

INTERESTING WORK

A few responses to this task were highly individualised and moved outside the more typical viewpoint seen in a majority of students' paintings.



This unique attempt at rendering a forest is expressed through a strong sense of feeling rather than descriptive visual representation. The mark making in this painting is very gestural and highly responsive to paint, to the point that we can feel its wetness and a sense of entanglement. The scraping through to colour that was previously painted gives an effect of a penetrating glow along with a whole feeling that there is something beyond this tangle. There is a suggestion of waterfall through the slashing, tangled and dribbled marks. The gestures that cross over the waterfall that are slashed into the form seem to be an attempt to keep the waterfall enclosed between two heavy textures. So although details are limited and the

forms are not necessarily pleasant, this painting is strongly expressive of a forest which is very effectively communicated by texture. There is a magical feel somewhat akin to the prince trying to rescue Sleeping Beauty through the thorns. It is a forest that is dense and hostile, and incredibly difficult to penetrate.

This is a painting that has handled the environment in the compositional tradition of 19th Century landscape artists. A variety of forms are presented, and there is a pleasing continuity running from left to right. There is a foreground that gives texture information where the paint has been scratched through. All of the colours in this painting have been mixed with care, using a range of greens through to brown. Possibly the one thing that is missing is a strong use of pigment. Everything feels a little bit washed out, although in part the effect of softness is appropriate to the style. There is a very pleasant sense of being in the bush with water whispering past us and the ferns. The painter is quite assured within the style and treatment given.



Imaginary Forest Painting

Approach: Independent

Level: Year 8 & year 4

Time: 45 minutes

Resources: (each student) 3 paint brushes (round no.16; flat no. 8; flat no. 6); stick of white chalk; 6 colours of acrylic paint in 6 hole palette (white, yellow, yellow ochre, Bordeaux red, cobalt blue, deep purple); mixing tray; water; brush drying sponge; sheet of A2 manilla brown paper, rough side up.

Description

Before painting, the student watched a 3 minute stimulus video recording which contained a spoken script and forest sounds (birds, running water, etc.) supported by photographic images of forest trees, the forest carpet and a variety of colourful forest plants and fungi. The script and visual images combined to give a strong sense of mood, atmosphere and a certain mystery.

The video recording was supported by instructions from the teacher administrator:

Students were not penalised for incomplete drawings

Instructions

In this activity, you will be painting your own imaginary forest.

We are going to watch a video of a journey through a forest. The video is to give you ideas for your own forest.

Look carefully at the video so that you get good ideas of colours, shapes and textures that will be useful to you when you come to paint your forest.

Your imaginary forest should have all sorts of plants and creatures not even seen on the video.

Listen carefully to the story. It is to help you to go into your own imaginary forest.

Video recording played.

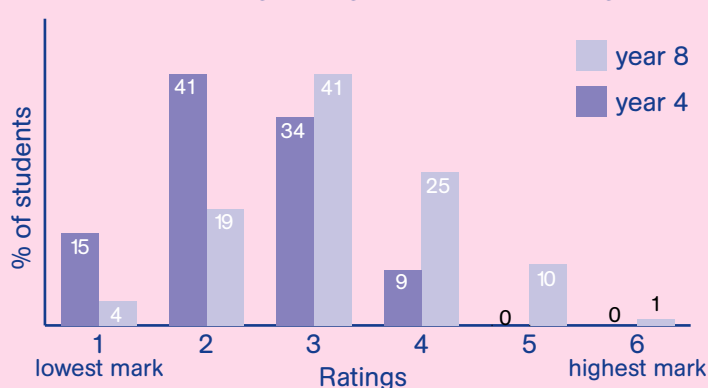
In front of you, you will find some chalk for planning your painting, and a palette with six colours of paint.

These are the only colours we have available, but you can mix your own colours using these paints.

Ask for more paint if you need it.

You may use fingers, sponge or any of the brushes to paint with. The sponge is also for cleaning your brush when you change the colour of paint you are using.

Global ratings: Imaginary forest painting



56% of year 4 students works were given low ratings of 1 or 2 compared to 23% of year 8 students. Very few paintings achieved high ratings.

Key attributes (1 low – 4 high)	Qualities	Mean score	
		year 4	year 8
expressiveness	relevant image; development of mood; diversity of object and symbols (preserving coherence); sense of movement where appropriate (eg running water) originality, avoidance of cliché.	1.9	2.4
composition	arrangement of objects in space, balance and depth; positive/negative balance; coherence.	1.8	2.3
detail	finer features included; appropriate use of texture, pattern, tonal effect.	1.7	2.1
use of media	appropriate use of tools; choice and mixing of colours; control of paint, confidence.	1.8	2.4
Global Rating (1 low – 6 high)		2.4	3.2



In this open spacious forest the mark making is somewhat underpainted. There is an attempt at inhabiting the forest slightly. The sense of tree form is there in the vertical trunks and the variety of attempts to render different kinds of foliage. There is use of fingers, rotating sponges and brush dabbing. The painting is consistent in that it is airy and spacious and somewhat tentative. What seems to be missing is a rich commitment to pigment and perhaps the compositional arrangement of things other than the flanking trees in the central foreground.



Only one recipe has been used for green in this painting, and it is used all over. The snarly and tufty topped tree forms are interesting. What is missing is a sense of density and forest. This is a careful painting of a couple of trees and a foreground river that seems to disappear on us. The area of painting that might have succeeded in giving the sense of forest is yet to come and there is not any real indication from the student as to how that would be resolved. The colour range used so far is quite limited.



Here are three very similar trunks with some sense of vines. There are some stereotype birds and a string of sky. There is a series of intervals between each trunk which vary the effect of shape and size and this adds to a sense of forest depth rather than to a sense of regimentation. So compositionally this painting is well worked out. The background has been painted by filling in between the trunks with pale colour (it is not unpainted paper) so the entire surface has been painted. What is missing is a sense of anything beyond the trunks, so there isn't really a believable sense of forest and recession of space. It is largely through the white bird forms across the front of the trees that any sense of space is achieved.

Mid range

Imaginary forest exemplars

This painting is fairly limited in its symbol forms, its lollipop trees and sun in the right hand corner, and yet it is well painted in the sense that the paint has actually been used to communicate area, and there has been colour mixing going on. The space is filled and when you look closely at the main symbols of person, a pond with fish in it and creatures at the side, it is seen that they are fairly schematic. They are line drawings in paint. It is the background having been attended to so fully that turns this from a drawing into a painting.



This is a painting that within the time available is relatively complete and well composed. There are some nice textural effects in the foliage, and a variety of tree forms. However, variety doesn't always make for forest, and the strong central tree with its yellow and red blobs has a way of dominating the picture by both position and colour. The fern forms are repeated shapes. There is a believable sense of space with the water diverting behind the trees that are further back. The effect is to give a sense of the river receding away from us. The challenge for this artist would have been to have completed work and exaggerate some of the textural information hinted at in one colour.

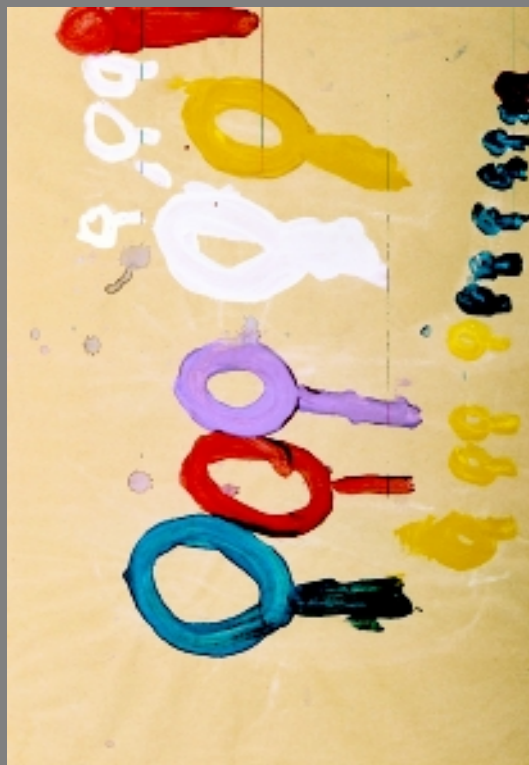


This is quite a strong composition with a footbridge over the river, and although the symbols are not well developed, the artist has managed to compose a picture that goes across an entire page to fill the space and give a sense of involvement. It is more the sense of the river coming down towards us that the student has evoked. The tree forms are fairly stereotypical with strong rectangular trunks and triangles or circles on top. There has been some attempt at shading and texture. Probably what is most inventive here is the mixing of the range of browns with the intent of showing form through light and dark. An image has been chosen that evokes bush and a sense of walking across waterways.



Imaginary forest exemplars

lower range



high range

Imaginary forest exemplars

