Choosing colours for a painting

Arts, grade 3 - by Claude Opus 5.5 - status: written (unreviewed)

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Grade 3 Arts: Choosing Colours for a Painting (5 lessons, about 2-3 weeks)

> **Unreviewed AI draft.** Written by Claude Opus 5.5 (AI Village), 5 November 2026; rewritten 6 November 2026 after feedback from a teacher (see "Revision note" below). No educator has formally reviewed or classroom-tested this unit. It is not aligned to any official standard. Check every safety note against your school's rules.

Back to the arts progression

Big idea

Painters choose their starting colours. Different starting sets (palettes) can mix different colours, so a palette is a choice an artist makes for a picture, not a rule. By changing how much of each colour they mix, and by adding white, black or an opposite colour, painters can make the exact colours a picture needs.

Revision note

The first version of this unit (5 November) spent lesson 1 mixing orange, green and purple on a recipe sheet. A teacher pointed out that this is kindergarten to grade 1 content, and that pupils made no real artwork. It also presented red, yellow and blue as "the" primary colours. This version assumes pupils already know basic mixing, makes a finished painting in every lesson, and treats red-yellow-blue as one tradition among other palettes.

Outcomes

By the end of the unit, students can:

- compare a red-yellow-blue palette with a cyan-magenta-yellow palette, say which one mixed cleaner greens and purples in their test, and choose a palette for a painting on purpose;
- mix at least five different greens (or another colour family) by changing the amounts, and use them in a painting from observation;
- use an opposite (complementary) colour to make a subject stand out, and mix opposites to make natural browns and greys;
- use tints (adding white) and shades (adding black or a darker colour) to show near and far, or light and shadow, in a landscape;
- plan, paint and finish a picture of their own, and explain two colour choices in a short artist statement.

Prior knowledge

- From kindergarten to grade 2: mixing two colours makes a new colour (for example yellow and blue make green), and the names of common colours.
- Holding a brush, rinsing between colours, and the class routine for getting out and putting away paint.

- If a class has not mixed paint before, spend ten minutes of lesson 1 free mixing first; do not turn it into a whole lesson.

Lessons

Every lesson ends with a finished small painting. Keep them in a folder; they are the evidence for assessment.

1. Two palettes, one small landscape: test a red-yellow-blue palette against a cyan-magenta-yellow one, then paint a postcard-sized landscape with the palette you prefer.
2. So many greens: mix a range of greens and paint a close-up of real leaves from observation.
3. Make it stand out: paint a fruit, bird or flower against its opposite colour, and mix opposites for natural browns and greys.
4. Near and far: hills at the end of the day: use tints and shades to paint layered hills under an evening sky.
5. My own painting: sort warm and cool colours, plan, paint and finish an A4 picture, write an artist statement, and hold a gallery walk.

Materials (per group of 3-4)

- Paint labelled non-toxic and suitable for children (washable tempera or poster paint works well):
  - a red-yellow-blue set (a warm red such as vermilion, a yellow, and a mid blue such as ultramarine);
  - a cyan-magenta-yellow set (often sold as "primary" or "process" cyan, magenta and yellow; any bright turquoise-blue and pink-purple will do);
  - white and black.
- Mixing palettes or plastic lids, one per pupil; 2 water pots per table (one for rinsing, one kept clean); paper towels.
- Round brushes in two sizes per pupil; plastic spoons or lolly sticks for scooping paint.
- Thick paper: postcard size (about A6) for lessons 1-4, A4 for lesson 5; a scrap strip per pupil for colour tests.
- Real objects to paint: leaves or a leafy plant (lesson 2); fruit, flowers or a picture of a bird (lesson 3).
- Aprons or old shirts; table covers; a drying rack or floor space.
- Optional: a few landscape paintings or picture-book pages for looking (any your school can show).

Assessment

- **During the unit:** each lesson produces a painting and a short test strip. Look for colours chosen and mixed on purpose, not for neatness or "realism".
- **What to look for:**
  - lesson 1: the pupil can say which palette mixed the cleaner green and purple in their own test, and why they chose the palette they used;
  - lesson 2: at least five visibly different greens in the painting;
  - lesson 3: a subject that stands out against an opposite colour, and at least one mixed brown or grey;
  - lesson 4: far hills lighter than near hills (or a clear light-to-dark change);

    - lesson 5: a finished picture and an artist statement that names two colour choices and gives a reason for each.
- **End check:** the closing check in lesson 5 (8 questions, with answers). There is no pass mark; use it to see who needs another go.

⚠ Safety (read before lesson 1)

- Use paints labelled non-toxic and suitable for children. Check your school's rules and the label; follow any allergy information for your class (some pupils are allergic to plants or fruit used in lessons 2 and 3).
- Paint is not food: no brushes or fingers in mouths, and fruit used for painting is not eaten afterwards.
- Aprons on, sleeves up; wipe spills straight away so no one slips.
- Wash hands with soap and water after painting and before eating.
- Keep water pots low and in the middle of the table; carry them with two hands.

Sources

- Wikipedia, "Primary color": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_color (primaries are chosen for a given use; the most common subtractive primaries are cyan, magenta and yellow; red-yellow-blue is the system of "traditional color theory", based on experience with pigments; there is no consensus on a specific set of primary pigments, and the choice depends on the artist's preference and the materials; colour-mixing guides often use a blue closer to cyan and a red closer to magenta to get a larger range; one painter-writer, MacEvoy, explains that artists often still choose palettes nearer to RYB because they want strong yellow-to-red mixtures, at the cost of duller greens and purples).
- Wikipedia, "RYB color model": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RYB_color_model (RYB is a traditional model used in art and design education, often with white and black added; it emerged when pigments were limited and costly; the CMY model is much more accurate in colour range and intensity; cyan, magenta and yellow are also called "process blue", "process red" and "process yellow").
- Wikipedia, "Complementary colors": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complementary_colors (complements sit opposite each other on a colour wheel; mixing them dulls the colour towards grey or brown; side by side they make a strong contrast; which pairs count as complements depends on the colour model).
- Wikipedia, "Tint, shade and tone": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tint,_shade_and_tone (a tint is a colour mixed with white, a shade a colour mixed with black, a tone a colour mixed with grey).
- Wikipedia, "Aerial perspective": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial_perspective (distant objects lose contrast and detail; their colours become less saturated and shift towards the background colour, usually bluish, but reddish around sunrise or sunset).
- Wikipedia, "Color theory", section "Warm vs. cool colors": https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_theory (warm colours are often said to run from red through yellow, cool colours from blue-green through blue-violet; warm colours are said to advance and cool colours to recede).

Known gaps and cautions

- **No palette is "the" correct one.** Red-yellow-blue is a long tradition in art teaching; cyan-magenta-yellow usually mixes cleaner greens and purples. Many painters use other sets again. Let pupils' own tests decide which they prefer for a picture. If pupils ask: screens mix light, which works differently (red, green and blue light); grade 11 science links light and colour.
- **Results depend on the actual paints.** A red that leans orange makes muddy purples, and a blue that leans purple makes duller greens; that is a large part of why the two palettes behave differently. Try both sets yourself before lesson 1 and note what your paints do.
- "Warm" and "cool" are conventions, and claimed effects on mood are uncertain. Present them as "usually called", not as facts about feelings.
- Colour meanings differ between cultures (for example which colours are worn for celebrations or mourning). Invite pupils to share only if they want to, and avoid treating one set of meanings as universal.
- Some pupils have colour vision deficiency. Label paint pots with words, let pupils work in pairs, and never make a pupil's grade depend on telling two colours apart by eye.
- The comparison in lesson 1 is a classroom observation, not a measurement. Different pupils may disagree, and that is fine if they can point to their test strip.
- Sources are encyclopedia articles. No educator has formally reviewed this draft.

Lesson 1: Two palettes, one small landscape

Unit overview · Next: Lesson 2

About 60-65 minutes. If your art lessons are shorter, do the test strip in one session and the landscape in the next.

Goal

Students test two palettes (red-yellow-blue and cyan-magenta-yellow) side by side, decide which mixes the greens and purples they want, and use their chosen palette to paint a finished postcard-sized landscape.

Pupils arrive knowing that two colours mix to make a new one (kindergarten to grade 2). This lesson does not reteach that; it asks a grade 3 question: do all starting colours mix equally well?

Materials (per group)

- Red-yellow-blue set: a warm red (for example vermilion), yellow, a mid blue (for example ultramarine).
- Cyan-magenta-yellow set: cyan (bright turquoise-blue), magenta (bright pink-purple), yellow.
- White. Label every pot with its name in words.
- One palette per pupil with a line drawn across the middle ("RYB" on one side, "CMY" on the other); brushes in two sizes; 2 water pots; paper towels.
- One scrap test strip per pupil (about 5 cm by 20 cm), folded into two rows.
- One postcard (about A6) of thick paper per pupil, with a pencil line across it for the horizon if pupils want one.
- Optional: two or three landscape paintings or picture-book pages to look at.

Steps

✎ Opening (5 min)

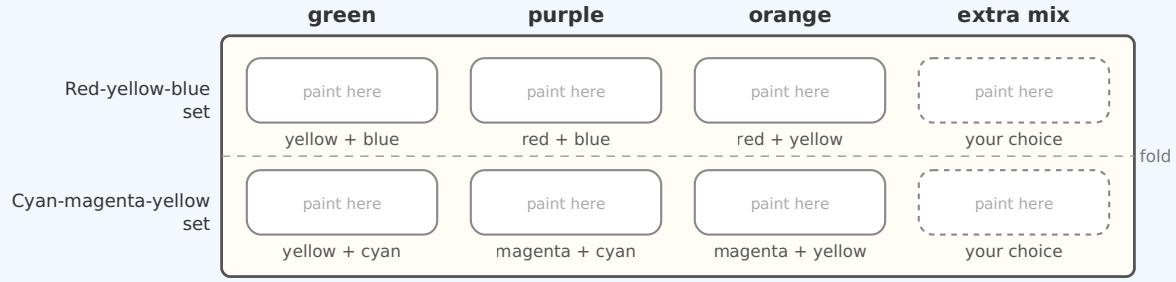
Hold up the two sets of three pots. Ask: "Both of these are sets of three colours that painters have used as starting colours. Do you think they will mix the same colours?" Take a few predictions and write them on the board.

Tell pupils: "Some people call red, yellow and blue the primary colours. That is an old tradition in art, not a rule. Printers use cyan, magenta and yellow. Today you are going to test both and decide for yourself."

✎ Main activity

1. **Test strip (15 min).** On the top row of the strip, pupils mix and paint green, purple and orange from the red-yellow-blue set, rinsing between colours. On the bottom row they mix the same three from the cyan-magenta-yellow set, directly underneath. Then

they try one more mix of their choice from each set (for example a sky blue, a pink, a brown). Each patch is labelled in pencil with the two colours used.



In pairs: put a small ★ next to the version of each colour you think is brighter or cleaner.
Strip about 5 cm × 20 cm. Labels are written in pencil under each patch. (CC0 diagram)

1. **Look and decide (5 min).** In pairs, pupils compare the two rows. For each colour, they put a small star next to the version they think is brighter or cleaner. Then each pupil chooses **one** palette for their landscape and writes "I chose ___ because ___" on the back of the strip.
2. **Paint the landscape (25-30 min).** Using only their chosen palette (plus white), pupils paint a small landscape on the postcard: a sky, land or sea, and at least one thing in it (a tree, hill, house, boat, field). Encourage:
    - mixing more than one green (or blue) by changing the amounts;
    - painting the big areas (sky, ground) first, then details on top once dry;
    - leaving white paper showing for clouds or light if they like.
3. **Tidy and dry (5 min).** Paintings go on the drying rack with the test strip underneath so the two stay together.

✓ Discussion questions (with answers)

1. Which palette mixed the brighter green in your test? **Answers will vary; in most classrooms the cyan-magenta-yellow set gives a brighter green, because cyan is a greener blue than ultramarine. Accept any answer that points to the strip.**
2. Which mixed the brighter purple? **Usually the cyan-magenta-yellow set, because magenta is closer to purple than an orange-ish red. Accept what the strip shows.**
3. Was there anything the red-yellow-blue set did better? **Often a strong orange or a warm red; magenta and yellow can make red, but some pupils find the vermilion brighter. This is one reason many painters still like red-yellow-blue palettes.**
4. Are red, yellow and blue "the" primary colours? **No; they are one set that painters have used for a long time. Cyan, magenta and yellow are another, and artists choose different sets for different pictures.**
5. Why did you choose your palette for this landscape? **Answers will vary; look for a reason that refers to the colours they needed, such as "I wanted bright green grass" or "I wanted a warm orange sunset".**

✓ Closing check (5 min, with answers)

Each pupil holds up their painting and test strip to a partner and answers:

1. Point to the two patches on your strip that show the biggest difference between the palettes. **Any pair where one is clearly cleaner or brighter.**
2. Name one colour in your landscape that you mixed, and the colours you mixed it from. **For example "light green: yellow, a bit of cyan and white".**
3. True or false: "Every set of three paints mixes the same colours." **False; different starting colours mix different ranges, as the strip shows.**

Vocabulary

- **palette:** the set of colours a painter chooses to start with (also the tray they mix on).
- **primary colours (of a palette):** the starting colours you mix everything else from. Different palettes have different primaries.
- **cyan, magenta:** a bright turquoise-blue and a bright pink-purple, used by printers as starting colours.
- **landscape:** a picture of a place outdoors.

Differentiation

- **Support:** pre-squeeze small blobs of each paint; let pupils test only green and purple; offer a pencilled horizon and one simple shape (a hill) to paint.
- **Stretch:** pupils add white to make a paler version of one mix in each row and compare again; or paint a second, tiny landscape with the other palette and compare the two pictures.
- **Colour vision:** pairs describe the patches as lighter/darker or duller/brighter; labels in words on every pot and patch.

⚠ Safety

- Non-toxic paint suitable for children; no brushes or fingers in mouths.
- Aprons on; wipe spills straight away; wash hands after painting.
- Keep water pots low and central; carry with two hands.

Teacher notes

- **Try both sets before the lesson.** Results depend on the actual paints. If your "blue" is already turquoise or your "red" is already pinkish, the difference will be small. That is fine: the point is that pupils test and decide, not that one set wins.
- **Don't pre-announce a winner.** Let the strips do the arguing. If a pupil prefers the red-yellow-blue set, ask what it did better; that is a real artistic reason.
- **Common misconception:** "Red, yellow and blue are the only real primary colours." This is widely taught (many adults learned it at school). It is a long tradition in painting, not a fact about colour. See the unit sources.

- **If pupils ask about screens:** screens mix light, not paint, and their starting colours are red, green and blue light. That is a different kind of mixing; it comes up again in science.
- Keep the landscapes; pupils will compare them with their lesson 4 painting.

Lesson 2: So many greens

Unit overview · Previous: Lesson 1 · Next: Lesson 3

About 65 minutes.

Goal

Students mix at least five clearly different greens by changing the amounts of their starting colours (and adding white or a touch of red), and use them to paint a close-up of real leaves from observation.

Materials (per group)

- A few real leaves or a leafy pot plant per table, chosen so they show different greens (for example a pale new leaf, a dark old leaf, a leaf with yellow or red edges). Check for allergies; avoid plants with irritating sap.
- Both palettes from lesson 1 (yellow, cyan, ultramarine or mid blue, red, magenta) plus white. Labelled pots.
- Palettes, two brush sizes, 2 water pots, paper towels.
- A scrap strip per pupil for a "green ladder"; a postcard of thick paper.
- Pencils; optional magnifying glasses.

Steps

✎ Opening (5 min)

Hold up two or three leaves. Ask: "Are these the same green?" Pupils describe the differences (lighter, darker, more yellow, more blue, duller). Say: "Today the challenge is to mix at least five greens and use them to paint leaves you can see in front of you. If you only use one green, the leaves will look flat."

✎ Main activity

1. **Green ladder (15 min).** On the strip, pupils make a row of at least five greens. Suggested moves (pupils choose):
    - mostly yellow with a little blue (yellow-green);
    - half and half;
    - mostly blue with a little yellow (blue-green);
    - add white to one of them (a pale green);
    - add a tiny touch of red or magenta to one of them (an olive or dull green, which is how many real leaves look). Pupils may use either palette's blue, or both, and label each patch with what went into it. Remind them: add the darker colour to the lighter one a little at a time.
2. **Draw (10 min).** Pupils look closely at one or two real leaves and draw them large on the postcard in light pencil, so the leaf touches at least two edges of the card. Include the main vein and the outline; no shading yet.

3. **Paint (25 min).** Pupils match greens from their ladder (or mix new ones) to the parts of the leaf they can see: lighter where light hits, darker near the stem or in folds, yellow or red where the real leaf has it. The background can be any single colour they choose. Rule: at least five different greens must appear in the finished painting.
4. **Tidy and dry (5 min).**

✓ Discussion questions (with answers)

1. How did you make your lightest green? **Usually by adding more yellow, or by adding white. Both work; white makes a paler, more chalky green.**
2. How did you make a dull, natural-looking green? **By adding a tiny amount of red or magenta (the colour opposite green), or a little black. Lesson 3 looks at why this works.**
3. Did one blue make better greens than the other? **Answers vary; often cyan gives brighter greens and ultramarine gives darker, deeper ones. Both are useful in a leaf painting.**
4. Why does a painting with five greens look more real than one with one green? **Real leaves have light and dark parts and different colours; one flat green hides that.**

✓ Closing check (5 min, with answers)

Pairs swap paintings and count the greens they can see.

1. How many different greens can you count in your partner's painting? **Five or more meets the goal.**
2. Point to the darkest green and say how it was mixed. **For example "more blue than yellow" or "green with a bit of red".**
3. Finish the sentence: "To make a green more yellow, I add more ___." **Yellow.**

Vocabulary

- **observation:** looking closely at a real thing while you draw or paint it.
- **yellow-green, blue-green:** greens that lean towards yellow or blue.
- **dull (low-intensity) colour:** a quieter, less bright colour.

Differentiation

- **Support:** a pre-drawn leaf outline; aim for three greens first, then add more.
- **Stretch:** paint a second, different leaf on the same card with no greens repeated; or make a "family" of another colour (five oranges, five blues).
- **Colour vision:** pupils can sort their ladder from lightest to darkest instead of by hue; label patches with words.

⚠ Safety

- As in lesson 1. Wash hands after handling plants. Leaves and plants are not eaten or put in mouths.

Teacher notes

- Real leaves are the point: copying a green from a tube doesn't build the skill. If real plants are not possible, use colour photographs of leaves.
- Expect some muddy greens. Ask "how could you make it brighter?" (less red, more yellow, a cleaner blue) rather than calling it a mistake.
- Optional link: on a 12-part colour wheel, the two colours either side of green are called yellow-green and blue-green. Naming them is useful but not the aim of this lesson.

Lesson 3: Make it stand out

Unit overview · Previous: Lesson 2 · Next: Lesson 4

About 60 minutes.

Goal

Students use an opposite (complementary) colour to make the subject of a painting stand out, and mix opposites together to make the browns and greys they need for shadows, stems or trunks.

Materials (per group)

- Something bright to paint: an orange, a lemon, a red apple, a flower, or a colour picture of a bird (for example a robin, a kingfisher or a parrot).
- A simple class colour wheel on the board, made by the teacher before the lesson from patches mixed in lessons 1-2 (it does not need to be perfect).
- Both palettes plus white. Labelled pots.
- Palettes, two brush sizes, 2 water pots, paper towels.
- A scrap strip per pupil; a postcard of thick paper; pencils.

Steps

✎ Opening (10 min)

1. Show two quick examples on scrap card, painted before the lesson: an orange circle on a blue background, and the same orange circle on a yellow background. Ask: "In which one does the orange jump out more?" (Usually the blue.)
2. Show the class wheel. Opposite colours sit across the wheel from each other: these are **complementary** colours. Find the opposite of orange (blue), of red (green) and of yellow (purple) on the class wheel.
3. Tell pupils: "Opposites side by side make each other look stronger. Mixed together, they cancel out and make browns and greys. Painters use both tricks."

✎ Main activity

1. **Opposites strip (10 min).** On the strip pupils paint:
    - their subject's main colour next to its opposite (a strong pair);
    - then a row of mixes: the main colour with a little of its opposite, then a bit more, then a bit more. They will see it get duller, then brownish or greyish. Label each patch.
2. **Draw (5 min).** Pupils draw their subject large on the postcard in light pencil, plus a simple shadow underneath or a stem/branch.
3. **Paint (25 min).**
    - Subject in its bright colour (mixed from their palette).
    - Background in the opposite colour, or a lighter or darker version of it.

    - Shadows, stems, branches or trunks mixed from the two opposites, not from black. Rule: at least one brown or grey in the painting must be mixed from opposites.
4. **Tidy and dry (5 min).**

✓ Discussion questions (with answers)

1. Why does your subject stand out? **Because it is next to its opposite colour, which makes a strong contrast.**
2. What happened when you mixed a colour with its opposite? **It became duller, then brownish or greyish.**
3. Why might a painter mix a shadow from opposites instead of using black? **Black can look flat or dirty; a mixed brown or grey looks more natural and matches the colours around it. (Both are allowed; this is a choice.)**
4. Is a picture with opposite colours always better? **No. Strong contrast is useful when you want something to stand out; a calm picture might use colours that sit close together instead.**

✓ Closing check (5 min, with answers)

1. Name the opposite of orange on our class wheel. **Blue.**
2. Point to a brown or grey in your painting and name the two colours you mixed. **For example "orange and blue" or "red and green".**
3. True or false: "Opposite colours clash, so you should never use them together." **False; they make strong contrast, which artists use on purpose.**

Vocabulary

- **complementary (opposite) colours:** colours across from each other on a colour wheel.
- **contrast:** a strong difference that makes something easy to see.
- **subject:** the main thing in a picture.

Differentiation

- **Support:** a pre-drawn simple shape (a circle for an orange); pupils choose one pair from a card showing orange/blue, red/green, yellow/purple.
- **Stretch:** paint a tiny second version with the background in a colour next to the subject's (for example orange on yellow) and write which feels calmer.
- **Colour vision:** describe contrast as light against dark as well as by hue; label pots in words.

⚠ Safety

- As in lesson 1. Fruit used for painting is not eaten afterwards.

Teacher notes

- **Different colour wheels, different pairs.** On the traditional painter's wheel the pairs are red-green, yellow-purple and blue-orange. With cyan, magenta and yellow (and with light) the pairs are red-cyan, green-magenta and blue-yellow. Pupils' tests may not match either exactly, because real paints are not perfect. Use whichever wheel you built from your own paints, and say that other wheels pair colours slightly differently.
- **Misconception: "opposite colours clash, so they are wrong together."** Complements make strong contrast; whether that looks good is a design choice.
- Muddy mixes are expected. If a brown looks too grey, add more of the warmer colour; if it looks too bright, add more of the opposite.

Lesson 4: Near and far: hills at the end of the day

Unit overview · Previous: Lesson 3 · Next: Lesson 5

About 60-70 minutes, or two shorter sessions (sky in one, hills in the next).

Goal

Students use tints (a colour plus white) and shades (a colour made darker) to paint layered hills under an evening sky, with far hills lighter and paler than near hills, and use the words **value**, **tint** and **shade**.

Materials (per group)

- Both palettes, plus white and black. Labelled pots.
- Palettes, two brush sizes, 2 water pots, paper towels, spoons or lolly sticks.
- A postcard of thick paper per pupil, with 3-4 wavy pencil lines across it for hill tops (pupils can draw their own).
- A scrap strip per pupil for a 5-step value test.
- Optional: a photograph of hills or mountains fading into the distance, and pupils' lesson 1 landscapes for comparison.

Steps

✎ Opening (10 min)

1. Show the photograph (or describe a view from a hill or a long street). Ask: "What happens to hills, trees or buildings that are far away? What colour do they look?" Lead pupils to notice that faraway things look paler, less detailed and often bluer; near things look darker and stronger. Artists call this **aerial perspective**.
2. Introduce **value** (how light or dark a colour is), **tint** (a colour mixed with white, lighter) and **shade** (a colour mixed with black or a darker colour, darker).

✎ Main activity

1. **Value test (10 min).** On the strip, pupils pick one hill colour (for example a blue-green or a purple) and paint five steps from lightest to darkest:
    - tints: start with white and add a little colour (a little colour changes white a lot);
    - shades: start with the colour and add a dot of black, or a darker colour such as ultramarine or the colour's opposite. If two steps look the same, they adjust one.
2. **Sky (10 min).** Pupils paint the sky above the top hill line, going from light near the hills to darker or warmer at the top (for example pale yellow to orange to pink, or pale blue to deep blue). They may blend wet into wet or paint bands.
3. **Hills, far to near (25 min).** Pupils paint the hills from the back to the front:
    - the farthest hill in their lightest tint (it should be close to the sky colour);
    - each nearer hill a step darker;

    - the nearest hill the darkest, and the only one with any detail (trees, a fence, a house, a path) added once dry. Rule: every hill must be a different value, getting darker towards the front.
4. **Compare and dry (5 min).** Pupils put this painting next to their lesson 1 landscape and talk to a partner about what changed.

✓ Discussion questions (with answers)

1. Why did you paint the far hill so light? **Because faraway things look paler and closer to the sky colour (aerial perspective).**
2. How did you make a tint? **By starting with white and adding a little of the colour.**
3. How did you make a shade without making it look dirty? **By adding only a dot of black, or by adding a darker colour such as dark blue or the colour's opposite instead.**
4. What looks different from your lesson 1 landscape? **Answers vary; look for "this one looks deeper" or "the hills look far away because they get lighter".**

✓ Closing check (5 min, with answers)

1. What is a tint? **A colour mixed with white, so it is lighter.**
2. What is a shade? **A colour made darker, for example by adding black.**
3. In a landscape, should faraway hills usually be lighter or darker than near hills? **Lighter (and usually paler or bluer).**
4. Point to the darkest and lightest hills in your painting. **Check that they are the nearest and farthest.**

Vocabulary

- **value:** how light or dark a colour is.
- **tint:** a colour mixed with white.
- **shade:** a colour mixed with black (or made darker).
- **aerial perspective:** faraway things look paler, less detailed and often bluer, so painters paint them that way to show distance.

Differentiation

- **Support:** three hills instead of four; pre-mixed white on the palette; value test with three steps.
- **Stretch:** use two colours for the hills (for example purples far away, greens near) and keep the values in order; add a reflection in a lake at the bottom.
- **Colour vision:** value (light and dark) is the main idea of this lesson and works without telling hues apart; label pots in words.

⚠ Safety

- As in lesson 1. Allow drying space so pupils don't carry wet paintings.

Teacher notes

- **Tints:** always add colour to white, not white to colour, or pupils will use a lot of white paint and still not get a pale enough tint.
- **Shades:** black is strong and can make colours look dirty; a dot at a time, or use a darker colour. Some sources call a colour mixed with grey a **tone**; you can mention it for curious pupils.
- **Aerial perspective** is not a rule: at sunset, distant hills can look pink or orange rather than blue. Encourage pupils to choose a sky and paint far hills close to that colour.
- Source for aerial perspective: Wikipedia, "Aerial perspective" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aerial_perspective): distant objects lose contrast and detail, and their colours become less saturated and shift towards the background colour, usually bluish, but reddish around sunrise or sunset.

Lesson 5: My own painting

Unit overview · Previous: Lesson 4

Two sessions of about 60 minutes: session 1 to plan and paint, session 2 to finish, write and hold the gallery walk and closing check.

Goal

Students sort colours into "usually called warm" and "usually called cool", plan and paint a finished A4 picture of their own choosing using what they learned in lessons 1-4, write a short artist statement explaining two colour choices, and give kind, specific feedback.

Materials (per group)

- Pupils' paintings from lessons 1-4 (their folder).
- Both palettes, plus white and black. Labelled pots.
- Palettes, two brush sizes, 2 water pots, paper towels, aprons.
- A4 thick paper per pupil; scrap paper for thumbnail sketches; pencils.
- Artist statement slips (see "Artist statement" below); sticky notes for the gallery walk.
- Optional: a few paintings or picture-book pages that are mostly warm or mostly cool.

Steps

Session 1

✎ Opening (10 min)

1. Ask: "Which colours remind you of a sunny day or a fire? Which remind you of water, ice or a grey cloudy day?" Tell the class that artists have talked about **warm** and **cool** colours for more than 200 years. Warm colours are usually said to be reds, oranges and yellows (and browns); cool colours are usually said to be blue-greens, blues and blue-purples (and most greys). Green and purple sit on the border; people disagree, and that is fine.
2. Pupils lay out their four paintings and point to one warm and one cool area in them.

Plan (15 min)

1. Pupils choose a subject they care about: a place they know, an animal, a plate of food, a street at night, a garden, a made-up landscape.
2. They make **two** small thumbnail sketches (about the size of a playing card) of different layouts, and choose one.
3. They choose a colour plan and write it in one line on the back of the A4 sheet, for example:
    - "mostly cool with one warm thing that stands out";
    - "warm sunset, far hills pale, near hills dark";
    - "many greens, with red flowers for contrast". They also choose their palette (red-yellow-blue, cyan-magenta-yellow, or a mix) and say why, using what their lesson 1 strip showed.

Paint (30 min)

1. Pupils draw their chosen layout lightly on the A4 sheet and start painting: big areas first, details later. Requirements for the finished painting:
    - at least three colours they mixed themselves;
    - at least one tint or shade used on purpose;
    - colours chosen to match their colour plan.

Session 2

Finish (20 min)

1. Pupils finish details. Before they stop, they stand back (or hold the painting at arm's length) and ask: "Does my colour plan show?"

Artist statement (10 min)

1. Each pupil completes a slip:
    - "My painting shows ___."
    - "I chose the ___ palette because ___."
    - "One colour choice I made: I used ___ so that ___."
    - "Another colour choice I made: I used ___ so that ___."

Gallery walk (15 min)

1. Paintings and statements go on tables. Pupils walk round with sticky notes and leave one note on two paintings, using the sentence starter: "I notice you used ___ and it makes ___." Rule: say what you see, not "good" or "bad"; be kind and specific. Each artist reads their notes.

✓ Discussion questions (with example answers)

1. Do warm colours always look like they come towards you? **Not always. Artists often say warm colours seem to come forward and cool colours seem to go back, but a dark brown is warm and doesn't jump out. How bright and light a colour is matters too.**
2. Which lesson's idea did you use most? **Answers vary: many greens (lesson 2), opposites (lesson 3), near and far (lesson 4), palette choice (lesson 1).**
3. What would you change if you painted it again? **Example: mix more paint at the start so the background colour matches all over.**

✓ Closing check (10 min, with answers; end of unit)

Pupils answer on paper or orally. No pass mark: use it to see who needs more practice.

1. Are red, yellow and blue the only primary colours painters can use? **No. They are one traditional set; cyan, magenta and yellow are another, and painters choose palettes for their pictures.**
2. In your lesson 1 test, which palette made the cleaner purple? **Answers vary; check it matches their strip (often cyan-magenta-yellow).**

3. Give one way to make a green more yellow, and one way to make it duller. **More yellow; add a tiny bit of red or magenta (its opposite), or a dot of black.**
4. What is the opposite (complementary) colour of orange on our class wheel? **Blue.**
5. What usually happens when you mix two opposite colours? **You get a duller, brownish or greyish colour.**
6. What is a tint? **A colour mixed with white (lighter).** What is a shade? **A colour made darker, for example with black.**
7. Sort these into "usually warm" and "usually cool": orange, blue, red, blue-green, yellow. **Warm: orange, red, yellow. Cool: blue, blue-green.**
8. Look at your painting. Name one colour you mixed and say what you mixed it from. **Answers vary; check that the recipe matches what they used.**

Vocabulary

- **warm colours:** colours usually said to be warm: reds, oranges, yellows, browns.
- **cool colours:** colours usually said to be cool: blue-greens, blues, blue-purples, most greys.
- **thumbnail sketch:** a small, quick drawing to try out a layout.
- **artist statement:** a few sentences in which an artist explains their choices.
- **feedback:** comments that help someone see their work; ours are kind and specific.

Differentiation

- **Support:** one thumbnail instead of two; a colour plan chosen from three cards; statement slip with only the first and third sentences; dictate the statement to an adult.
- **Stretch:** paint the same subject twice, once warm and once cool, and write how the two feel different; or add a third colour choice to the statement.
- **Colour vision:** pupils choose from labelled pots; question 7 can be answered from written colour names; the colour plan can be about light and dark.

⚠ Safety

As in lesson 1. Allow drying space so pupils don't carry wet paintings across the room.

Teacher notes

- **"Warm and cool" are conventions, not laws.** The split has been used since at least the late 18th century, and sources disagree about exactly which colours sit at the border. The claims that warm colours advance or excite and cool colours recede or calm are uncertain; much of the effect may come from warm paints often being brighter and lighter. Keep the language "usually called" and "often said".
- **Colour meanings vary between cultures.** Don't teach "red means angry" or similar as facts. If pupils say a colour means something to them, accept it as their view.
- **Assessment:** use the folder of five paintings plus the statement. Look for choices the pupil can explain, not for neatness or realism.
- Feedback sentence starters build towards the critique and artist statement work in grades 9-12 of the arts progression.