

DRAWING DREAMSCAPES / WRITING FROM THE DREAMS OF FRIENDS

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Education Level: Elementary

Genre: Poetry, Fiction, Hybrid

Time Frame: 1 hour per lesson (2 hours total)

Objective: Explore the landscapes of students' dreams

Prior Knowledge and Skills: Some practice with comparisons or similes and metaphors in writing; some practice with drawing as a creative warm-up exercise

Required materials: Blank drawing paper, large presentation paper, colored pencils, markers, stencils, etc.

Sequence of activities:

LESSON 1: DRAWING OUR DREAMSCAPES

Introduction: (5-7 minutes): Ask students about their relationship to dreams. Possible questions include:

- Do you remember your dreams?
- What do you dream about?
- Do you dream that you are running and never get anywhere?
- Do you dream of people that you never speak to in waking life?
- Do you dream about flying or falling from high places or becoming someone or something else?
- Do you ever have a dream so wonderful you don't want to wake? What happened?
- Do you ever have nightmares?
- Do you have recurring dreams?
- Did you ever have a dream that predicted something that then happened in your waking life?

Then, introduce some ideas about dream logic. Some possibilities include:

- In dreams, things can trade places, sizes, perspectives, past present and future can get mixed up, they can show us what's strange, what we fear, what we secretly want or something we suspect but are not willing to engage with.

- Anything can happen in a dream. In a dream we're not bound by what is realistic--we can talk to plants, we can swim with whales, we can play with the dead, we can do things we wouldn't dare do in waking life.
- The closer we can get to the strange combination of images, beings, textures, and feelings that appear in our dreams, the closer we get to poetry.

Drawing Dreamscapes Warm-Up: (15 minutes):

Tell students that you're going to practice harnessing dream logic today, using drawing as a tool to get everyone exploring the wild, weird magic of dreaming:

First, I will read you some writing about dreams to get your imaginations working. Then, I will give you a couple prompts. For example, one might be to draw a dark stairwell, with 2 minutes per prompt for you to sketch this image as if you were seeing it in a dream.

Read an excerpt from Brandon Shimoda's *Hydra Medusa* dream segments.

Give students a couple drawing prompts, giving them two minutes to draw in response to each prompt, then sharing their drawings in between. Some possibilities include:

- I had a dream I climbed up a dark stairwell into the sky.
- I had a dream I was on a school bus stuck deep under the sea.
- I had a dream the whole world was inside a peach.

Ask students to share some of their thoughts on what they notice about their drawings, what they like, what feels dreamy.

Drawing Dream Worlds: (20 minutes):

Give students independent time to make drawings of their own dreams. Reiterate that they can draw a dream they actually had, sample images from different dreams they remember, or make up content they would want to find in their dreams. The idea is to get weird, wild, colorful, and moody.

Encourage them to mix mediums, etc.

Sharing Drawings: (10 minutes):

After everyone completes a drawing, have students share their drawings with the class, picking one thing they like from it to comment on.

At the very end, tell students or the classroom teacher to save their drawings for the next lesson.

LESSON 2: WRITING INSIDE OUR FRIENDS' DREAMS

**This second lesson was born from a conversation with my friend Zach about the first lesson.

Introduction: (5-7 minutes):

Explain that today students will be using their drawings of dreamscapes from last time, but that we are going to write poems inspired by these dream worlds:

Today, you'll be trading dream drawings with a friend, pretending like their drawing is the world of your dreams. You'll enter that dream through admiring the picture, then will write a poem in conversation with it.

Warm-Up (15 minutes): Arrange 3 magazine images, paintings, or drawings at the center of the circle.

Review the art of descriptive comparisons (metaphors / similes): *If we say, for example, the boy was sad, we know a little, but if we say, instead, that the boy's grimace looked like a tattered rag, we know a bit more.*

Let's look at these example pictures together and try to become part of these images as if they were the landscape of our dreams. What would we see and say and write? What connections can you make?

Setting an example for the class, begin to describe an image, starting with the phrase "I had a dream..." Offer a few descriptive examples to get students going, then continue logging their results on a big paper.

Examples :

- I had a dream that alien spires popped the clouds in heaven.
- I had a dream that the house was as cold as a metal spoon.
- I had a dream that a man's blood was the same color as sunset.
- I had a dream that the entire valley was made out of caterpillars.

Writing the Dreams of Friends Activity (20 minutes):

Explain that students will now get the chance to "enter" a dream world drawn by a classmate and write a poem from the perspective of being inside that picture, as if it were their dream.

Pair students up, send them back to their desks, instruct them to trade pictures, and facilitate a short meditation activity guiding students toward observations of the different details in their picture.

Write: "I had a dream that..." on the board as a starting phrase.

Then, encourage them to start writing. Give them space to write, going around asking any students that are stuck with improvised questions to draw their dream writing out further.

Sharing: (10-15 minutes):

Return to circle, give students a chance to read their dream poems to the class.