

Flight Dreams – Sensational Flights!



Photo by Jan Von Holleben

Title: Sensational Flights!

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Suggested Grade Level(s): Grades 3-5

Suggested Length of Class Time: At least four classes will be needed to develop this project, but teachers may decide to extend the lessons over a longer period of time.

Subject Areas: Language Arts, and Art are the main areas of focus but Math and Science outcomes can be integrated naturally depending on the theme and direction of the project.

Rationale: Have you ever wondered what it would be like to fly? In this lesson students are invited to imagine and stage the experience of flight. As a class, students will design and create a mural, photograph each other “in flight” and write descriptive stories about their adventures.

Logistics:

Classroom setup

This lesson unfolds in three parts. The introductory session will involve brainstorming and planning. Once the class has decided on a theme and the materials have been gathered, the classroom will be used in three ways: as a writing centre where stories are developed; a landscape mural painting station; and a photo studio. Ideally, teachers will have use of an art room, pod, cafeteria, gym or workspace just outside their classroom - any space that affords enough room to create.

Materials for discussion

- Access to Internet: Artist Jan Van Holleben's site and his collection of photographs called "Dreams of Flying" at <http://www.janvonholleben.com>
- Simple picture books to remind students of characters they've encountered in flights of fancy or imagination such as: *Penguin Dreams* by Jotto Seibold, *Tar Beach* by Faith Ringgold, *Curious George* by Margaret and H.A. Ray, *The Magic School Bus Space Adventures* or *Taking Flight*, *Kiki's Delivery Service* (an amazing series of graphic novels from Studio Ghibli Library), *Mary Poppins*, *Abeulah* by Arthur Dorros
- Chapter books such as Harry Potter, Kenneth Oppel's *Silverwing*, stories from Greek mythology (Icarus, Pegasus), *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl, Peter Pan, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* by Ian Fleming, etc.
- In addition to books, you may want to use stock photography (on-line catalogues around the theme of flight or landscapes), or reference travel magazines
- Pieces of music such as "Flight of the Bumblebee" to inspire students and allow them to visualize flying through the sense of hearing
- Access to chart paper or whiteboard for note taking, brainstorming, dividing up tasks, etc.

Materials for story writing

- Paper
- Pencils

Materials for Photo Studio

- Access to a printer
- Access to a digital camera
- White sheet for photo background
- Sturdy tape (such as Duct tape) to hold sheet down on the ground
- Prop materials as determined by class theme
- Electric fan (for "windblown" look)

Materials for Mural and Final Assembly

- Sturdy paper (craft paper or another of a quality that you can paint on)
- Paint and paintbrushes, water buckets for clean up
- Newsprint to protect surface students are painting on or sponge for easy cleanup
- Scissors and glue

Suggested Outcomes:

Language Arts:

- Create texts collaboratively, using descriptive writing
- Create written texts
- Organize, reflect on and view ideas
- Writing with other media to increase impact of presentation
- Plan and develop a story using expanding vocabulary

Art:

- Explore and manipulate a range of materials
- Express personal ideas and feelings through art-making
- Students will work independently and with others throughout the creative art-making process
- Recognize that people use a variety of approaches when making art

Science:

- Explore movement of birds, mammals, planes, things in flight
- Identify factors that affect movement
- Knowledge of atmospheric conditions – air pressure, gravity, wind or other forces, debris or other atmospheric details, cloud types, weather formations

Math:

- Develop spatial sense and understand position in space

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:

Initial set up:

Class 1: The purpose of this class is to introduce students to their “*Sensational Flight!*” project.

Begin a discussion by asking students if they’ve ever wondered what it would be like to fly (as one would in dreams or imagination). You may want to give them a minute to imagine they are flying – around the classroom or all the way to outer space. Invite them to tell you about their imaginings. Begin a list on the board of words they use to describe

what that feeling might be like. A Venn diagram may help organize the information as it comes forth. Ask them to think about all the senses: What would they smell, see, feel, hear, taste? Allow them the opportunity to do this more than once if time allows. Next encourage them to select a different flying experience (if they were floating ask them to consider zooming, etc.), or play music to engage them further.

Next, ask students to recall characters they've encountered in books or films. (Introduce students to relevant pieces of fiction centered upon flight from the resources you have gathered.) Since you are preparing students to create a landscape or backdrop setting for their "flights", ask them to try to remember where the characters were flying and why? These descriptions will help them think about details and reinforce the tone (or feeling) of the overall piece they are about to create. You may want to select a passage to read aloud.

Finally, lead students to German artist Jan Von Holleben's website to explore his photographic series called *Dreams of Flying*. Show them five or six of the staged flight photos and ask for their comments.

Explain that as a class, they are going to create art and writing inspired by the literature and art they've just been considering. Explain the tertiary breakdown of the project and, in particular, how they will set up a photo studio to "stage" flight photographs. (These will later be printed, cut out and adhered to the giant mural they will create. Refer to **Extension of Ideas** to see how to simplify this project or create an exhibit more like artist Jan Von Holleben.)

Determine a theme that the class would most like to explore and develop a list of resources, props and materials you will need for your next class. In addition to deciding the "location" or landscape for the mural (outer space, up in the clouds, etc.), students will need to figure out what purpose they have for flying up there! They may wish to make a note of their character and what props they will need for the next class. These should be kept fairly simple: a fan to blow back their hair, a scarf trailing behind them, an umbrella, etc.).

Class 2: Divide the class into three working groups that will rotate over the course of the project. Each student will get a chance to stage his/her own photo, to write and work on the backdrop in this session. This may take several classes or it may be done in one concentrated period.

1. The Mural

As a class, students should determine the overall tone and feel of the mural. Will it be fantasy based or more realistic? Is perspective important? How will that be shown? What details need to be included? Will the paint be applied directly to the mural paper or will there be a sketch first? Are students in favour of cutting and pasting shapes (like Eric Carle or Leo Lionni) to create the background? (If so, use this session to paint textures and tones on large sheets of paper for later use.) Is there another painter or illustrator that is admired? Look through the resources available if students want to spend

time thinking about this. Be sure the background surface is big enough to hold all the photographs without looking crowded.

Ensure that the station is well stocked with paint, brushes and water rinsing, along with other materials that may be needed. Students should be prepared to clean up the painting station and be responsible around any resources they are referencing.

2. The Photo Studio

Determine ahead of time whether this station can operate independently or if additional support will be needed. Perhaps a parent or another teacher, book buddy, etc. could be on hand to help students with this portion of the project.

Students will need to be given some basic information about the digital camera if they are taking turns operating it themselves. Be sure they are aware of how to take a clear picture and how to frame the work. Lighting should be adequate and students will need to ensure their photo has been saved.

Perhaps the first group can use a flip chart or white board to record settings on the digital camera or any other pertinent information for the remaining groups.

It's clear from some of Jan Van Holleben's photographs that he used a chair or ladder to gain additional perspective. This is a great opportunity for students to look through the viewfinder from different angles and positions to see what happens to an image. If they stand on a ladder, desk or chair to gain additional height, make sure they are safe!

3. The Writing Centre

Students in the writing centre should have all the materials they need to begin writing a draft of their story. They may want to bounce ideas off each other or work independently. Perhaps students will want to develop their work in another location that is quieter – the library, etc. To further their research, they may want to stand next to an open second story window for a few minutes listening to the sounds they hear outside, closing their eyes and imagining flight. Ask students to use some of the words they listed in the brainstorming session to enhance their stories.

Class 3: If the mural requires further detail (outlining to make things stand out and look richer now that the paint is dry) or cutting and pasting if the approach is collage-style, this can be done first.

Photographs should be printed in advance for this class so that students can cut them out and add them to the mural. (Adjust this step if students are doing alternate versions of this project.)

Students may use this session to polish their writing piece. Students may also want to exchange their work with a classmate for feedback.

Class 4: This final session should be reserved for any additional details and a chance to enjoy all their efforts! Stories may be read aloud or presented, with photos, to other grades. It would be great if students reflected on their work. (Is the piece exciting? Does it really capture the possibility of flying? Etc.)

Extension of ideas:

This lesson can be simplified and expanded. If you would rather this be an individual project, a photo studio could still be set up in the classroom and students could create their own backdrop on an individual sheet of paper. (But offer them large sheets of paper so that when they add their photo there is enough space to get a sense of where the student is flying.)

If the result you are looking for is more like the artist Jan Von Holleben, create the mural first and have each student stage their photograph in front of it. They would all have different poses and stories, but the background would be shared. Alternately, you could have students working in different groups with themes such as space flight, up in the clouds, migrating, etc. Each group would then prepare their backdrop according to the theme.

This lesson can be applied to many subject areas. If studying clouds or atmospheric conditions is part of your curriculum, simply build the project around those themes.

Or, chose a piece of music that makes students take off!

Suggestions for Assessment:

Observe students to see that they are working cooperatively as they complete the three components of the project. Sharing materials and organizing themselves into groups is key to the success of the project.

Determine whether the writing corresponds with the visual component and if students were successful in engaging their classmates (or other audience members) in their flight story. Is the writing clear and expressive? Does it make use of the vocabulary listed by the group during the brainstorming session? Does it make use of more than one of the five senses? Is the mural engaging? Is it obvious that the characters in it are not on the ground? How creative was the student's approach? Did the class gain a technical understanding of the digital camera and its basic functions? Were their photos clear and understandable? Was the project enjoyable?



