

Color and Words

Can words “paint” pictures in the mind’s eye?

1. PERCEIVE

Work through the PERCEIVE card to carefully investigate your artwork.

2. CONSIDER

List the colors you see in your artwork. How would you describe these colors? What color do you see the most? How does color make your eye move?

If one of your colors is blue, is it sky blue, or navy blue, or indigo, or the frosty blue of icebergs? (Think of all the crayon color names!) Do the colors create a mood?

List at least five words that you find interesting; words that you like either because they remind you of something or because you simply like the sound of them. All painters choose colors carefully and many use favorite colors over and over. Poets do something similar. All have favorite words that they use again and again. What are your favorite words?

3. CREATE

Write a poem about your colorful painting. Write lines that answer some of the following questions: What does it make you think of? What is it like? How does it make you feel? How does it move? Does it suggest a story to you, or a certain place or person?

As you write, try to use the name of the most important color you found in the painting at least three times in your poem. At the same time, try to use the words that you find most interesting also at least three times somewhere in the poem. Think about the words moving through your poem just like the colors move through the image.

The individual lines in a poem do not have to be a complete thought or sentence. You can break the sentence in any place you choose and continue it on the next line. This adds rhythm to the lines and helps your reader want to read on to your completed thought.

Here is an example based on Marc Chagall's painting *The Poet Reclining*. From the poem, can you image what it might look like?

Color observed: blue

Favorite words: home, poet, horse, dream, heart

The Poet Reclines

by Jude Nutter

Home, we say, meaning the place the heart
dreams of. Here is the poet, reclining, at home
in the fields where the horse is floating on the pale
blue flames of its hooves, like a dream. The horse
has even been sung with a blue shimmer
to its body: the horse is at home at the heart
of the poet's dream. And looking closely
we can see how the knees of the poet
have a blue sheen, as if he as knelt every day,
for years, inside his own heart, in prayer.

4. REFLECT

Look at the places where you chose to put your favorite words. Does the meaning of the word change at all, depending on where it is in the poem and what words are next to it?

This is an important aspect of poetry: Even a slight change in context or grammar can change the meaning and feel of a word. How is this like the use of color in a painting?