**Paper Mache Insects**

**Form-Building Skills**

**Supplies**
- Newspaper and white paper towels (4 sheets per child)
- Plastic drinking straws
- Plastic coated 20 guage steel wire and wire cutters
- Masking tape, glue and scissors
- Styrofoam bowl
- Colored paper scraps and/or tissue paper
- Paper Mache paste
- Acrylic or liquid tempera paint/brushes/water
- Tin foil
- Waxed paper/cheesecloth/liquid starch
- Cellophane sheets/wire

These insects are easy to make and are brimming with personality. I developed this lesson to tie in with my second grader's insect unit for science. It's always nice to have a cross-curriculum connection stem from the art room.

**This lesson takes four, 45-minute sessions:**
- Session #1: Build armature
- Session #2: Apply paper mache
- Session #3: Paint with acrylic paints
- Session #4: Add wings and paper embellishments
• Using strips of masking tape, tape 3 balls of wadded up newspaper together. Show the kids how to roll the paper into itself. Tape to secure balls. Make 3 sections: the head, thorax and abdomen.

• To make legs, use plastic drinking straws that have been inserted with wire. I prepped all the drinking straws the night before by cutting and inserting wires but this isn’t necessary. Instead, have the kids tape either one straw per leg onto the body at the thorax OR they can use one straw to make two legs by taping the straw in the middle to the thorax. The difference here is that some kids have large insects and some have teeny-weeny insects.

• Sometimes wrapping tin foil around parts of the insects will give the insect more heft or will secure flimsy body parts together. There is no rule for this, so just offer this suggestion to kids who might need the extra support for their insects.

• Use LOTS of tape to secure the legs and body parts.

• When the body is sturdy, adjust the legs by bending them into the position you want.

• By the end of day 2, every child should have some sort of insect. Use a marker to put the name son each insect. I stored the bodies in a plastic container until the next week.
Ending the first class:

Gather all the children’s insects with only the attached parts. Save any prepared legs or tails or whatever in a small container and place with insects. Dump all insects into a bin. Write the child’s name on each insect with a Sharpie or waterproof marker.

TIP: Some kids will finish the paper mache section far sooner than others. For these kids, do not have them move on. Trust me on this. Be prepared by offering them the free-choice activity of drawing and coloring their insect onto a piece of scrap paper.

The trickiest part of applying the paper mache occurs near the legs. Covering these spindly things is quite hard for many kids but if you could sit down with those having problems, offer them these tips: use small bits of newspaper and dip fingers into gel to smooth paper onto straws. Try to cover bottom of straws with newspaper as well.

Now it’s time to bring out the styrofoam cups, identified by each child’s name, to the tables. When the kids finish with the paper mache, place body onto cup with legs facing down. Place on a drying table.
I decided to try an experiment: What painting process makes most sense for a paper mache project?

**Fish Project:** Acrylic directly onto hardened paper mache newsprint

**Insect Project:** Gesso then tempera paint.
For this project, the kids used tempera paints after painting their entire body with white gesso paint. Gesso is acrylic paint much like regular household paint. It doesn't come off clothes and is generally a pain in the butt, but it gives a beautiful base to whatever paints you used.

Here's the problem with Gesso: Applying this paint only takes 10-15 minutes. You can't apply it however, until after the paper mache has dried. Then, you can't paint the tempera paint over the Gesso until the Gesso has dried. See the problem? My kids came into the class, painted the insects with Gesso then had another 20 minutes before class was over. I don't know about you, but I need every moment of art class since I only see each class 15 hours a year. I had to figure out what to do with that extra 20 minutes fast!
I used the instructions on *Art For Small Hands* for making these insects and loved how the wings were made. However, they were a bit hard to make considering the prep involved.
This is how to make them: Buy cheesecloth and separate into layers. Dip cloth into liquid starch. Squeeze out some of the liquid starch but not all. Lay cloth onto waxed paper to dry. When dry, the cheesecloth should harden. You can cut out wings from the hardened sheets of cheesecloth.
Some kids used cheesecloth wings while others used a cellophane and wire wing. This is how to make them: Cut a length of plastic coated wire about 8-12” long. Wrap two ends together to form a bow. Run hot glue along the wire and place wings onto a sheet of cellophane. The glue will stick to the cellophane. Trim access and hot-glue wings onto back of painted insect.
SECOND GRADE
PAPER MACHE INSECTS

DEEP SPACE SPARKLE & THE MEMBERS' CLUB
CREATING

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work — Brainstorm multiple approaches to art and design—use of various materials to make art
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work — Explore materials to explore personal interests in art-making—demonstrate safe use/cleaning—repurpose objects into something new
- Refine and complete artistic work—discuss/reflect with peers about choices when creating artwork

PRESENTING/PRODUCING

- Analyze, interpret and select artistic work for presentation— categorize artwork based on a theme or concept for an exhibition
- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation — distinguish between different materials or artistic techniques for preparing artwork for presentation
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work — analyze how art exhibited inside and outside school contributes to communities

RESPONDING

- Perceive and analyze artistic work- describe aesthetic characteristics of the natural world— categorize images based on expression
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work — interpret art by identifying the mood suggested and describing relevant subject matter and identifying the characteristics of form
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work— use learned art vocabulary to express preferences about artwork

CONNECTING

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art- create works of art about events in home, school or community life
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding —create works of art about events in home, school or community life
CREATING

- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work — elaborate on imaginative ideas—apply knowledge to develop personal ideas in artwork
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work — create personal artwork—demonstrate understanding proficient use of materials—construct everyday life representations
- Refine and complete artistic work—elaborate visually by adding detail during art-making that enhances meaning

PRESENTING/PRODUCING

- Analyze, interpret and select artistic work for presentation— Investigate and discuss possibilities and limitations of spaces for exhibiting artwork
- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation — Identify exhibit space and prepare works of art including artists’ statement for presentation
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work — identify and explain how and where different cultures record and illustrate stories and history of life through art

RESPONDING

- Perceive and analyze artistic work- Speculate about processes and artist uses to create—determine messages communicated by images
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work — interpret art by analyzing use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form and mood
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work— evaluate an artwork based on a given criteria

CONNECTING

- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art- develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding —develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings
NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS—FOURTH GRADE

CREATING
- Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work — brainstorm approaches for design problem—set goals and create purposeful and meaningful artwork
- Organize and develop artistic ideas and work — explore and invent art-making techniques—care for materials while art-making—document and describe environments
- Refine and complete artistic work—revise artwork in progress through insights gained from peers and discussion

PRESENTING/PRODUCING
- Analyze, interpret and select artistic work for presentation— Analyze how past, present and emerging technologies have impacted preservation and presentations of artwork
- Develop and refine artistic work for presentation — Analyze the various considerations for presenting and protecting work in all settings and forms
- Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work — compare and contrast purposes of art museums, etc. and the types of personal experiences they provide

RESPONDING
- Perceive and analyze artistic work— compare responses to artwork after experiencing the medium analyze messages in visual imagery
- Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work — interpret art by referring to contextual info and analyzing relevant subject matter, characteristics and media
- Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work— apply one set of criteria to evaluate more than one work of art

CONNECTING
- Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art— create works of art that reflect community cultural traditions
- Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding
WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR ARTWORK?


HOW DID YOU CREATE YOUR ARTWORK?
(What tools, supplies and techniques did you use?)


WHAT DOES THIS PIECE OF ART MEAN TO YOU?
(You can use “I” statements and talk about your inspiration and what creating this piece of art means to you)


Today I will learn about FORM, so that I CAN create a three dimensional insect from newspaper, paper towels, straws and masking tape based on photographs of actual insects. I’ll know I have it when all three parts of my insect are securely attached for my ARMATURE.

Today I will learn about PAPIER MACHE, so that I CAN dip my newspaper strips into the paste and wrap them in layers all around my insect. I’ll know I have it when my insect is completely covered in newspaper strips.

Today I will learn about COLOR and TEXTURE, so that I CAN use GESSO and TEMPERA paint or ACRYLIC paint to add color to my insect for a shiny and smooth surface.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR PAPIER MACHE INSECTS**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1**

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

After students finish their art, you can have them fill out the artist statement worksheet (page 10 of this packet). This information leads them to reflect on the process of art making while forming an opinion about their own work based on the processes used, materials used, inspirations, etc.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1**

Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

You can communicate to students that using conventions of standard English grammar when writing their answers to the artist statement worksheet should be emphasized. This is a wonderful way to help students see cross curricular connections between subjects!

**CCSS.Math.Content.4.G.A.3**

Recognize a line of symmetry for a two-dimensional figure as a line across the figure such that the figure can be folded along the line into matching parts. Identify line-symmetric figures and draw lines of symmetry.

As students create their armatures for their insects, you can have a discussion about symmetry and how it applies to three-dimensional art. Since insects are symmetrical in nature, encourage students to try and make their insect look like it is pretty much the same on both sides.