

Monsterland (aka Exquisite Corpse)

By Jesse Cramer

Education level: Elementary

Genre: Poetry

Time frame: 45 minutes

Prior knowledge and skills: None

Required materials: Blank paper (folded in thirds), pencils

Sequence of activities:

Explanation (10 minutes)

Drawing (15 minutes -- 5 minutes for each section)

Describing creatures & creating a poem (20 minutes)

Explanation:

Bring in an example Monsterland (Exquisite Corpse) when explaining the game so the class can see how the paper folds, unfolds, and how the monster comes together. The idea is to secretly, yet collaboratively draw different parts of a creature (head, torso, legs) without knowing what the other parts are.

Make sure to explain that they don't have to (and in fact, are encouraged not to) draw humans. They can draw animal heads, a torso with 5 arms, perhaps a tail, or wheels in place of legs.

Drawing:

Split the students into groups of 3 and give each group one piece of paper, already folded into thirds.

One student from each group starts with the paper, while the others put their heads down on the table so as to not peek at what their classmate is drawing. The student with the paper will draw the "head" of their monster.

(Set a timer for 5 minutes so they're all mostly on the same time schedule.)

Flip the paper so that the head is hidden and only the blank middle third is showing, and pass it to the second student in the group. This student will draw the "torso", while not knowing what the head looks like.

Flip the paper one last time so that the first two thirds are hidden, and the last student will draw the "legs" of the monster.

After all the monsters have been drawn, collect the papers and gather everyone in a circle. Unveil each monster!

Describing creatures & creating a poem:

Spend time with each one. Ask students to describe what they see. If they are laughing, ask which part is funny and why. They can describe physical traits, but also what the monster is doing, what it might like to do for fun, perhaps what its name is.

Write down or record the students' observations.

Combine their descriptions into a poem. Each stanza can be about each monster, and as a whole it can come together as one written work titled "Monsterland."