Art Masterpiece: The Peaceable Kingdom (1833) by Edward Hicks

Keywords: Color, Line, Texture, Shape

Activity: “Peaceable Kingdom” Oil Pastel Drawing

Meet the Artist:

- Edward Hicks was born in Pennsylvania in 1790, 4 years after the American Revolution. He grew up on a farm. When he turned 14, he went to work for a coach maker and a sign painter. He received no formal education as an artist.
- He survived a serious illness when he was 22. He believed it was a miracle, so he joined a religious group named the Quakers. The Quakers were also called The Society of Friends. They emphasized the need for peace. Eventually, he became a minister in the Quaker church.
• Painting became a way that Hicks expressed his beliefs in a peaceful way. His best-known paintings were the *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings. He painted the same theme up to 100 times. He once even painted his own face onto the lion’s body.

• There were always 2 elements to his *Peaceable Kingdom* paintings. The first was the ideal; that enemies could lie down together in peace. In the background was the second element. The background depicts early treaties that the early American settlers made with the Native Americans. The background showed that peace was a process, and that in real life, there was strife.

• Interestingly, the only three animals that are present in every version of the painting are the cow, the lion and the leopard. His paintings are classified as *American Primitive*. Primitive, since they aren’t realistic. The landscape is rather realistic, as are the people and the farm animals, but the animals that he never actually saw in person have a very childish appearance about them.

• He was known to struggle throughout his life with a fiery temper. He died in 1849. His art at the time suggests that he felt very peaceful as he grew older.

**About the Art:**

Hicks painted over 100 versions of this painting. The theme of this painting is drawn from the 11th chapter of Isaiah in the Bible. It says,

“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.”

In his depiction of this Biblical scene, he also included a visual reference from U.S. History. He depicted William Penn presenting a peace treaty to Native Americans, highlighting the peace this would bring.
2nd Grade: Lesson 4 (February)

Possible Questions:

- Which part of this painting looks closest to you? Farthest?
- Can you see a “line” between the two sides? (From the darkest trees in the middle, to the bull’s shoulder. To edge of grass at the bottom left.) What kind of line is it? (curved)
- How do the children look?
- Which animals look happy or calm? (bull, lamb, goat, calf)
- Which ones look fearful? (lion, tiger, leopard)
- How many main stories are being told in the painting?
- Which story do you think the artist felt was the most important?
- What textures do you see?
- Are there any colors that catch your eyes? (The man wearing red, bringing the peace treaty.)
- Are the shapes rounded or are they angular?

Activity: “Peaceable Kingdom” Oil Pastel Drawing

1) Explain that they will be creating their own “Peaceable Kingdom.” The image should represent a peaceful and happy environment. Brainstorm with the students about what kind of animals they could draw. Pass out the laminated Animal Ideas pages to help the students with drawing various animals.

2) Cover the desks with a large piece of scrap paper to help contain the mess. Pass out the white drawing paper, and have the students write their names on the back with a pencil.

3) Students can begin by sketching with pencil. A basic border is already copied onto the paper; students can draw a pattern within the border. The border patterns can be dots, zig-zags, lines, shapes, waves, etc. Keep the pattern in the border simple so it will be easier to color with the oil pastels later.

4) Using a pencil, draw various animals in the scene: lions, tigers, rabbits, dogs, cats, snakes, lizards, birds, fish, dolphins, dinosaurs, bugs, mice, penguin, spiders, elephants, giraffes, cows, horses, bears, ostrich, etc.

5) Draw scenery around the animals: bushes, trees, river, lake, mountains, flowers, rain, clouds, ocean, waterfall, cactus, etc.
6) Pass out the black Sharpies. Trace over the pencil marks with the black markers. Don’t forget to trace the border and pattern. Collect the Sharpie markers before passing out the oil pastels to avoid leaving oily residue on them.

7) Pass out oil pastels and begin coloring. Students should color from the top of the page and work their way down the page to avoid smearing. Use wet wipes to clean hands, but do not use wet wipes on the paper.

8) Oil pastels are somewhat messy and tricky to color with, so emphasize that color is more important than detail. For most of the students, this is their first experience using oil pastels, and it is okay if their pictures get a little messier than planned!

9) When coloring is complete, discard large scrap paper (do not recycle). Use wipes to clean desks and hands, and place artwork in a plastic grocery bag before sending home.

Materials Needed:

- 9 x 12-inch white drawing paper (with border lines copied onto it)
- Pencils
- Laminated Animal Ideas pages
- Black permanent markers
- Oil pastels
- Baby wipes to clean hands
- Plastic grocery sacks (to send artwork home in)
Artwork Examples: