

Abstract Expressionism: Action Painting

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

The student will create an abstract expressionist piece using gestural, expressive mark-making techniques.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- large paper or cardboard (to protect the work surface)
- paint (2-3 colors) or markers/crayons
- a paintbrush (or an unconventional tool like a fork, sponge, or string)
- old newspaper or a drop cloth to protect the floor/table

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Lay down old newspaper to protect your work surface, then place your large paper or cardboard on top.
2. Before starting, think of one strong emotion (excitement, calm, anger, joy) you want to express, and decide which colors and types of marks (drips, splatters, swirls, bold lines) might represent that feeling.
3. Using a paintbrush or an unconventional tool (like a fork dragged through paint, or string dipped in paint and pressed onto the page), apply paint using large, expressive, physical movements rather than careful, planned strokes — let your whole arm move, not just your wrist.
4. Layer 2-3 colors using different techniques (drips, splatters, swirls) across the page without worrying about creating a recognizable image.
5. Once dry, write 2-3 sentences on the back describing the emotion you were trying to express and how your physical movements while painting helped convey that emotion.

QUESTIONS

1. What emotion were you trying to express in your painting, and what colors/techniques did you use to convey it?
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2. Name one artist associated with Abstract Expressionism.
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3. How is Abstract Expressionism different from the earlier art movements you've studied this quarter (like Renaissance or Cubism)?

4. Why do you think the physical action of painting (fast, sweeping movements) was considered as important as the final result in this movement?
