Contour Without Looking | Teacher Guide

Visual Arts Skills & Growth Lab • Lesson 002 • Grades 3–5 • contour drawing • 3–5 sessions

Essential inquiry

How can we explore careful observation through contour drawing and communicate an original idea?

Cultural or technical context

careful observation. Teach technical knowledge through practice and reflection without presenting mastery as identical results. Offer material and accessibility alternatives.

Learning targets

Students will demonstrate contour drawing; research the relevant context; create an original artifact or composition; justify at least one change after critique.

Materials and preparation

Sketchbook or paper, pencils, media needed for contour drawing, reference objects, process-log sheet, classroom-safe supplies.

Differentiation

Students compare two sources, draft two alternatives, label one technical choice, and revise with peer feedback.

Extension beyond Grade 12

Adult and advanced learners may expand this lesson into a self-directed series, research comparative methods, document portfolio-quality process evidence, and develop a public-facing critical rationale.

Ten-step teaching sequence

01. Notice two contrasting examples or observations associated with careful observation; name one uncertainty.
02. Investigate who made or uses the source material and what context must be represented accurately.
03. Complete two low-stakes trials of contour drawing; label what changed between trials.
04. Sketch three independent approaches to the question: careful observation.
05. Select one approach; plan materials, ethical citation, composition and success criteria.
06. Draw an everyday object using continuous blind contour and compare evidence. Record one decision that differs from the first sketch.
07. Give peer feedback using one visible detail and one clarifying question.
08. Revise at least one element based on evidence; photograph or annotate the change.
09. Present artwork with an artist statement, source credit and medium information.
10. Explain how the technique and concept developed, plus one next studio goal.

Discussion prompts

01. What evidence tells you something important about careful observation?
02. How does contour drawing change the meaning of the result?
03. Which source is being credited, and whose voice is missing?
04. What feedback prompted a visible or audible revision?

Formative assessment

At entry: one baseline observation. During: two skill trials and a peer critique. Exit: final result, revision evidence and source credit.

Safety and accessibility

Provide accessible participation roles, sensory accommodations and clear consent for any recordings or images.

Reference and standards note

https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/
https://www.arteducators.org/
Align locally with current grade-level arts standards; do not treat this resource as a verified Louisiana standards crosswalk.

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