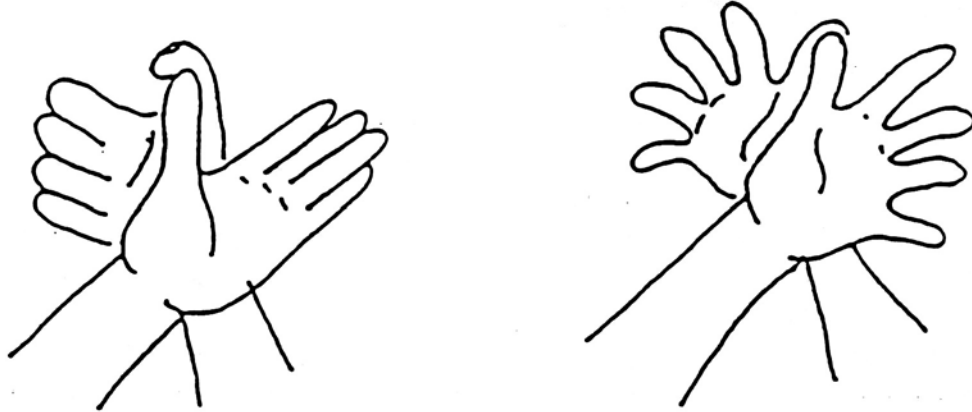
A FISH TALE!

The story of “Little Blue” can be used to reinforced and develop skills in a wide variety of activities:

- Make fish patterns for use in skill drills (please see “Monsters” in this guide)
- Children take turns retelling the story
- Write new stories using the same characters and act them out – use silly situations to help students get started such as: There’s a whale in my bathtub, the shark who only eats broccoli, the electric eel who lit up the ocean, and what fish study in their schools.
- Older students can move into acting out more serious themes – the fish who is different from the others, but finds a friend; Little Blue’s being teased by Butch and going into the dark water – encourage exploring a variety of ways to handle the situation. Ask students to list and discuss other problems that may not have clear solutions or one right answer.
- In addition to puppets, turn the classroom into an underwater scene using huge paper cutouts like those of Matisse, colored cellophane, strips of old fabric, etc. Make centers for all curriculum areas using the underwater theme.
- Explore the use of such words as “school” for a group of fish, “pride” for lions, etc. List as many as the class can think of, then enlist the help of your media specialist or librarian to find more. Make up names for groups that do not have them or that are not as creative as the ones from your class!
- Following the above activity, discuss the concept of “sets.” Which sets are complete as they are, i.e. deck of cards, and which can have items added – Halloween candy, silverware, etc. Which can be part of a larger set?
- Find a parent or pet shop owner who will lend a salt- or fresh-water aquarium to your class for a time. Have them show the students how the aquarium is set up and what the fish need to thrive in that environment.
- Select pairs of students and give them characters and situations. Using nonsense words (such as the monster’s “glub”), they communicate physically and vocally with each other as the rest of the class tries to guess who, what, and where they are.

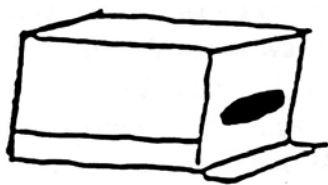
SHADOW PUPPETS

Use slide or overhead projector to create a shadow light and have children take turns practicing shadow puppets. Encourage the students to create their creatures using the two illustrated here as examples.

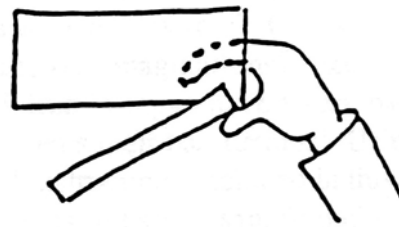


BUILD A BOX PUPPET

Each student may bring in a shoebox for an individual puppet or this can be a class project using a large box.



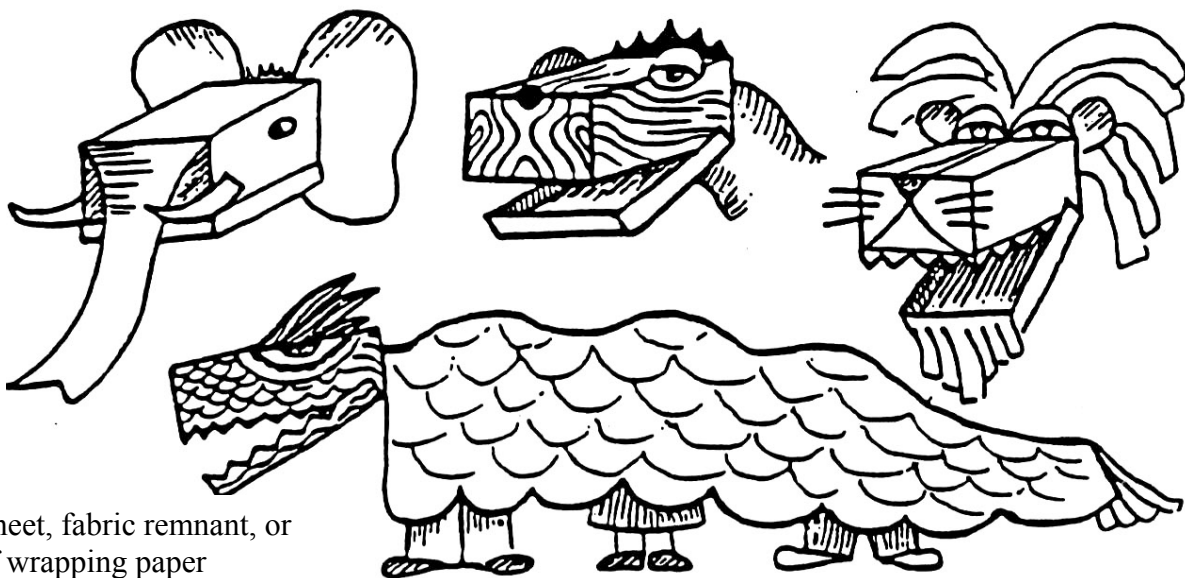
Cut off back
of box lid



Cover arm with cloth
or soft paper

Turn box upside-down. Cut hole for fingers. NOTE: Cutting hole may be difficult with scissors. A straight edge or mat knife used safely, is ideal. Cut off back lip for greater mobility and make a hinge by taping box lid to just below finger hole. Decorate as desired.

Puppet suggestions: dragon, lion, donkey, tiger, elephant, horse, zebra, unicorn, rhinoceros, dinosaur, dog, monster.



Use an old sheet, fabric remnant, or roll of wrapping paper for monster body.