

## Key Ideas

- Children can tell stories in art.
- Artists are good models for creating visual stories.
- Stories in art reflect artists' experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Visual stories can help us remember important events.
- Creating a visual story involves choosing the most important part of the story and deciding how best to dramatize it.

## Program Summary

As this program begins, Zizi rushes in to join Don and THE BIG A children in Don's studio. Zizi just had an exciting experience—his cat had kittens in his closet. Don explains that artists often use their own experiences to tell stories in art.

THE BIG A children learn that art helps us remember important events. Through the Magic Easel, book illustrator Margot Zemach reveals how she dramatizes an event after she has selected the most important part of the story. The children's visual awareness is enhanced when Fran and Bill James explain the stories and designs in Northwest Coast Indian art during a visit to the Sea Monster House.

While the children use what they have learned to create their own visual stories, Don shows how using his Idea Book helped him finish the animated story, "Norman the Storyteller," a delightful tale that illustrates how to use personal experiences to develop ideas for visual stories.

## Key Words

**design**—the elements of design include line, color, shape and texture.

**form line**—lines used to outline the overall features of a subject.

**Idea Book**—a book for collecting quickly sketched ideas and thoughts that can be elaborated and refined into works of art. (See "Idea Books" in the Appendix for ways to make them.)

**contrast**

**details**

**lines**

**visual**

## Featured Artwork

*Cape Cod Evening*; Edward Hopper; National Gallery of Art, Washington; John Hay Whitney Collection (Date: 1939; Oil on canvas; 30 ¼" x 40 ¼" (0.768 x 1.022 cm.))

*The Triumph of Camillus*; Biagio d'Antonio da Firenze; National Gallery of Art, Washington; Samuel H. Kress Collection (Date: c.1480; Wood; 23 ⅝" x 60 ¾" (0.60 x 1.54 cm.))

Illustrations from *The Judge* by Margot Zemach. Copyright 1969 by Margot Zemach. Used by arrangement with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc.

Illustrations by Margot Zemach from *The Two Foolish Cats* by Yoshiko Uchida. Illustrations copyright 1987 Margot Zemach. (A Margaret K. McElderry Book) Reprinted with the permission of Macmillan Publishing Co.

*Killer Whale, Man-of-the-Sea, Eagle*; Darren Yelton; Vancouver Island; Oil on wood; L: 28" x H: 10" x D: 4 ½"; Collection of Joe James

*Sea Monster House* and totems. Pacific Science Center, Seattle, Washington. Facade is a partial reconstruction of two houses built by Chief John Scow of the Kwakiutl Nation. Painting is a copy of a 1902 Sea Monster design. Totem poles are originals from Chief Scow's Raven House, dated 1915.

## Before the Program

Ask the students to remember an exciting, sad or scary experience. Can they tell their stories in words or by acting them out? How did it make them feel? Can they think of a color or line or shape that expresses how they felt? Explain that today they will learn how to tell their stories without words, in the way artists do.

Select two or more reproductions of visual stories such as those in THE BIG A Teacher's Art Kit. Display your selections so that students can study them carefully. Ask the students to describe the stories being told. Can they describe the mood or feeling of each story? Help them figure out how the elements of design—line, color, shape and texture—contribute to the mood and feeling. (For example, "The *sharp, jagged lines* give the story a *painful feeling*.")

Explain that in this program they will see other visual stories created by artists and children. Encourage them to look carefully for ways that the elements of design are used to tell stories.

## After the Program

### Recall the Program

Ask the students to recall some of the visual stories created by artists and THE BIG A children. Encourage them to use expressive language to describe details of the stories. (For example, "The cat that Zizi painted has *big, thick* lines." "The Sea Monster has *fierce, wide-open* eyes.") Ask the students what THE BIG A children learned from the artists. How did they express feelings such as excitement, love, power and fear in their artwork?

NOTE: The artwork created by THE BIG A children was actually produced in stages and required several class periods to complete.

### Discuss Ideas for Creating Art

Explain that the students are going to sketch ideas for visual stories in their own Idea Books. Show them how to make Idea Books. (See "Idea Books" in the Appendix.) Invite the students to recall personal experiences that would make good visual stories, such as experiences at home, in school, at camp, in dreams and imaginary experiences. Students can bring to class photographs of family and friends, or postcards of vacations. Some students may wish to write their stories. Help the students focus on the most dramatic parts of an experience and describe its mood and feeling. (For example, "Then I fell down the steps at home. My legs went up in the air. I was really scared.")

### Create Art

Invite the students to sketch their favorite stories in their Idea Books using a variety of drawing tools. Discourage copying of other artwork. Have the students select their most visually dramatic sketches. Then use the sketches as the beginnings for artwork made with paint, clay, crayons and colored construction paper. (See "Clay Sculpture," "Colored Paper Collage," "Crayon Drawing," "Felt Tip Pen Drawing" and "Tempera Painting" in the Appendix.) While the students work, encourage them to think about and experiment with lines, colors, shapes and textures that best express the moods and feeling of their stories.

### Respond to Art

Display the students' completed visual stories. Invite each student to pick a classmate's work and describe the story. Help the students to practice describing artwork created by their classmates and artists. (For example, what is the story? What is the mood? How do the lines, colors, shapes and texture express the mood?)