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Ansel Adams, "Thunderheads, North Dome"

Arts and Science

Clouds as Art: Torn Paper Landscape

Grade Levels: 1-4 (Could be adapted to work with older students, just make the collage more detailed, even using magazine pictures, and tissue paper.)

Overview:

During this activity, students create a torn paper landscape including sky, mountain ranges, and small hills or flatlands.

Whole Picture:

Clouds are formed when water on Earth evaporates and forms water vapor held in the air. As warm air rises, cooling occurs. The cooler the air, the smaller the amount of water vapor it can hold, therefore some of the water vapor is forced to condense onto tiny particles (dust, pollution) floating into the atmosphere. A small drop of water forms around each particle. A cloud is a visible mass of such water in the form

of small droplets or ice crystals that are small enough to stay suspended in the atmosphere.

Clouds appear white because water droplets and ice crystals reflect sunlight. Light is composed of a spectrum of colors that, when added together, appear white to the human eye. Clouds appear gray when the droplets begin to crowd together so that sunlight cannot pass through. This can also be an indication the cloud is becoming over saturated and may produce rain, snow, or hail.

Clouds can be categorized into three basic types: cirrus, cumulus, and stratus.

Materials:

12" x 18" blue construction paper (for sky)

12" x 18" white or brown construction paper (for mountains)

12" x 18" green construction paper (for foothills/flatlands)

Glue sticks or watered-down white glue, applied with brushes

White crayons or oil pastels

(Optional, cotton balls)

Activity Procedure:

1. Make a sample torn paper landscape using blue paper for the background, which represents the sky. Tear jagged, steep triangles from white or brown paper for mountains and glue them to the blue paper. There should be some blue sky above even the highest mountains. Note: If students are unable to tear jagged mountains out of one long sheet, give them smaller white/brown sheets to tear triangles into. The triangles can be overlapped and glued to the blue background to form a chain of mountains.
2. Tear gently sloping hills or a straight line from the green paper, representing foothills or flatlands, and glue the flatlands in the front of the mountains.
3. Show students how to create similar landscapes.
4. Cut student landscapes into thirds so that each student has three landscapes. Make sure each landscape includes flatlands, mountains, and sky. Use each third to illustrate cirrus, cumulus, and stratus clouds. The teacher will demonstrate how to draw the three different kinds of clouds. (This step could be omitted, and the students could just select one type of cloud, and create one intact landscape.)
5. Students will use white crayons to draw a different kind of cloud on each one of their thirds. (Or just select one type of cloud to do on their intact landscape using crayons, oil pastels, or gluing cotton balls that they pull apart.)

6. Display the landscapes. Discuss the different types of clouds in each landscape. Ask students “How do your clouds compare to some of the clouds Ansel Adams photographed?”