



## Growing Up with Crayons Upper Elementary and Middle School Level

Activities, Objectives, and Skills Practiced authored by:  
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### Introduction

Crayons graduate from kindergarten and advance a few grades for this series of Language Arts/Reading activities. Reading an article from Smithsonian magazine, students are reunited with crayons, the wonderful artist's tool of early childhood, and learn about the waxy implement's history and recipe for success. Activities guide them in the reading process, helping them identify new vocabulary and practice such critical thinking skills as predicting outcomes, analyzing and synthesizing information to form their own opinions, and creative expression.

### U.S. Common Core Curriculum Standards

#### K-5 Reading

##### Informational Text

##### *Key Ideas and Details*

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

##### *Craft and Structure*

- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

#### K-5 Language

##### *Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

#### K-5 Writing

##### *Production and Distribution of Writing*

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

### Read

"The Colors of Childhood"

*Smithsonian*, November 1999, Lexile 1000

Database: MasterFile; EBSCO AN 2407972



## Objectives

- Students will read a short informational article of non-fiction, expository content to learn about the history and production of crayons.
- Students will engage in activities that will guide them in the reading process to
  - identify new vocabulary.
  - predict outcomes.
  - analyze and synthesize information to form opinions.
  - think and write creatively.

## Skills Practiced

Making predictions  
Reading strategically  
Understanding vocabulary  
Identifying breakdown of meaning  
Making sense of the text  
Comparing similar items  
Thinking creatively  
Utilizing technology  
Stating and supporting opinions  
Making personal connections  
Discussing thought processes with peers

## Co-curricular Applications

Reading  
Writing  
Art

## Materials Needed

A copy of “The Colors of Childhood” activities sheet (provided below)  
Copies of “The Colors of Childhood,” or online computer access to the article from Online Reader®  
Sticky notes  
Crayola® crayons  
Crayons of another brand  
Half and whole sheets of 8 ½ x 11 inch paper  
Half and whole sheets of construction paper (for mounting purposes)  
Crayon pattern

## Instruction Notes

Make sure your students are familiar with the strategies and tasks listed on the task sheet; for example, identifying words that interfere with comprehension. This assignment can be used as an



individual assignment or can be completed as a whole or small group assignment with your guidance and instruction on each task.

## Building Vocabulary

After all children have completed Activity 4 on the task sheet, take time to discuss the words that interfere with their comprehension. Make this a risk free discussion and encourage children to share their words, what they think they mean and how they came to their conclusions. Then refer back to the text, other children’s perceptions of a word, and finally, a dictionary if necessary, in order to discern the meaning of a given word. Examples may include:

- **Boomer:** a person born in the Baby Boom years after World War II
- **celebrated:** famous, favorably well-known
- **constituents:** members of a group representing a particular issue or mission
- **craie:** the French word for “chalk”
- **oleaginous** (oh-lee-AJ-uh-nuss): oily
- **olfactory system:** the body system that allows us to smell things
- **palette:** a range of colors children use
- **pallet:** a platform used to store or move heavy freight; often made of wood
- **Prussia:** an area of North Central Europe that was once a state, it included the present-day areas of northern Germany and northern Poland
- **reverie:** reflective thinking, daydreaming
- **vat:** a big tub, or open barrel

## Activities

1. Distribute copies of “The Colors of Childhood” to students, or arrange for online reading of the article.
2. Ask students to read the title of the article, and predict what they think this article will be about. Students will write their predictions.
3. Direct students to read the article silently.
4. Students will go back and reread the article, writing on a sticky note any words they aren’t sure of, and where the words occur in the article. Students should ask themselves these questions: Is there anything in the article that confuses me, or isn’t clear? If so what? Write it down. Then discuss with a classmate to figure it out.
5. Writing – In this activity, students can describe how a crayon is made OR explain the reaction of the public when eight colors were retired. They should format the essay by first writing one of the following two questions. How is a crayon made? How did the public react when Crayola® retired eight colors, and why? Student responses should follow.



6. Crayon Inspection – Give each student (or a group of students) one Crayola® crayon and another brand’s crayon. Ask students to compare the two. They can use a Venn diagram or a “T” chart and highlight the similarities and differences. Ultimately, students should give an opinion of which crayon is of higher quality.
7. Creative Coloring – Students will use Crayola® colors to draw or color a picture of their choosing. Then they will explain how they feel when they use crayons. Example: “I love to color; it makes me feel like a carefree little girl again.” They can write their explanation on the back of the picture, or sticky note it on their picture.
8. Creative Writing: Invent a new color – Students will write a paragraph that describes a new color they invent and why it is needed. They should first do a rough draft, then write a final paragraph on paper, or type it. Modification for student special needs: Make a blank crayon pattern for students (an outline of a crayon). Give each student a pattern, saving extras for mistakes. Each student will label the pattern with his/her new color’s name. Then they will color the pattern with the new color, which may involve mixing crayon shades.
9. To the students: Ask students to give their opinions of the importance of crayons, as a discussion or writing exercise.

*Note:* Some of the activities address standards other than Reading and Literature Standards.

## **Sharing and Displaying Children’s Work**

At the end of the week, take time to share your students’ responses to the above tasks. It will be a time of discussion and celebration of the students’ work and creativity. Children learn so much from each other, especially if they have been supporting each other during the course of the lesson. Responses from tasks can be posted in the hall for other students to view. Therefore, it will become a learning opportunity for more students and your class can share its thinking with a broader audience.

## **Resources**

The Official Crayola® website, <http://www.crayola.com>, is a fun and creative site with sections for parents, educators, and children; it includes additional lesson plan ideas.

## **Evaluation**

When evaluating the mastery of the components of this lesson, examine the children’s work samples. If a child is not proficient in an area, meet with that child, and allow for additional opportunities to practice the deficient strategy. Students will be graded on their answers to the discussion questions, group work and their written work. They can also be graded on their participation, behavior, and cooperation.



## Rubric

Teachers and teacher educators identify rubrics as a set of criteria used for particular assignments, projects, and other tasks. To aid in the assessment procedure, there are three steps recognized by the measurement community to an assessment:

1. Students respond to questions
2. Analysis/scoring of performance on those questions
3. The interpretation of those results

If a rubric is a set of criteria, then the assessment tools should be based on these criteria and take on forms such as checklists, essays, problem sets, portfolios, etc.

Resources for rubrics:

- <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php>
- <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/tips/assess-elem.html>
- <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schrockguide/assess.html>