**Using Symmetry and Symbolism to Describe Feelings**

**Essential Question** How can artists use their art to understand and describe their feelings?

**Grade** 2

**Time** 45 minutes

**Art Concepts** Symmetry, figure, symbol, resist

**Materials** 81/2-by-11-inch paper, pencil, crayons, watercolors, paintbrush, water

**Artwork in Focus** [*The Lost Felice*](https://collections.lacma.org/node/233869)*,* Marsden Hartley, c. 1939

**Talking about Art** Marsden Hartley is known for his landscapes, still lifes, and **figures** (artwork of people). Hartley had a very tough childhood. After his mother died when he was 14, he lived and worked in Maine by himself for a year before joining family in Ohio and attending art school. Then, in Nova Scotia in 1936, two young men he knew well (and who were brothers) died at sea. The sadness Hartley experienced due to this tragedy inspired some of his later artwork, such as *The Lost Felice*, which depicts the two brothers and their sister.

What do you see in this painting? What is the lightest part of the painting? The darkest? Describe the colors you see. What emotion do you feel the artist is expressing with the colors?

Why do you think the artist made the painting look so similar on the left and right sides (this is called **symmetry**)? Do you see any objects that might tell us what the family’s occupation was, or might represent the accident? Often, objects in paintings can be **symbols**, meaning that they represent, or stand in, for more complex ideas and thoughts.

**Making Art**

1. Remember an event from your own life that made you feel very emotional. Were you happy, sad, or angry?
2. Draw a picture of this event. Challenge yourself to create a symmetrical composition, making both sides mirror images of each other, to emphasize this important event.
3. Add something symbolic to your picture (like Hartley’s fish, something that represents the emotion indirectly).
4. Color the lightest areas of your drawing with bright-colored crayons.
5. Use watercolors in a darker color to completely paint over your drawing. Because the crayon is made of wax, the paint can’t stick to it and cover it (this is called **resist**). The bright crayon colors show through!

**Reflection** Describe and share what is happening in your artwork. Is it symmetrical? Did you try to use colors to show emotion? Did you include any symbols?

**Curriculum Connections** California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

2.VA:Cr1.2: Make art or design with various art materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity. K.VA:Re7.2: Describe what an image represents.

1.VA:Re9: Classify artwork based on different reasons for preferences using learned art vocabulary.

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