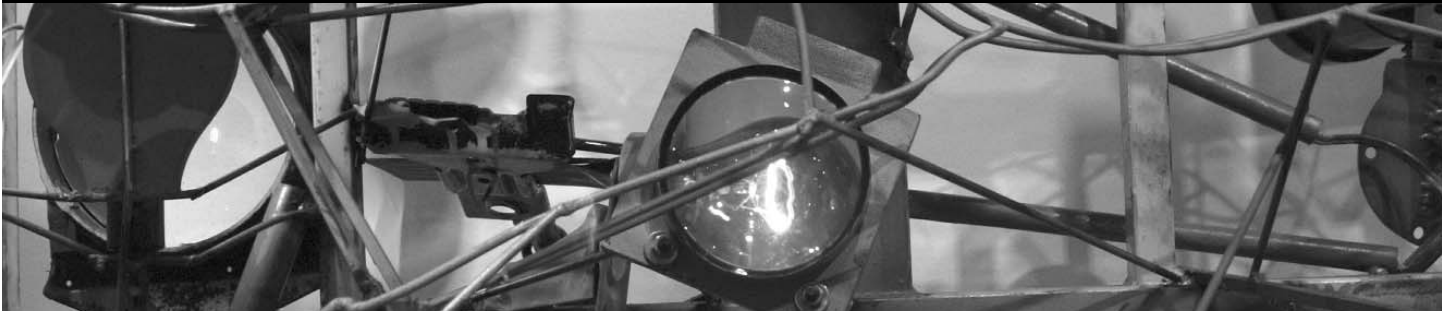


Fanning the Spark: Fostering Your Students' Creativity



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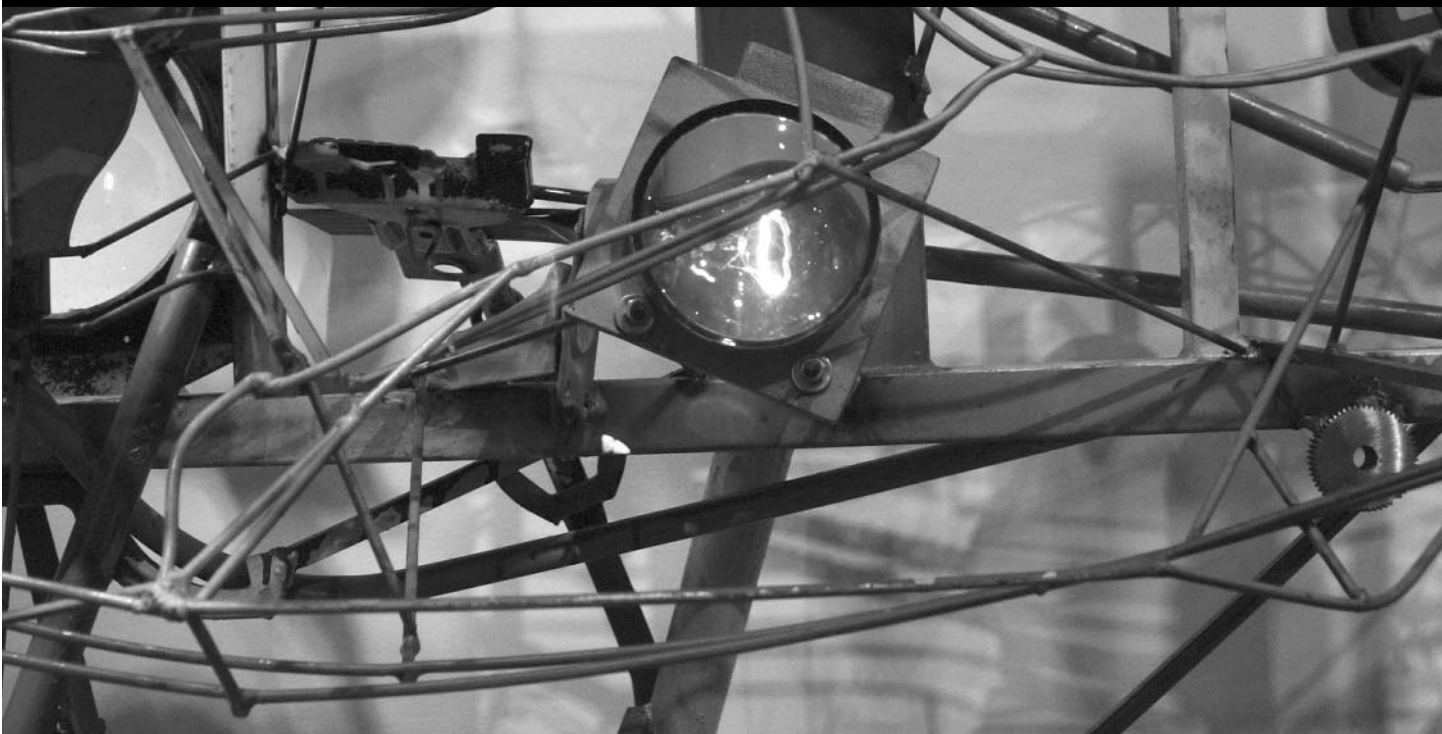


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INTRODUCTION

We are often told that the most valuable attribute for young people entering our rapidly-changing world to possess is creativity. Most people will pursue many professions throughout their lives. A creative, flexible mind can be one of the most valuable qualities for us to encourage in students.

The idea of creativity has often been associated with the ability to produce original artworks. But artworks are only one manifestation of creativity. We wish to encourage creative thinking, promoting an approach that generates inventive ideas and applies those to problem-solving and other activities. In these lesson plans, we frame experiences and exercises to encourage and practice these creative thinking and problem-solving skills.

Creative thinking takes time and practice, but by incorporating approaches that stimulate creative thinking into your classroom on a regular basis, students will begin to think creatively on their own more often.

We have found that a trip to an art museum can serve as an excellent catalyst for stimulating creative thinking. Museum docents are trained to give students tours that encourage creative responses. This packet suggests activities to prepare for and follow-up on an art museum visit. These activities can greatly enrich the museum experience.

GENERATING IDEAS

In relation to creative thinking, there are four approaches through which people generate ideas:

- **Fluency** (developing a large quantity of ideas)
- **Flexibility** (developing a wide variety of ideas, viewing ideas in different ways, or shifting from one thought category to another)
- **Originality** (developing individualistic, unique, unusual, different, or new ideas)
- **Elaboration** (enriching existing ideas, expanding with details, refining, embellishing)

(Note: extended definitions of these creative thinking skills are included at the end of this explanatory section to assist you in generating new ideas, activities, or answers in order to further develop these thinking processes in your students.)

Creative thinking can come as a result of one or a combination of these methods. These approaches are valuable in aiding in the development of creative thinking in children, especially when utilized in activities or questioning strategies.

You can encourage *fluent, flexible, original* and *elaborative* thinking in your students through *open-ended questions* (questions that have no right answer). Be sure to allow sufficient time for thought before requiring an answer. Each of the creative thinking methods has various key phrases that can be useful tools in developing questions that will produce the desired response from students:

Fluency: to help students to come up with many ideas, use phrases such as: "How many ways ...?" or "Make a list of ..." or "What are all the uses ...?" or "List all the possible ..."

Flexibility: if you want a variety of ideas, try phrases such as: "How/What else ...?" or "What other kind ...?" or "What different approach ...?" or "What other angle ...?"

Originality: to get original, individual ideas, ask questions such as: "What would you do ...?" or "Come up with your very own ..." or "Try to think of something no one else will think of ..." or "What unusual way ...?"

Elaboration: for detailed responses, use phrases such as: "Tell me more about ..." or "What else ..." or "Describe ..." or "Give all the details ..." or "What can you add to ..."

Activities that involve the different thinking approaches do not have to be complicated or time-consuming. They can be as simple as a single question that you ask at the beginning of the

day to start students thinking creatively. Included in this packet are a variety of activities that can be tailored to students of different ages. Some are very simple, some are more complex.

Some activities are solely for the purpose of getting your students' creative juices flowing. Others are designed to accompany a visit to the BYU Museum of Art, particularly the *Poetic Kinetics* exhibition. The activities incorporate various creative thinking approaches. Choose the activities that would most benefit your students. Use your own creativity in adapting those activities to your group. Begin to incorporate creative thinking activities into your classroom and continue fanning that creative spark!



A young visitor to the *Poetic Kinetics* exhibition

Extended Definitions for creative thinking approaches:

Observation-taking an in-depth look at the problem/idea, considering different perspectives, comparing data, noting similarities/differences, forecasting

Fluency-brainstorming, looking for alternative solutions, listing attributes, listing possibilities, asking a variety of appropriate questions, utilizing synonyms, accepting the possibility of more than one right answer

Flexibility-using a variety of approaches to consider problems and arrive at solutions, reconsidering the viewpoint by minifying or magnifying the problem, adapting the idea to alternative situations, interpreting the information in a variety of ways

Originality-combining the unusual, noting unusual responses, searching for unique products or ideas, reversing the question/answer process, relating unconnected information, comparing unlike objects

Elaboration-incorporating accuracy and completeness within an idea, enhancing an answer to provide full meaning and understanding, embellishing an idea/concept/question, adding details to make a common object more interesting, filling in "gaps" in writing, stretching or extending an idea.

(From: Riley, Margaret C. and Donna L. Taylor, *Year-Round Creative Thinking Activities for the Primary Classroom*. West Nyack, N.Y.: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1990.)

Lesson 1: Creative Thinking in Preparation for a Trip to the Museum

Objectives

- To prepare students for the museum experience
- To introduce students to various types of art
- To introduce students to the idea of creative thinking and get them to begin thinking creatively

Discussion

Using the following questions based on the creative thinking approaches, have your students discuss (either as a class or in groups) what they anticipate from their museum experience.

1. How many of you have been to the art museum before? Tell me about what you saw there. (Follow up on questions by asking for details.

Then, begin to ask the following questions that will lead into a discussion of sculpture if students do not mention it on their own). Is there anything besides pictures at the museum? Are there works of art that don't hang on the walls? What do you call those? What are they like? How do you look at sculptures (view from all sides)? (fluency, flexibility, elaboration)

2. (Show your students a picture of a painting or sculpture from the museum that will be easy for them to recognize when they go there. There are several examples provided in this packet or visit our website at <http://www.byu.edu/moa>)

What would you title this painting/sculpture? What do you see in this painting/sculpture? What else? What do you think it is about? What else might it be about? (originality, fluency, elaboration) Try to view the artwork during your visit to the museum and reveal its title and what it is about.

3. I want you to find something at the museum that you have never seen before. Remember it so we can share it with each other when we get back!

4. Did you know that over half of the museum is full of rooms we can't go in and things we can't see? What do you think is in the rest of the museum, the parts we can't see? What do you think they do there? (fluency, originality). Following the students' responses, tell them about various parts of the museum: large areas of storage for other artworks; areas for departments that help put together the exhibitions like the design department, the registration department (in charge of receiving artworks, checking them over for damage, displaying them and returning them), and also the curatorial, public relations and education departments.



Children enjoy the Poetic Kinetics exhibition.

A Creative Thinking Activity For High School Students:



Dennis Smith with one of his creations

• To encourage *fluency*:

Split the class into small groups. Have each group brainstorm to come up with as many ideas as they can for use of an ordinary object, a cup, for instance, in three minutes. Remind them that they are to concentrate on generating a large number of ideas and that there should be no criticism of ideas while brainstorming.

• To encourage *flexibility*:

When exercising flexibility in creative thinking, a student must shift from one thought category to another. Have students brainstorm uses for the upright container (perhaps a tin can) sitting at the front of the classroom. Turn the container upside down so it no longer functions as a container. Brainstorm uses for it now. Turn the container on its side and brainstorm additional uses. Ask students how many times they shifted thought categories (three). Point out the increased number of uses generated by shifting thought categories.

• To encourage *originality*:

Bring an ordinary household object of your choice from home. Tell students they have been ordered by a weird dictator to make this ordinary object part of a work of art displayed in your home. What would you do to it to make it more artistic?

What would you call it? Where would you place it (what room, where in the room, etc.)? Would it be about something (if so, what?) or just decorative?

To encourage *elaboration*:

Have your students read through the list they came up with for original uses of an ordinary object. Have each student take one of the ideas and elaborate on it. They could create a short story, poem, song, etc. about the object. They might wish to create a role play or an improvisational scene about the object and its uses. They could also figure out how the object could be part of a larger structure and create a detailed drawing or diagram of the structure, outlining its parts and functions. Allow students to share their creations with the class.

Lesson 2: Creative Thinking Following a Museum Visit

Objectives

- To reflect on the exhibitions viewed at the museum and the museum experience and art appreciation as a whole
- To allow students to recall and remember things about the museum and their firsthand experience of artworks.
- To help students think like an artist and involve them in creative thinking activities that will excite them about art

Activities

Using the following suggestions based on the creative thinking approaches as guides, have your students complete one or more of the following activities related to their museum experience. Some activities are more complex than others and you may need to adjust them to the age level of your students. Give examples where necessary and allow students enough time to complete the activity, providing continuous encouragement as they do so.

1. List as many things (or people or places or ...) as you can that you think would be most interesting to paint a picture of. List real and imaginary things. (fluency, flexibility, originality)

Follow-up activity: Have students paint a picture of one of the interesting things they thought of. (originality, elaboration)

2. Discuss with your students the many types of activities pursued by artists (painters, sculptors, photographers, etc. and even musicians, dancers, actors and others). What type of artist might you like to be?" List at least 10 reasons why. (fluency, flexibility, originality)

Follow-up activity: Have students write a story about "A day in my life as an artist" from their point of view as if they are the artist. They may wish to describe who they meet during the day,

what they do, what materials they work with, where they go, where they live, what their artwork (be it music, dance, painting, etc.) is like, etc. A more challenging activity for older students might be "A day in the life of an artwork" (painting, sculpture, or other piece of art) where they discuss, from the view of the artwork, where they are located, what it's like in that place, who looks at them, etc. (originality, elaboration)

3. How would you stop a thief from stealing the art in the museum? Think of a few original ideas that no one else has thought of and describe them. (flexibility, originality, elaboration)

Follow-up activity: Have each student invent an imaginative device to keep a thief from stealing art in the museum. Then have them write and illustrate a newspaper or magazine ad for the product. (originality, elaboration)

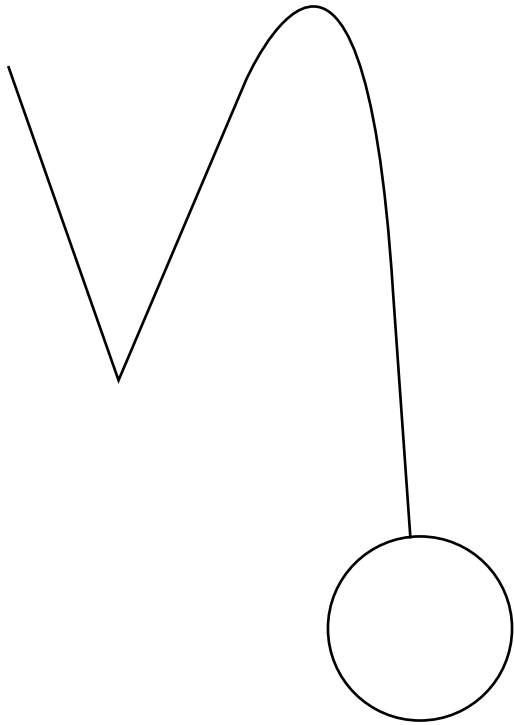
4. You've gotten your hand stuck in a rare and valuable vase on your visit to the museum! (Remind students that this would never happen in a real museum, because they would never touch the artwork!) List at least 20 credible or incredible reasons for having put your hand into that vase. Provide as much detail as you can for each idea. (fluency, flexibility, originality)

Follow-up activity: Have students draw an X-ray picture to reveal their vases and what is inside of them. (originality)

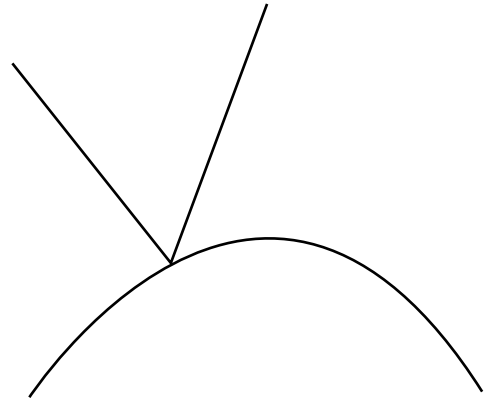
5. Using any of the shapes on the following page, draw in features and details to create a realistic picture. Then, using the same shape turned upside down, create a new picture. Compare and contrast both pictures with those of a friend. (observation, flexibility, originality)

Follow-up activity: Create a display with each student's completed drawings and compare and contrast all of them in a class discussion. (observation, elaboration)

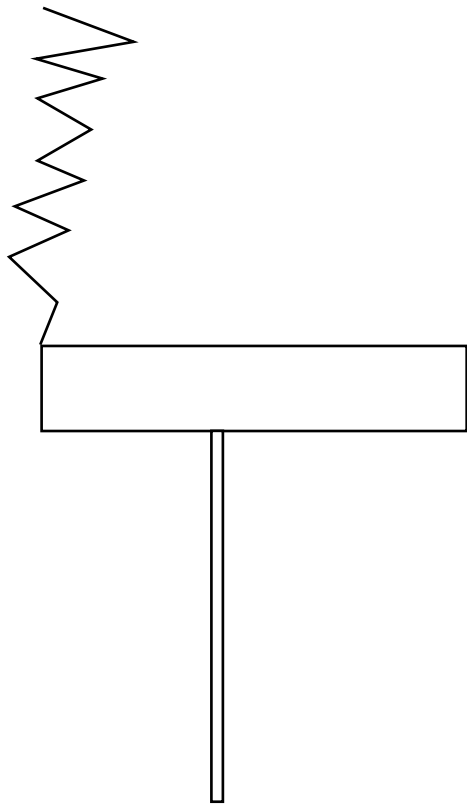
OPTION 1



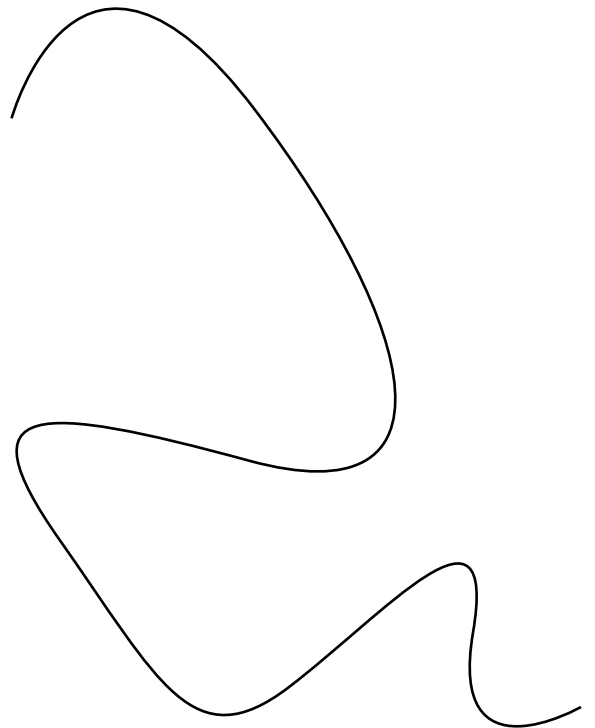
OPTION 2



OPTION 3



OPTION 4



Lesson 3: Creative Thinking Following a Visit to Poetic Kinetics

Objectives

- To begin to understand how a kinetic sculptor works by creating a kinetic sculpture
- To understand what kinetic sculpture is and receive hands-on experience with it

Discussion 1

Ask students what they liked best in *Poetic Kinetics*. Ask follow-up questions to make the responses as detailed as possible. Lead into a discussion of kinetic sculpture. Talk about the different kinds of kinetic sculpture (mobiles, mechanical sculptures or machines, water fountains, etc.). Talk about how kinetic sculpture moves, or implies movement. For a *fluency and flexibility* activity, see if the students can figure out the many different ways that movement happens (air, motors, water, manual touch, etc.) and discuss those. You could also have them think of as many materials as they can that could be used to create a kinetic sculpture. Using the included images of the Smiths' works, reflect on some of the sculptures in the exhibition for examples of various types of movement and materials. You may also wish to talk about how the sculptors created some of the works and what methods they utilized. Also discuss how kinetic sculpture was tied to an interest in technology that peaked during the mid-20th century. Relate that interest to the present day and ask students to think about how advances in technology affect them and how works of kinetic art might change due to those advances.

Activity 1

After discussing the above, have students think about what they would do if they were to create a kinetic sculpture with no limitations for size, budget, materials, etc. What would it look like? What materials would they use? Would it actually move or just give the feeling of motion? Would it perform a particular function or would it simply move just to move? How would the sculpture move or

what in the sculpture would generate movement? Would it symbolize or represent something? If so, what? Where would they want this sculpture to be located and why? Allow them to write about their sculpture, elaborating on it by using quick sketches if they wish. Have some students share their ideas with the class. You may wish to have them do a full-out drawing of their sculpture, referencing the different parts and materials, where it is located, how it moves, etc. (originality, elaboration)



Sculptors Dennis and Andrew Smith

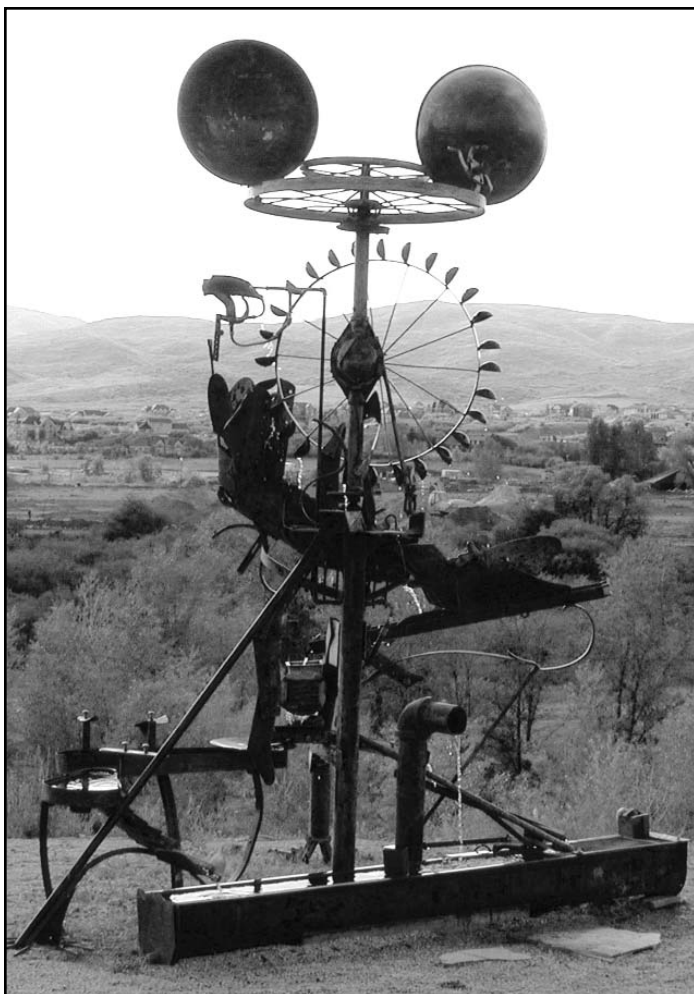
Discussion 2

Talk about the personal influences and insights of both Dennis and Andrew Smith, the artists who created the sculptures in *Poetic Kinetics*. Discuss with your class the similarities and differences they saw in their sculptures. Review the materials they used (especially the concept of found objects), how their sculptures moved or portrayed movement, and who and what influenced each artist.

Have students gather found objects ahead of time for the mobile. These can be random objects from home or nature. Discuss some of the possibilities with your students. (For a simpler mobile, use paper shapes or other objects from the classroom or small things found outside in nature.) Each student will also

need a base, which can be made from sticks, clothes hangers, wire, cardboard tubes, tongue depressors, pencils, rulers, etc. They will also need string, yarn or thin wire with which to hang the objects. Mobiles can range from simple, single-level sculptures to more complex, multi-level sculptures. There are evenly balanced and unevenly balanced mobiles. Allow students to explore their imaginations and encourage them to think of original, personal designs and ideas.

If possible, hang the mobiles from the ceiling in your classroom. Invite the class to point out interesting and unique things about the mobiles. Allow students to experience the excitement that comes with kinetic art because of its ability to constantly change.



Andrew Smith's Water Weld