



Expressive Ceramic Relief inspired by Luca della Robbia's Cantoria

Grade levels: K-5

Background:

Luca della Robbia paid special attention to each figure featured on his Cantoria, and each has his or her own unique facial expression. By taking time to examine the faces of these characters, students can use visual clues to make inferences about each character's emotional state. In this lesson, students will creatively explore the faces of the Cantoria through a class discussion, and then they will make their own ceramic relief that features a character with an emotion or story.

Essential Questions:

1. How can we use visual clues to read images?
2. How can we use the ceramic medium to portray a character with an emotion or story?

Objective:

Students will create a ceramic-relief sculpture of a character on a small slab of clay, and then speak or write about how that character feels or the story behind that character.

Terms:

- Relief sculpture
- Clay
- Visual Clues

Materials:

- Sketchbooks
- Pencils
- White Clay (air dry can be used if a kiln is not available)
- Child-safe ceramic tools

Lesson:

Day 1-2:

- Introduce the students to Luca della Robbia's Cantoria, and give them some background information. (This may be before or after a visit to the exhibition).

- Show students slides of key images from the Cantoria, taking time to focus on images that feature especially unique facial expressions.
- Ask the students to investigate the faces. Some questions you may want to ask might be: “What do you think this person is thinking?” “How do you think this person feels?” and “What makes you say that?” You may want to ask the students what a figure’s story might be. For example, “What might have happened before this moment?” “What might have happened after?” Use Artful Thinking Routines to help guide the questions you ask.
- Ask students to think about how we visually read faces. “How do we know a person is happy? What face do they make?” Do an activity with the students in which you call out a type of emotion and the students make faces that they think match the emotion (happy, angry, surprised, etc).
- Ask the students to create a character in their sketchbooks that has a certain emotion or story, and to think of ways they can show that visually.

Day 3-4:

- The students will be creating a ceramic-relief sculpture similar to those of Luca della Robbia that will feature the character that they created.
- Each student will be given a small slab of white clay (6"x6" is a good size) and safe ceramic tools. Air dry clay will work fine if a kiln is not available. White clay is good because it aesthetically looks more like a Renaissance relief sculpture.
- Students will use the tools to remove or add material to their slab to create their character in the clay.
- When the works are complete, they can be displayed on the wall like the Cantoria.
- Have a critique in which you ask the students to explain to the rest of the class how their characters feel or allow them to tell the story of their character.

Assessment:

Formative assessment will occur through classroom discussion and verbal feedback during studio time. Summative assessment can be recorded by rubric that can be adjusted according to teacher discretion.

Needs Improvement	Good	Exemplary
Student does not take part in discussion/ is overly distracting or misbehaved	Student is active during discussion/contributes at least one comment	Student contributes thoughtfully and productively in discussion
Student chooses not to complete the artwork and	Student completes all the criteria of the artwork	Student produces a well-crafted and creatively

makes no effort to make it up	assignment	developed artwork
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Modifications/Extensions:

To integrate a writing element into the lesson, you could have the students select a character from the Cantoria and write a narrative that features that character. This could also be done with the character that the student creates on their relief.

Another more group oriented activity that could be used would be to have the students select a character from the Cantoria and have them do skits as those characters. This encourages the students to think critically about the visual clues of the characters. (This might be better suited for 3rd-5th.)

Standards:

VAKMC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VAKMC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VAKMC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VAKCU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VAKPR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VAKPR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (e.g., ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VAKAR.1 Discusses his or her own artwork and the artwork of others.

VAKC.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

VA1MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA1MC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VA1MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA1CU.1 Identifies artists as creative thinkers who make art and share ideas.

VA1CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA1PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA1PR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA1AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA1C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

VA2MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA2MC.2 Formulates personal responses.

VA2MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA2CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA2PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA2PR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA2AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA2C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

VA3MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA3MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA3MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

VA3CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA3PR.3 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA3PR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA3AR.1 Discusses his or her artwork and the artwork of others.

VA3C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

VA4MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA4MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA4MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VA4CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA4PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA4PR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (ceramics, sculpture, crafts, and mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA4C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.

VA5MC.1 Engages in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas.

VA5MC.2 Formulates personal responses to visual imagery.

VA5MC.3 Selects and uses subject matter, symbols, and/or ideas to communicate meaning.

VA5CU.2 Views and discusses selected artworks.

VA5PR.1 Creates artworks based on personal experience and selected themes.

VA5PR.3 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes of three-dimensional works of art (e.g., ceramics, sculpture, crafts, mixed-media) using tools and materials in a safe and appropriate manner to develop skills.

VA5C.2 Develops life skills through the study and production of art.