

Mabel Murple - Colour Mixing

Today I introduced the concept of tones and tints to the children. I started the morning with a brief circle time reading *Mabel Murple* by Sheree Fitch. When the story was finished, I showed the children a few items that I had brought with me that day: two silk irises, a few other fake flowers (all various shades of purple), a purple plate, cup, and container of play dough. I asked the children if they considered all of the items to be purple? Which they did (with the exception of the plate, a few children commented that it looked pink, and compared to the rest of the items, I'd have to agree; it was definitely a warmer tint of purple). I asked them if they all looked like the same colour purple? We then looked at a page in the book that had various shades of purple and talked about how you might be able to make a dark purple and a light purple when mixing paint.

After our discussion ended, I worked with small groups of children at a table. I provided red, blue, black and white tempera paints for them to mix their palettes. At the table, we discussed what you could do to make purple darker and lighter; reiterating what had been said in circle by several of the children and as well as predicting what might happen to purple if more blue or red was added to it. It was at this point that I introduced the terms *tone* (when a hue is made darker) and *tint* (when a hue is made lighter). I also suggested that as a topic, the children might want to paint a picture of Mabel Murple or of something that they might find in her very purple world.

Observations:

The children took to colour mixing with enthusiasm. I was impressed that several children were already aware of how they could make a colour lighter or darker. They seemed to enjoy painting pictures of Mabel's world, giving me detailed explanations of their paintings when I asked them to "tell me about it." One of my most important insights this week had little to do with the specific concept I was trying to teach the children. The day before this lesson, I came into the classroom to talk to Kimi and Glenn about Friday's lesson and noticed that there were new watercolour paintings on the wall that the children had painted during class with Kimi. I was immediately struck by how different these paintings looked in comparison to the painting the children had painted with me the previous week using tempera paints. These paintings done with watercolour were far more representational than the ones they had done with tempera paint, which tended to

be large, broad strokes of colour that were not always recognizable as the subject they were said to represent. That night, as I prepared for the next day's lesson on tints and tones, I was conflicted regarding which media to use. The fact that I intended for them to mix the colour purple and then create various tints and tones of it meant that using watercolours would be difficult and impractical. I realized that my lesson was much more conducive to the use of tempera paints, yet I was eager to see the children's use of watercolour up close. I wondered if their painting would be different with tempera paints the next day. Perhaps they would be inspired by *Mable Murple*. The following day, as I observed the children paint, I began to realize that this medium was perhaps posing some difficulty with some of the children. It is very easy to load up a brush with paint but once applied to paper, it isn't easy to produce lines that aren't wide, and that this is more than likely the reason for creating paintings with larger, broader brush strokes. I began giving more direct instruction to some of the children (those who seemed to be having difficulty manipulating the brush) on removing excess paint from their brushes or urging them to try smaller brushes.

As I watched the children paint, I realized that the watercolour paintings that were particularly representational on the wall had been painted by several of the children who typically painted pictures that had more obvious representations. As I spoke with the children that morning, I realized that those whose paintings didn't seem like they were about anything (mostly broad strokes of colour) were in a lot of instances extremely representational about them.

With respect to the mixing of tints and tones that week, I believe that it went very well. The children mixed many tints and tones. I was pleased to see that many chose to add more red or blue to the purple and not always black or white.

Some pictures (see source website to enlarge)



Source: <http://www.unbf.ca/education/ecc/gallery/lucinda/colourMixing.htm>