FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 3–5 / 24

The Color of a Memory

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 3–5 | 4–5 sessions, 45–55 minutes

Media: washable art media and cut-paper supplies

The artistic problem

Make an abstract painting that communicates a chosen feeling without a literal picture.

Essential question: Can colors communicate a memory or possibility without telling the whole story?

Place-based cultural lens: Investigate how Gulf Coast artists use color to interpret place, light, and feeling.

Learning targets

- Investigate the question: Can colors communicate a memory or possibility without telling the whole story?
- Apply color mixing, gradients, opaque and transparent layers in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve color mixing and name one next step.

Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Make an abstract painting that communicates a chosen feeling without a literal picture.
- Artwork includes two intentional color changes and written or spoken evidence of meaning.
- Process evidence shows three different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate color mixing and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana Grade 3–4: VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E3, VA-AP-E6; Grade 5 (5–8 cluster): VA-CE-M2, VA-CE-M7

Studio Habits of Mind: Develop Craft, Stretch & Explore, Express, Reflect. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Drawing paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- washable art media and cut-paper supplies
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level
- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Present the artistic question: Can colors communicate a memory or possibility without telling the whole story? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

02 / Investigate Investigate how Gulf Coast artists use color to interpret place, light, and feeling. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

03 / Skill Studio Demonstrate color mixing, gradients, opaque and transparent layers. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

04 / Generate Develop three possibilities for the challenge: Make an abstract painting that communicates a chosen feeling without a literal picture. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

05 / Plan Compare sketches to the success check (two intentional color changes and written or spoken evidence of meaning); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

06 / Produce Produce an original visual response using color mixing, gradients, opaque and transparent layers; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

07 / Critique Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of color mixing in the work.

08 / Revise Revisit the specific checkpoint: Two intentional color changes and written or spoken evidence of meaning. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

09 / Present Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

10 / Reflect Reflect: What evidence proves you improved color mixing? What will you try or investigate next?

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Observe + question** Investigate how Gulf Coast artists use color to interpret place, light, and feeling.	Notice/wonder log and initial study.
Day 2	**Develop craft** Demonstrate color mixing, gradients, opaque and transparent layers. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.	Technique trials and feedback.
Day 3	**Generate + plan** Produce three proposals and select one using criteria.	Three thumbnails and written/oral rationale.
Day 4	**Produce + critique** Create and test work against the checkpoint: Two intentional color changes and written or spoken evidence of meaning.	Work sample and peer response.
Day 5	**Revise + exhibit** Make one substantial change; present and reflect.	Before/after evidence and a precise next step.

Key technique to model

color mixing, gradients, opaque and transparent layers

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Students may choose a fictional memory or emotion; personal sharing is not required. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Never score the authenticity of a student's personal experience.

Stretch & explore

Create paired works with contrasting emotional color systems.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.