



SONOMA VALLEY MUSEUM OF ART

Art Rewards The Student

ARTS@Home



Let your mind run wild: a little bit of Surrealism

Teaching Artist: Sarah Parker

Lesson Overview:

Project Description: Using “mad libs” and creative prompts, students will allow their minds and imaginations to run wild as they combine objects and images, reality and dreams, and create drawings unlike anything ever seen before.

Medium or Technique: Drawing or Collage

Materials Used: Pencil, Paper, Magazines or Photographs (optional)

Grade Level: Suitable for any student with mastery of the parts of speech or who has someone to assist them.

CA Visual Arts Standards:

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

Essential Questions: What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

Process Component: Imagine, Plan, Make.

A little bit of Art History:

SURREALISM

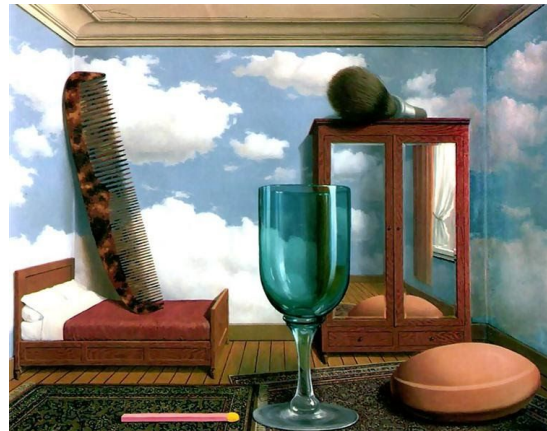
Surrealism was a movement that started during the early 20th century (from the 1920s to around the 1960s) among writers, poets, artists, and philosophers that encouraged people to think differently about the world around them. Surrealists wanted people to explore their own minds and let themselves freely live, dream, imagine, and create.

Some of the people who called themselves Surrealists include: André Breton, Leonora Carrington, Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, René Magritte, Joan Miró, Meret Oppenheim, Kay Sage, Yves Tanguy, Dorothea Tanning, Toyen, and Remedios Varo. The movement spread around the world and influenced many creative people.

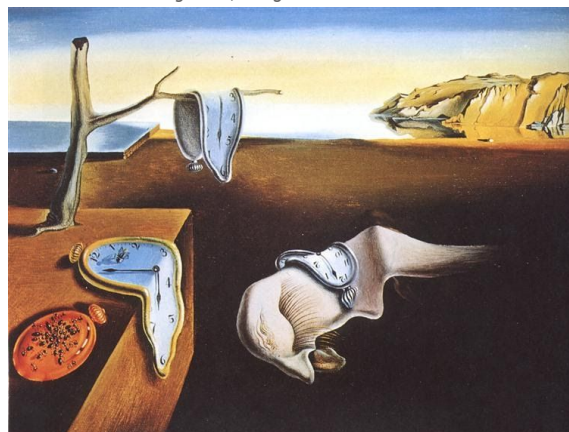
Here are some examples of Surrealist paintings:



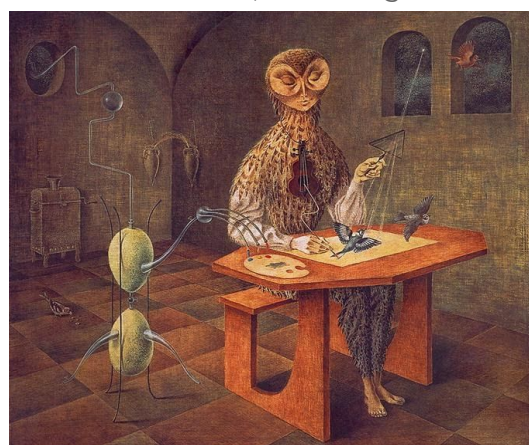
Phantom Object, Toyen



Personal Values, René Magritte



The Persistence of Memory, Salvador Dali



Creation of the Birds, Remedios Varo

Instructions:

Step 1: Get Your Ideas Flowing

Sometimes, Surrealists would play a game called “Consequences.” It was a lot like “mad libs” and was a fun way to come up with original ideas or spark imaginative thinking. First, complete the games below. Do it by yourself or complete it with a friend or family member. To try to be most like a Surrealist, write down the very first thing that comes to your mind, without feeling silly or doubting yourself. Fill in your answers and read it aloud OR have your friend or family member read it back to you. Trade and then give them a turn.

This mad lib uses a basic sentence structure:

- Think of two **nouns** (for this game, choose a person and/or a thing)
_____ _____
1 2
- A **preposition** (a connecting word that tells you more about how something relates to another) Examples: *above, across, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, between, by, down, from, in, into, near, of, off, on, to, toward, under, upon, with, within, etc.* _____
- An **adjective** (a descriptive word that tells you more about a noun)
Examples: *angry, shy, silly, beautiful, lonely, fancy, brainy, tired, clumsy, clever, grumpy, wild, open, closed, cloudy, lucky, soft, etc.*

- A **verb** (an action word that often tells you what a noun is doing)
Examples: *jump, grow, sing, laugh, eat, create, sleep, give, take, learn, etc.* _____
- An **adverb** (a descriptive word that tells you more about an action).
For this game, choose *always, often, sometimes, or never*, or an adverb that ends in *-ly*) Examples: *slowly, excitedly, terribly, carefully, accidentally, furiously, sadly, warmly, sweetly, cheerfully, rudely, politely, solemnly, etc.* _____

Now put your silly sentence together:

The _____ + _____ + _____
 adjective noun 2 adverb

+ _____ + _____ the/a _____
 verb preposition noun 1

You can add or change the words if you'd like to make it even more ridiculous. Depending on the verb you choose, your sentence might read better without the preposition. You decide.

Here are two mad libs based on jokes:

- Nouns: _____
 1 2 (plural) 3 4
- Verb: _____
- Adjective: _____

What did the _____ ask the _____ _____?
 noun 3 adjective noun 1

"Make me a _____ with _____ on it and I'll
 noun 4 noun 2

_____ for my supper."
 verb

Step 2: Brainstorm

Read through and write or doodle anything that springs to your mind after reading these prompts.

10 Things You Might Find in a Surrealist painting:

- Something that is oozing, dripping, stretching, melting, bent, or folded.
- Something doing what it is NOT supposed to be doing or is where it is not supposed to be.
- Something turned backwards, upside down, or sideways.
- Something that is alive or moving that really shouldn't be.
- Something MUCH bigger or MUCH smaller than it is in real life.
- Something turning into something else or that is a blend of more than one thing.
- Something only possible on another planet, in another universe, or that could only exist in your dreams.
- Something secret, hidden, camouflaged, or disguised.
- Something far above or far below you, or either extremely close or very, very far away.
- Something disappearing, reappearing, dissolving, or only partly visible.

Step 3: Gather Objects, Images, and Materials

- Gather anything else you need to draw all of your funny ideas.
- Look for images of things if you don't have them around the house.
- Be ready to use your imagination for the things you can't find!
- Grab a pencil (or another drawing tool) and some kind of paper.
Remember, as a surrealist, it's okay to think outside the box and use unusual materials. You could even cut out pictures from magazines and make a paper collage too!

Step 4: Decide on 1-3 Things Happening in Your Picture

Is there a hippo eating an alarm clock? An airplane made out of a banana? A person walking in a circle because they sprouted extra legs and can't control them yet? You'll know it's the right idea when it makes you smile or giggle.

When you're ready, draw the different important parts of your drawing. Remember to use gentle pressure so that if you need to change or move something, you can.



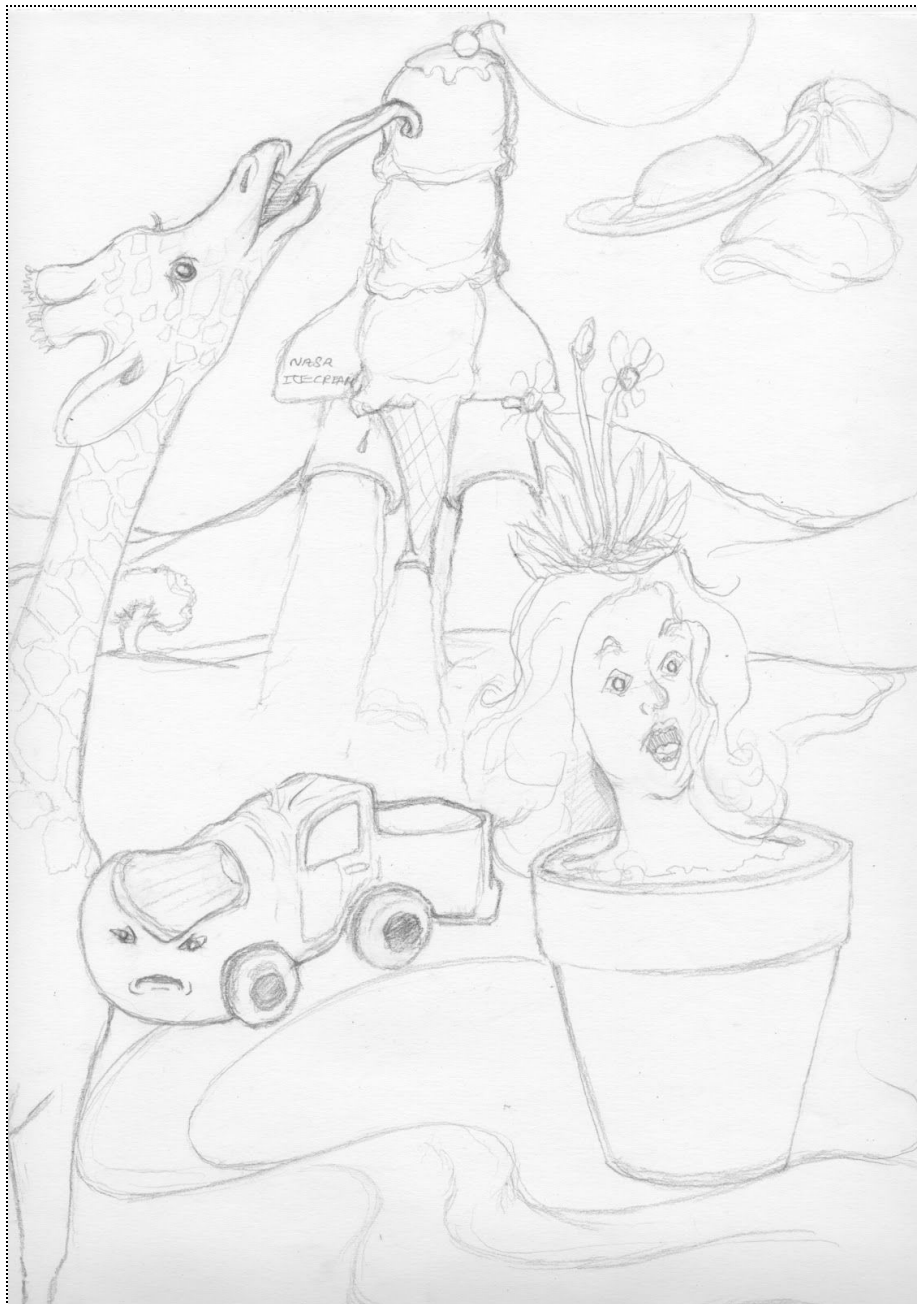
Remember two things :

1. The bigger you draw it, the closer something will seem to you.
2. The farther away it is, the higher it will probably be on the paper.

This picture will have:
a giraffe licking an ice cream cone, hair that is sprouting flowers, and a very grumpy toe.

Step 5: Where Does Your Picture Take Place?

In the background of your drawing, softly sketch out a few lines that start to tell you where all of the action is happening. This could be drawing the edges or boundaries of a space that is small like a room, something larger like a building, or a wide open space that you might find in nature. The only limit here is your imagination. What would it look like if your drawing took place under the sea, in outer space, or even inside of your own brain?



This picture is happening somewhere outdoors with mountains.

When you're sure of all the details, it's okay to start pressing a little harder and to start adding patterns, textures, and shading.



When you're happy with your picture, stop! It's really easy to keep adding and changing things, but it's a good thing to learn to stop while you are still happy and excited about your drawing.

It's not supposed to be perfect, it's supposed to be fun!
You're always learning and growing.

Additional resources:

TateKids video on Surrealism (under 3 minutes):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YE_Zas-A5A

7 Surrealist games that you can try:

<https://artclasscurator.com/surrealist-games/>