
Art Masterpiece: *Children's Games*, by Pieter Bruegel (the Elder)

Keywords: Pattern

Grade(s): First – Second Grade

Activity: Two options.

Project #1: Making a Checker Board
OR

Project #2 Drawing a scene of
children playing a game.



About the Artist:

- Pieter Bruegel (Pee-ter Broy-gull) is an artist from the Renaissance period. His actual birthdate is not known but believed to be around 1525.
- Many of his paintings show his great interest in the poor people, or peasants, who lived, in the countryside. He would paint people doing common everyday things.
- He received the nickname "Peasant Bruegel" or "Bruegel the Peasant" because he would dress up like a peasant in order to socialize at weddings and other celebrations. Making the life and manners of peasants the main focus of a work was rare in painting in Bruegel's time, and he was a pioneer of this style of "genre painting." His earthy, unsentimental but vivid depiction of the rituals of village life.
- Quite often his paintings are pictured from a high vantage-point to give the viewers a bird's eye view of the scene.
- There is usually a lot going on in a Bruegel painting. When people look at a Pieter Bruegel painting, they often think he used very few colors. At first glance, his pictures seem to be an overall brown, gray, or dark yellow. But if you look closely, you'll be surprised to see he used some bright colors

too. At the time, red pigment was made from scraping bricks and the most famous “reds” were from Antwerp, where Bruegel painted.

- Pieter Bruegel is sometimes called “the Elder” because he had two sons: Pieter Brueghel the Younger and Jan Brueghel the Elder. Bruegel’s two sons also became famous artists, but neither of them had their father’s imagination or was able to put the same kind of human feeling into their paintings.

About the Work:

Children's Games was painted in 1560. While many of his other paintings also portray peasant folk culture, this painting shows about 200 children playing about 80 games and activities. Many (although not all) of the outdoor activities are recognizable today!

There are only children in this painting, no adults. The kids are all playing either physically energetic games or imaginative games, or both. Here are some examples. Three boys mounted on a red fence are pretending to race horses. A few are playing leapfrog and others playing "horsey" and "tug of war." Another is straddling a hobbyhorse. Two girls are playing a medieval form of jacks (knucklebones) but with a bone instead of a ball. A group of children playing dress-up are staging a wedding. A small group of boys are spinning tops (a popular toy). A girl is playing musical instruments, another with a doll. A few boys are balancing on barrels. Some children are engaged in solitary play (e.g., blowing bubbles; doll-making). While some are playing gently, there are rough bullies here as well.

Some of the games in this painting, besides those mentioned above, are:

1. Swinging on swings
2. Doing handstands and somersaults
3. Walking on stilts
4. Basket weaving
5. Soap bubbles. Still a popular pastime, Bruegel shows children blowing bubbles with clay pipes. This painting helps to verify that blowing soap bubbles and verifies soap bubbles being used as entertainment for at least 400 years

6. Morra is a hand game similar to “rock, paper, scissors.” Morra dates back thousands of years to ancient Roman and Greek times
7. Piñata
8. Playing Tiddlywinks and marbles
9. Catching insects with a net
10. Riding piggyback
11. Hide-and-seek
12. Pole vaulting
13. Bocce ball – a game sort of like bowling, only played outdoors. Bocce ball was played in ancient Rome (and still played in Italy)
14. Climbing a tree
15. Swimming and diving
16. Building sand castles and digging holes

Discussion Questions:

1. Have students identify individual games in the painting. Use the Power Point for discussion. If using a physical art print supply students with magnifying glasses to see up close.
2. Ask which of the games they have played. Which games have they never played?
3. Ask what their favorite games are? Are they indoor games or outdoor games? Ask what their favorite outdoor games are.
4. Have they ever played checkers? With whom?
5. Share a story of yourself playing checkers as a child.



Share this image using the Doc camera in the classroom.

Head Coordinators: There are two possible projects for this lesson. Please select for your school and inform your Art Guides on which project to prepare for their lesson.

Project OPTION #1 - Checker Board Game

Supplies:

Quadrille Paper 1" grid – cut to 8" x 8" 1/student

8 ½" x 11" colored card-stock or 9 x 12" colored construction paper 1/student

Zip-lock baggies – small 1/student

1" square sponge shapes (1/student) – dampen prior to use

Red Tempera paint

Large Paper plates - 1/student

Paper towel – 1/student

Glue Sticks

TWO different game pieces. 12/each style per student

(Ideas : noodles, beans, M&M's, white and colored mini-marshmallows, etc)

Black and White Checker board Xerox copies class set – re-collect after lesson

Parent Letter

Wet wipes to clean desks.

Checker board Game – Optional

Magnifying glasses to view Art Print - Optional

Note To School Coordinator:

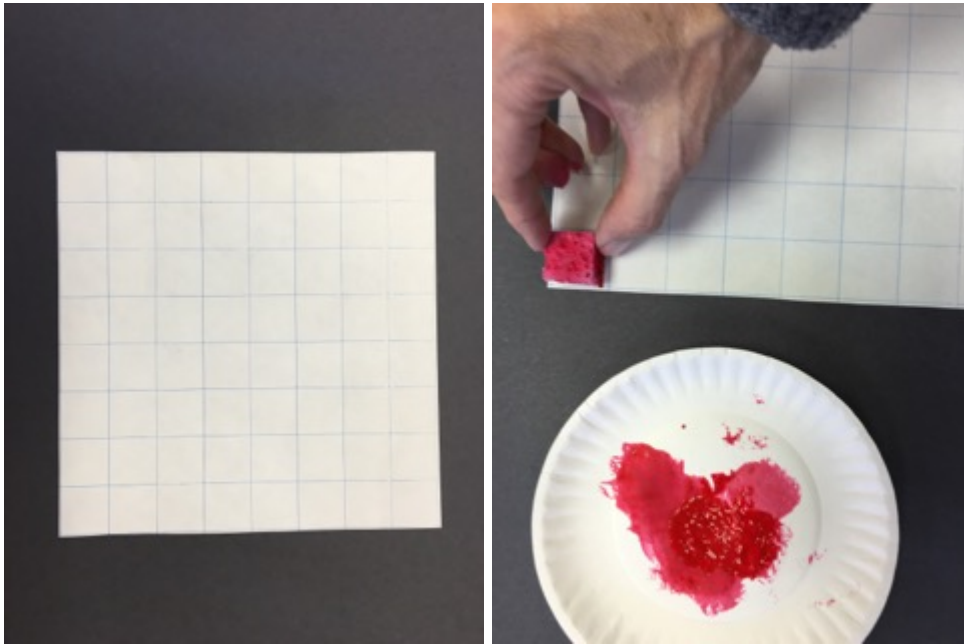
- Quadrille paper is available through CUSD Warehouse. Item #67554510
- Sponges should be cut just a tiny bit smaller than 1" to allow for expansion of the shape when it is pressed onto the paper.
- Zip lock bags are available through the CUSD Warehouse. Item # 67509120- sandwich size
- Providing an actual checker board game is nice for art guides to use to demonstrate

Process for Checker Board Game Project:

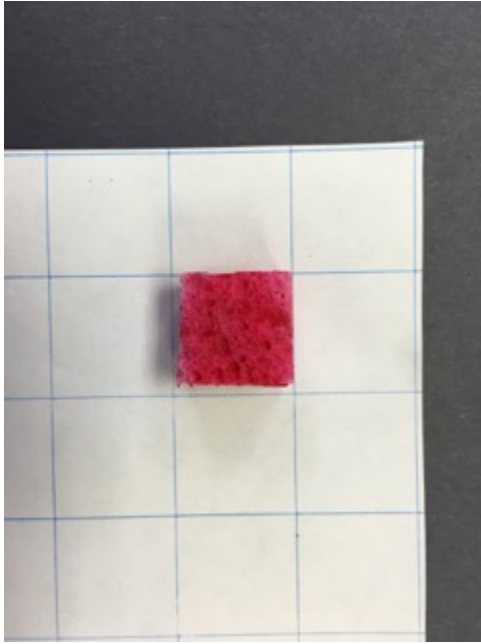
1. Pass out the colored cardstock or construction paper, glue sticks and parent letters.
2. Have students glue the parent letters and write their name onto the back of the colored paper.
3. Next, pass out the black and white checkerboard Xerox copies and the 8" Quadrille grid paper squares to students.
4. Students should carefully center the 8" grid paper square and glue onto the colored card stock.
5. **Using the classroom Document camera and the Xerox check board copies have the students use their finger to follow along with as you discuss the checker-board pattern.**
 - a. Show how the dark squares skip over the white squares. Two dark squares are never side by side.
 - b. Show how the pattern changes when you move to the next row.
 - c. Show how the pattern works from top to bottom.
6. Have students in PENCIL lightly mark their quadrille grid paper every other square with a small dot. This will help them when they begin to stamp and save them from mistakes.

***CHECK every child's grid to make sure their dots are done correctly before you give them paint.**

7. Pass out the paper plates with red paint, the DAMPENED sponge shapes and paper towel.



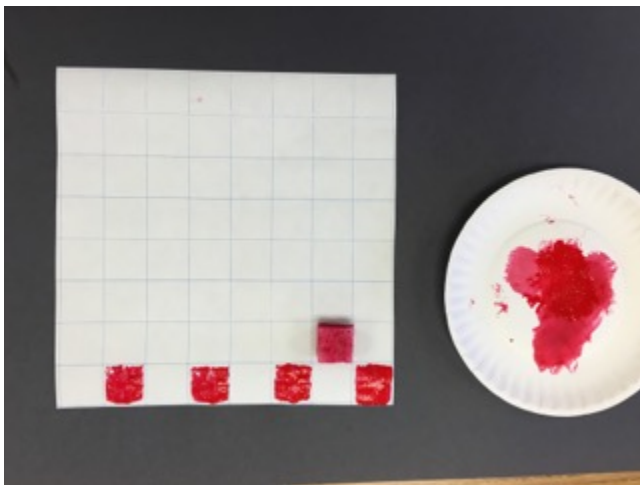
8. Using document camera illustrate how to dip the square sponge into the paint and carefully position over the very first square on their 8" grid paper that has a DOT. Tell students to press lightly. Caution that if they press too hard that the paint will run over the lines and into the next square.



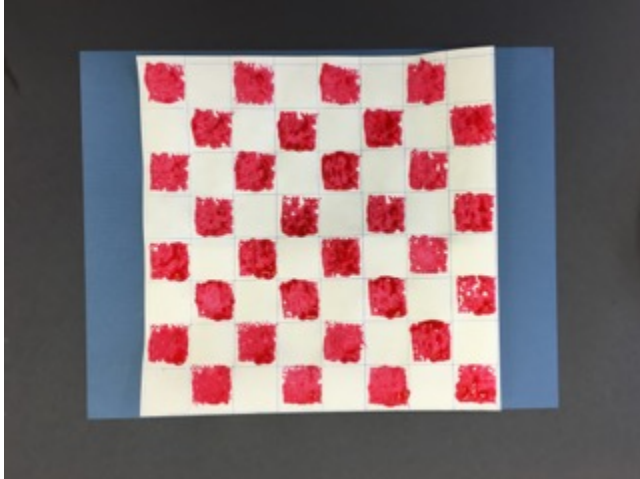
9. Show them how they can lightly blot the square sponge on the plate to remove excess paint if necessary moving to the paper.

10. Challenge them to see how neat they can be with their stamping.

11. Tell students to continue stamping only in the boxes that have the dot.



12. Continue line by line until complete. Lay aside to dry.



Finished Checker Board Game.

13. When students are done stamping they can take their zip lock baggy and go to a designated location in the room to collect their game pieces. They will need two different types of game options. 12 pieces of each.

14. If time permits, students can use the Xerox checkerboard copy and their game pieces to play checkers with another student. You may also share interesting facts about the game of checker found below.

15. COLLECT all Xerox copies to be used by the next class.

CLEAN-UP: Please thoroughly wash the sponge squares and leave in an open container to dry between lessons. Collect all Xerox checkerboard copies for the next class to use.

INTERESTING Facts to share about the game of Checkers:

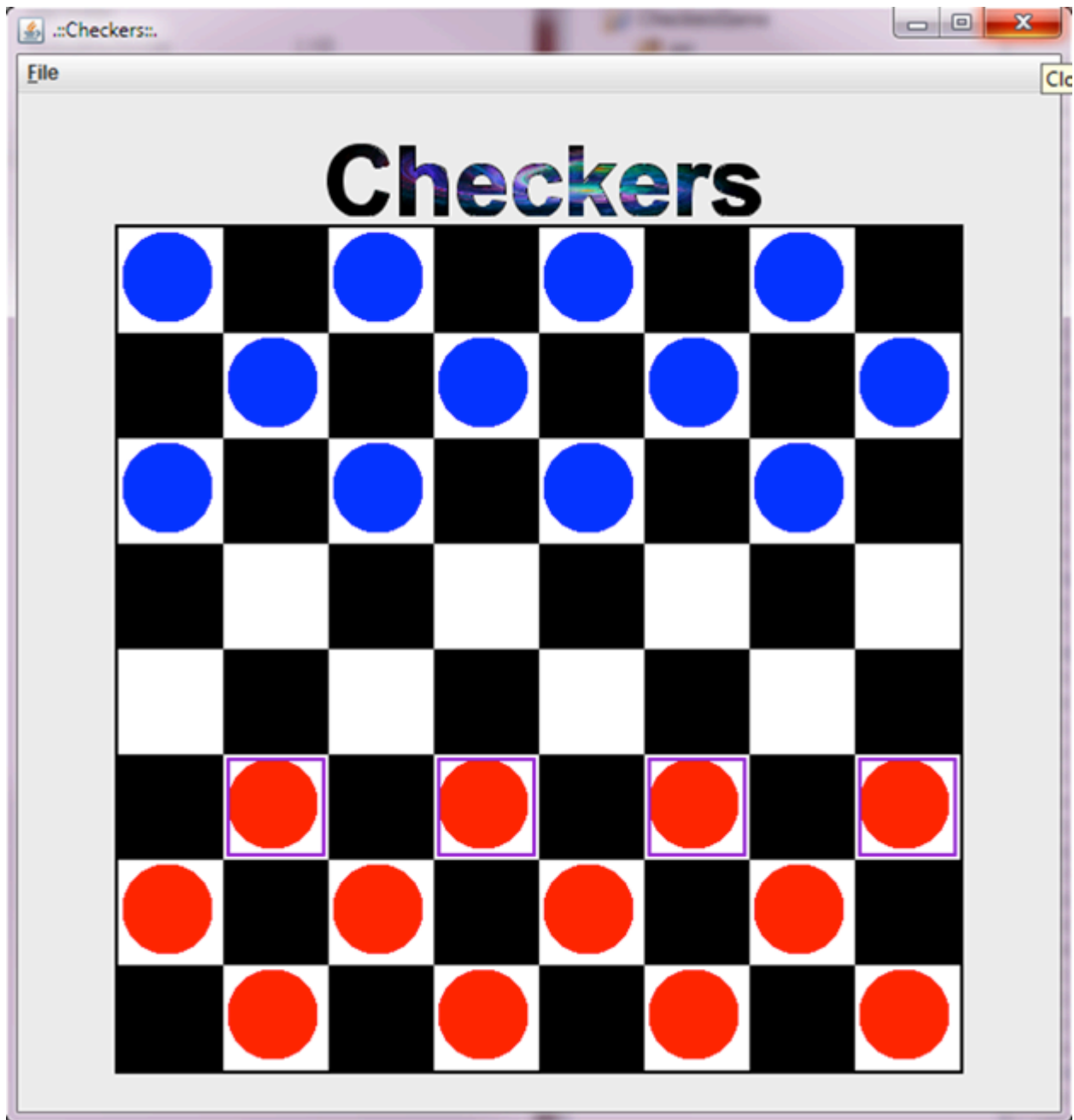
The Origin of Checkers:

Checkers is the oldest game in the world and dates back over 4000 years. According to inscriptions in the temples of Thebes, the Egyptian kings took time out from building the Pyramids to mop up their courtiers with a game of Checkers.

Checkers first hit the computer programmers' radar screens even before World War II. Although computers were in a rudimentary stage of development a famous pioneer, Alan Turing, created a basic program for checkers that required calculations be done on paper (because the computers themselves were not ready to be used in this fashion).

The first program to actually be put on a computer was created in 1952 by Arthur L. Samuel. As the years passed programs for checkers were improved primarily because of the ever increasing capacity and speed.

Many famous people of the past were fond with the game of checkers, most notably George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Edgar Allen Poe, Teddy Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Harry Houdini, Will Rogers, the famous baseball pitcher Christy Mathewson and the famous lexicographer Samuel Johnson considered the game as a favorite.



How to set up the game board. Notice all game pieces are on the white squares. Although the original game had players only use the black squares that is not important. Just make sure both students set up their game pieces using the same color square. (This image can be shown in the classroom using the Doc-camera.)

OR:

Project **OPTION #2**: Drawing a favorite outdoor game

Materials Needed:

- 9" x 12" white construction paper, one per student
- Colored pencils, one set per student
- **Magnifying glasses to view Art Print - Optional**

Process:

1. Remind the students of all the different games that are in the painting. Point out that they are all outdoor games.
2. From the discussion, ask the students to think about their favorite outdoor game or activity. Maybe it's soccer, or swinging on swings, or climbing on monkey bars, or swimming.
3. From the discussion, ask the students to remember what positions their bodies are in when they are playing their favorite game. How would their arms look? How would their legs look? How would their hair look while they were at play?
4. Hand out the construction paper and colored pencils.
5. Remind students to write their name on the back of their paper.
6. Have the students draw their favorite outdoor game.
7. When students are finished, hang to display.

Examples:



Parent Note:

Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525 – 1569) was a Dutch Renaissance painter and printmaker, known for his landscapes and peasant scenes (so called genre painting). Making the ordinary life of peasants the main focus of a work was rare in Bruegel's time; he was a pioneer of this style of painting.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students studied pattern and discussed children's games. The game of Checkers is one of the oldest games in the world dating back 4000 years.



Children's Games is an oil-on-panel, painted in 1560. It is currently held and exhibited at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

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