

Trend Task: Underwater Garden



Approach: Independent

Focus: Students can create an expressive painting from an imaginative idea, showing a variety of shapes, detail, colour mixing and spatial effect.

Year: 4 & 8

Time: 45 mins

Resources: Video recording on laptop computer, cue card,. Per student: B3 green sugar paper, flat no 8 brush, flat no 6 brush, round no 10 brush, 6-hole palette, A1 polythene desk cover, white chalk, sponge, water, mixing card, plastic cups, acrylic paints: white, yellow, ochre, scarlet, blue, purple.

Questions / instructions:

This activity uses the computer.

Seat students around the computer, away from their table spaces.

Keep the chairs at the computer rather than allowing them to be taken back to tables. Students *stand* to paint.

In this activity you will be making a painting.

On your table you each have a piece of chalk for planning your picture, and a palette with six colours of paint. With these colours you can make almost any other colours you want by mixing and blending your paints. You can mix colours directly on the painting. You will need to mix white with your colours to help them show upon the paper. If you need more paint you can ask me, because we have plenty.

You also have three different kinds of paint brushes, some water and two pieces of sponge. Use one piece of sponge to clean and dry your brush each time before you change to a different colour of paint. Sometimes you can use your brushes, your fingers or a piece of sponge to paint with. They will give you different kinds of marks.□

You will have **45 minutes** to make your picture, and I want you to use all of that time for painting.

Now listen carefully as I explain what your painting is to show. It might help if you close your eyes and try to see in your imagination what I am explaining.

Encourage students to close their eyes as they listen to the following description.

Imagine you are a sea creature hanging about looking for somewhere to feed and hide, but your space is full of emptiness.

It's so dull and uninteresting for you. You've got nothing but water.

What you would really like is a beautiful, magical underwater garden with all sorts of unusual and wonderfully coloured magical plants and rocks.

You want your life in the water to be bright, interesting and full of fun.

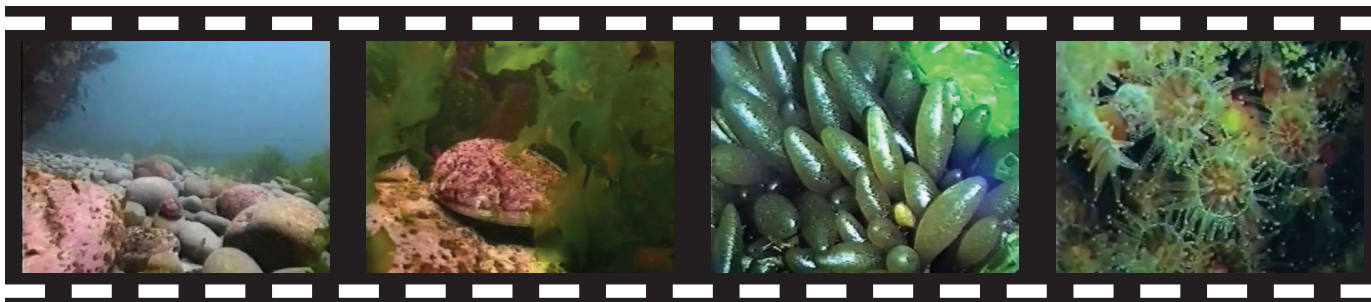
In your painting you are going to paint this magical garden with some plants that are overlapping and unusually exciting to look at, play in and hide in. These will be make-believe plants – plants that are big, bright and magical in their colours and overlapping shapes.

There might be underwater caves to swim through and rocks to hide under.

When you look up the plants in your garden will create wonderful dappled patterns of light rippling on the surface of the water.□

Open your eyes now and look at the video which will also help you to think about the plants in your magical underwater garden, and the way they clump together and behind each other.

Click the *Underwater Garden* button. The video will start.



[No voiceover; soundtrack of atmospheric music only]

You're going to start your paintings now, but here are three things to remember.

Show and read aloud the cue card, then instruct students to commence work.

Underwater Garden

Try to fill your picture with a few big, bright, beautiful, overlapping plants.

This is your garden. Paint the rocks, plants but not other sea creatures or fish.

Use your chalk to quickly draw the outlines of your plants – but don't spend too long with the chalk.

Students shouldn't spend more than two or three minutes sketching with the chalk.

Give guidance where necessary.

When 10 minutes remain:

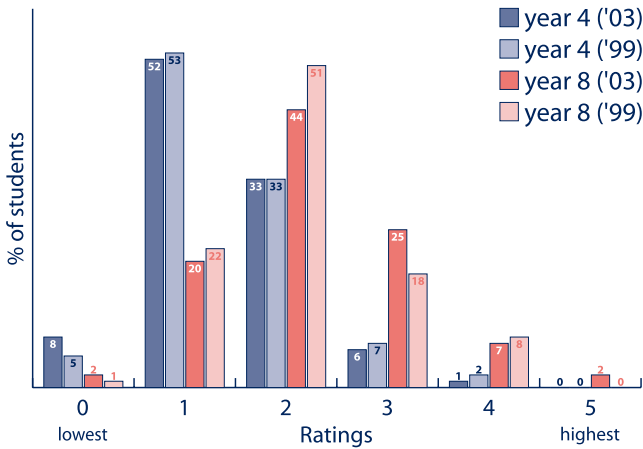
You have 10 minutes left for painting. See how much you can get done in that time. Don't stop painting until it is time to stop.

When time is up:

It's time to stop painting now. Stand back and have a good look at your picture, then come and sit on a chair.

Conclude the activity with a brief informal discussion when students talk about what they thought of the video (not their own paintings).

Global Ratings: Underwater Garden



Mean Score 2003 ('99)	
year 4	year 8
Key attributes: (0 low – 3 high)	
expressiveness: relevant image development of mood objects and symbols originality; avoidance of cliché	
1.07 (1.24)	1.61 (1.53)
composition: depth – overlapping, receding space variety of shapes; coherence	
0.99 (1.06)	1.48 (1.41)
detail: finer features included diversity of objects symbols (<i>preserving coherence</i>) appropriate use of textures, patterns	
0.90 (1.00)	1.32 (1.34)
use of media: appropriate use of tools choice and mixing of colours control of paint, confidence	
1.09 (1.12)	1.54 (1.49)
Global rating: (0 low – 5 high)	1.39 (1.49) 2.18 (2.09)

Commentary:

In this trend task, the work produced by students in 2003 was compared with a carefully selected sample of the work produced by students in 1999. Both sets of work were assessed by the same team of teacher markers. At both year 4 and year 8, differences from 1999 to 2003 were small on mean scores in the analytic marking of key attributes, and in the mean global ratings. Mean scores for year 4 students tended to the lower end of the four-point rating scale, while mean scores for year 8 students tended towards the middle of the rating scale. Although students were provided with rich visual and aural stimulus information prior to painting, few were able to use this successfully for developing personal imaginative statements and to use the medium of paint with confidence.

EXEMPLARS –

Key criteria: expressive/imaginative, composition / space / shapes, details, media skills.

MID RANGE EXEMPLARS:

The text offers possible answers to two diagnostic questions: *What can the student do? Where to next?*



Bold flat mixed colours and strong independent shapes with some surface details create an underwater garden that offers symbols for plant variety, caves and a possible sense of movement between each area. The most elaborated and contrasting shape is placed centrally in the painting. This has the effect of stopping movement.

The student has considerable control over the media but is yet to explore arrangements involving overlapping shapes which would create depth. There is scope for providing surface details beyond spots.



The student has created a network of lines of varying thickness and colour. Some of the colours are mixed. The lines grow from all of the edges of the painting (as if each side of the painting is a baseline) and sometimes overlap. The response is an inventive valid solution to the problems the task offers. The effect is almost like a linear map of a playground maze.

A number of students in this range began to treat the painting as a flat pattern. In terms of the student's painting skills, however, the paint is often handled like a drawing medium. The line length is determined by what can be achieved by a single brushstroke. The student is now faced with the strategic challenge of how to paint the spaces in between the lines. If the student had pre-planned their response in chalk they might have realized that they needed to lay down background surfaces first.



Two bold shapes of interesting profile dominate the composition in an interlocking and coherent way. We are drawn as viewers to the yellow light-filled space by the light contrasting colour and the pushing - yielding tension of the two forms against one another. The colours are moody with a preference for yellow and purple contrasts. The shapes have been outlined in a dark blue line which begins to give a shading effect. Paint has been applied to give brush strokes, a dabbing motion and soft sponge stippling in separate areas. Many of these decisions are likely to be intuitive but still demonstrate a refined sensitivity to thinking in paint.

The student would benefit from being shown how to give three-dimensional effect to a form through blended shading in paint and being set a challenge that required overlapping shapes to build a sense of depth. Given their skills in shape the student might find collage a supportive entry point to the challenge of overlapping.

MID RANGE EXEMPLARS CONTINUED:

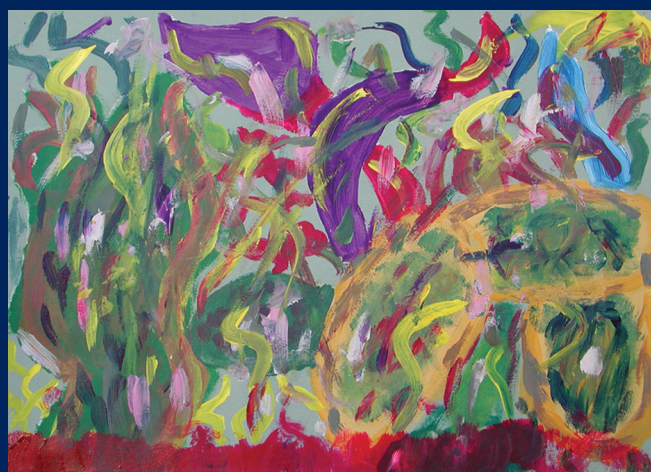
The student has carefully planned some major structures to the painting to indicate caves, rocks, plant variety and movement. At this stage in the work the colours are mixed but applied flatly, each shape having its own unique colour. None of the shapes overlap and there is no indication of how the student might handle the background.

Many students reach an impasse when they approach painting as if it is a series of separate objects that are dealt with independently. The opportunity to approach painting as a multi-visited task is unfortunately not possible within this assessment task. Students would benefit from learning a painting strategy where background effects are laid down first then shapes, modifications and details are applied over this at later stages when the first layer of paint is dry.

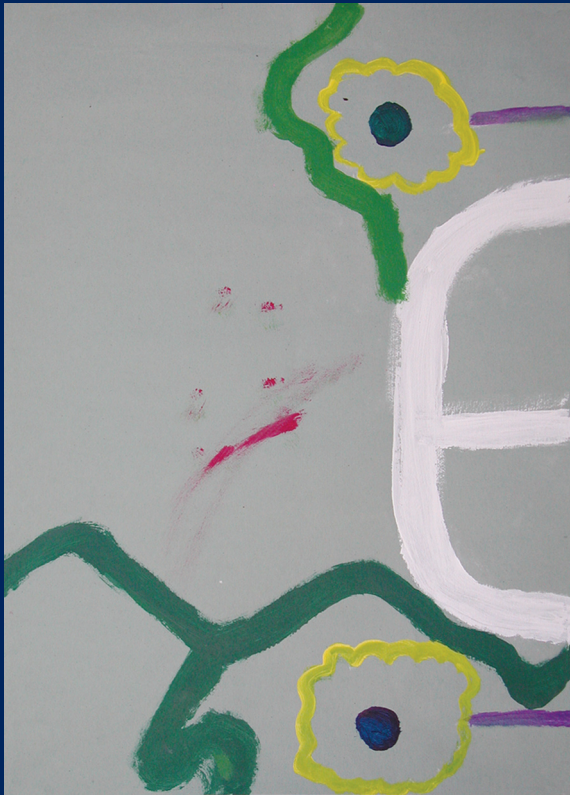


This student has strategically built up an image in layers which are evocative of rocks and concealing, fluidly-moving weed. Viewers can unearth, a little like an archaeological puzzle, the earlier commitment to three bold plants in purple, red and green and some yellow and dark green rock shapes. These have been concealed by painted textures and flowing seaweed rhythms. A red base line has been added near the conclusion of the painting time.

The image risks being lost in a flurry of brushstrokes perhaps better suited to background treatment. The base line destroys the effect of overlapping depth by re-establishing a flattened foreground. This may have been a last attempt to provide a still point to all the movement. Giving definite shape to some of the foreground flowing seaweed would have been more successful in creating contrast of stillness and movement. The strong background forms are so concealed that they are having difficulty peeking through and providing the structure to the composition that they initially provided.

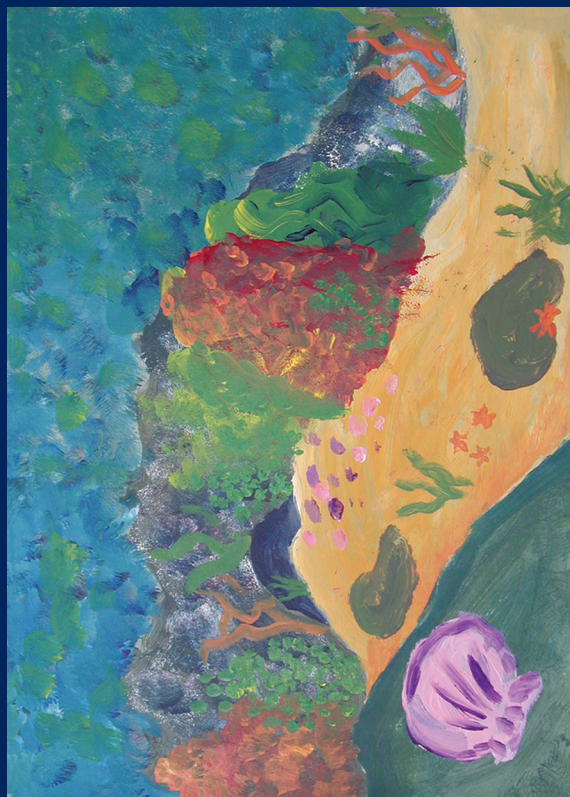


LOW RANGE EXEMPLARS:



Top

HIGH RANGE EXEMPLARS:



Top