

NYBG

Poetry for Every Season: *CHIHULY*
Lesson Plan

Goal:

Explore American artist Dale Chihuly's installations throughout The New York Botanical Garden and consider ways the art installations alter, complement, and enhance the landscape. Compose spontaneous poems inspired by art and nature.

Objectives: *Students will. . .*

- *Observe and describe the interactions between Chihuly's sculptures and the site placements in the landscapes in consideration of:*
 - *color*
 - *form*
 - *light*
 - *transformation*
- *Share ideas with peers about the connections between the sculptures and organic shapes that may have inspired them or that surround them*
- *Create contour sketches and consider the strong lines found in CHIHULY works*
- *Find plants with forms and colors that seem to relate to the sculptures*
- *Compose individual or collaborative poems reflecting experiences with CHIHULY sculptures in the Garden*

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils

Garden Etiquette Reminders: NYBG is a museum of plants. At a museum we have special behaviors. Remember:

- Stay on the paths
- Please don't pick plants or flowers
- Please don't touch artworks
- Please speak with your friends about what you notice and see
- Stay with your group

Suggested Activities:

Sculpture Observation #1: Looking and Thinking

Lead class to a sculpture. Give time to freely explore and walk around, as closely as barriers allow, without touching. Then gather group to observe the whole sculpture from afar and **scan** it for clues about choices the artist made, using open-ended questions:

- *What seems to be happening?*
- *What more do you notice?*
- *What shapes can you see?*
- *What material does it seem to be made from?*

Warm up as you make and share observations. Restate and rephrase what you hear in order to validate students' participation and synthesize their thoughts when relevant. Keep class looking back at the sculpture closely. Have them support their ideas:

- *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- *Point to parts of work that students are referring to in order to focus whole group's attention*

Add bits of relevant information about the sculptures as they apply to current conversations which build on students' ideas.

Sculpture Observation #2: Contour Sketch

Lead class to another sculpture. Recall earlier ideas students shared while observing the new sculpture. Compare and contrast sculptures.

Distribute paper and pencils. Fold paper in quarters, pick a spot to stand, and have students contour sketch using a single line without lifting pencils, what they see as they move to four different positions, rotating in 30–60 second intervals around the sculpture.

- *What shapes do the sculptures seem to add to this landscape?*
- *What shapes did you notice when sketching that you didn't before?*
- *How might the sculpture's appearance change throughout the day? Throughout the year?*

Invite students go through the same intervals again, but instead of creating a contour sketch at each viewing point, include *words* to describe the what you notice from each position.

Sculpture #3: Word Whip Around

Lead class to another sculpture. Build on ideas shared from earlier observations.

Invite students to participate in a one-word "whip around" conversation starter: "*Quick! What word comes to mind when observing this sculpture?*"

Compose Garden- and Chihuly- Inspired Poem: (10 minutes)

Bring students to a quiet area. Invite them to reflect about their experiences observing sculpture throughout the landscape and to remember and read all the words they have heard and written today that gave some ideas about the connections between the art and the

landscape. Extend the idea about how the illustrations and words they captured expresses a sense about their experiences here today.

Ask them, *“How might you express your experiences at the Garden today in a poem?”*

Pass out blank sheets of paper and build on ideas about Chihuly’s sense of experimentation, chance and collaboration in creating the sculptures. Encourage students to write using their ideas for poems they might know the format of or to create a free form poem.

Poetry Read Aloud: Pair Share

After students write their poems, invite them to share their poems with a partner and recite them aloud.

Conclusion:

Dale Chihuly embraces the spirit of spontaneity and experimentation in creating his art. Think back to your experiences today. *When was a time when you might have felt surprised or spontaneous?* I bet next time you walk through a garden or park you’ll be thinking about how plants inspire art.