

A Child's Drawing Analysis Research Paper

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All children have very different artistic abilities and tend to develop those abilities at various rates throughout their childhood. Because of this, it is important that we understand how these developments affect children and what each stage of artistic growth tells us about these children. It is especially important for educators to have this kind of understanding in the classroom. The way a child draws can tell us as teachers so much about our students. How well a student draws at a certain age not only gives us insight into their artistic abilities, but could also give us a greater understanding of where their overall learning abilities are at that moment. Their drawings may be a reflection of how they learn; they may be on a slower moving path of learning or they may be considered gifted in the way they understand and grasp certain ideas in school.

Knowing and understanding the stages of artistic development is also a great way for teachers to assess their students.

According to Brittain and Lowenfeld (1970), there are six stages of development: the scribble stage, the preschematic stage, the schematic stage, the gang age, the pseudo-naturalistic stage, and adolescent art (p. 47-52). At each stage children begin to advance in their drawing skills a little at a time. In class, we were each given a drawing to analyze (see Figure 1, above).



Figure 1. An example of a child's drawing in the Gang Age stage.

We were asked to decide which stage the artist would fit into that coincides with the work of art. Analyzing a student's work of art gives us a better understanding of who our students are as people. A simple drawing of a student's family could tell us so much about their lives at home, what they do outside of school, and how these things may affect them when they are inside the classroom, or many other things that have to do with a student's life. "Our feelings arise because we see pictures as extensions of the real world" (Bang, 2000, p. 41). Student's pictures and paintings are an extension of their lives and what they think and feel about the world, and this is why it is important to know about the stages of artistic development. Drawing is a skill that continues to develop as children grow and age. It helps them with motor skills, understanding the world, and expression.

Description and Analysis

The work of art I chose for this analysis is a portrait of a person, which appears to be fairly advanced in the stages of drawing development. Though I know nothing about this artist, may that be age, gender, race, ethnicity, I can still see that he is making way toward a more developed stage of artistic ability. According to the stages of development listed previously, this artist is in The Gang Age, Nine-Twelve Years: The Dawning Realism (Brittain & Lowenfeld, 1970, p. 50). There are many characteristics in this figure that lead me to believe that this child is at this point in his art skill. For instance, the child shows a great awareness of details that is portrayed through his use of lines to represent facial hair. This use of detail can lead viewers to believe that this is a portrait of an older man, maybe a father or role model of the student. The use of detail can also be seen through the drawing of the

man's shirt. The shirt could have been kept plain and simple, but the use of a plaid patten shows me that the student notices little details. Another characteristic from the pattern of the shirt that is listed in this specific stage is the student's greater awareness of clothing details, from the human figure representation section. . The shirt has a pattern, buttons, and pockets. There is even a layering to the clothes with an under shirt, button up shirt and what appears to be a tie. To further this idea of overlapping objects that develops in this stage, the man in the picture is wearing glasses. This shows that the artist knows how to portray things that are more complex in detail, like he did with the clothes.

Human figure representation is another reason why the artist fits into the gage age stage because he has "less exaggeration, distortion, and omission of body parts to show emphasis" (Brittain & Lowenfeld, 1970, p. 50). Though the head is larger than the body and some of the body parts, such as the lips, are much bigger on the face, as a whole the portrait is relatively proportionate and he includes all the body parts from the waist up. Along with human figure representation, one characteristic of this stage that Brittain and Lowenfeld mention is that the body parts retain their meaning when separated. The picture is not just a stick figure or geometric shapes that are supposed to represent bodies. If you were to just see the head or just see the body, it would be obvious as to what those things were. Through these examples, it is clear that this artist has reached the gang age of these stages of artistic development.

Conclusion. Understanding this student's artwork and being able to analyze which stage he is in is beneficial for both the student and the teacher. If the teacher knows, depending on the age or grade, that he is lagging behind other students because his picture is not quite up to par with his classmates, the teacher can try to help this student develop those skills by allowing him to draw more or assessing him in other subject areas to see if it is an overall developmental issue. For example, if I noticed that a student was not able to convey certain art concepts, I may look at his progress in other subjects. Doing this I may notice that this student has a slower development in all learning areas, or I could learn that maybe this student just is not as artistic as other students, and vice versa. No matter the case, understanding how a student learns and develops in each subject can help me tailor certain lessons for each student. As Pink (2005) describes "our brains are divided into two hemispheres. The left hemisphere is sequential, logical, and analytic. The right hemisphere is nonlinear, intuitive, and holist" (p. 3). So, if I know a student is more artsy and learns better in that sense, they use the right side of the brain more, I can then try to steer my lessons for those types of students so they can understand certain subjects through art expression. If art is not a strong suit for a student, I can direct the lessons in a way that will help them learn in a more left-brain manner. Learning to analyze children's art is important for all different reasons, both inside and outside the classroom.

As stated in the *Learning to Draw: Nurturing the Natural* (2013) article, "children's drawing activit[ies that have] been studied has led some observers to conclude that all children posses a universal language of visual symbols, one that is

present at birth and needs only to blossom and flower” (p. 57). This author is saying that all children, no matter where they are from or what knowledge they have, have the ability to draw simple things and then take those lines or shapes and expand on them. It is a natural process for children to develop their artistic abilities and begin to create things beyond the scribble or stick figure, like the artist did in his portrait of a man. When it comes to the classroom, students must be encouraged and supported so that they can learn and feel comfortable expressing their artistic abilities, and growing on them. At the same time, however, we as teachers must know how to analyze and give constructive criticism so that our students can progress in their art, which will in turn help them improve in many other subjects.

References

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