



By Art Teacher Molly Geib

Volume 151 | Gr. 4–6

Time: 2–3 (40-minute)  
class periods

# *The Scream*: Expressing emotion through color and character

## National Art Standards

**VA:Cr1.1.5a:** Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making.

**VA:Cr2.1.5a:** Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

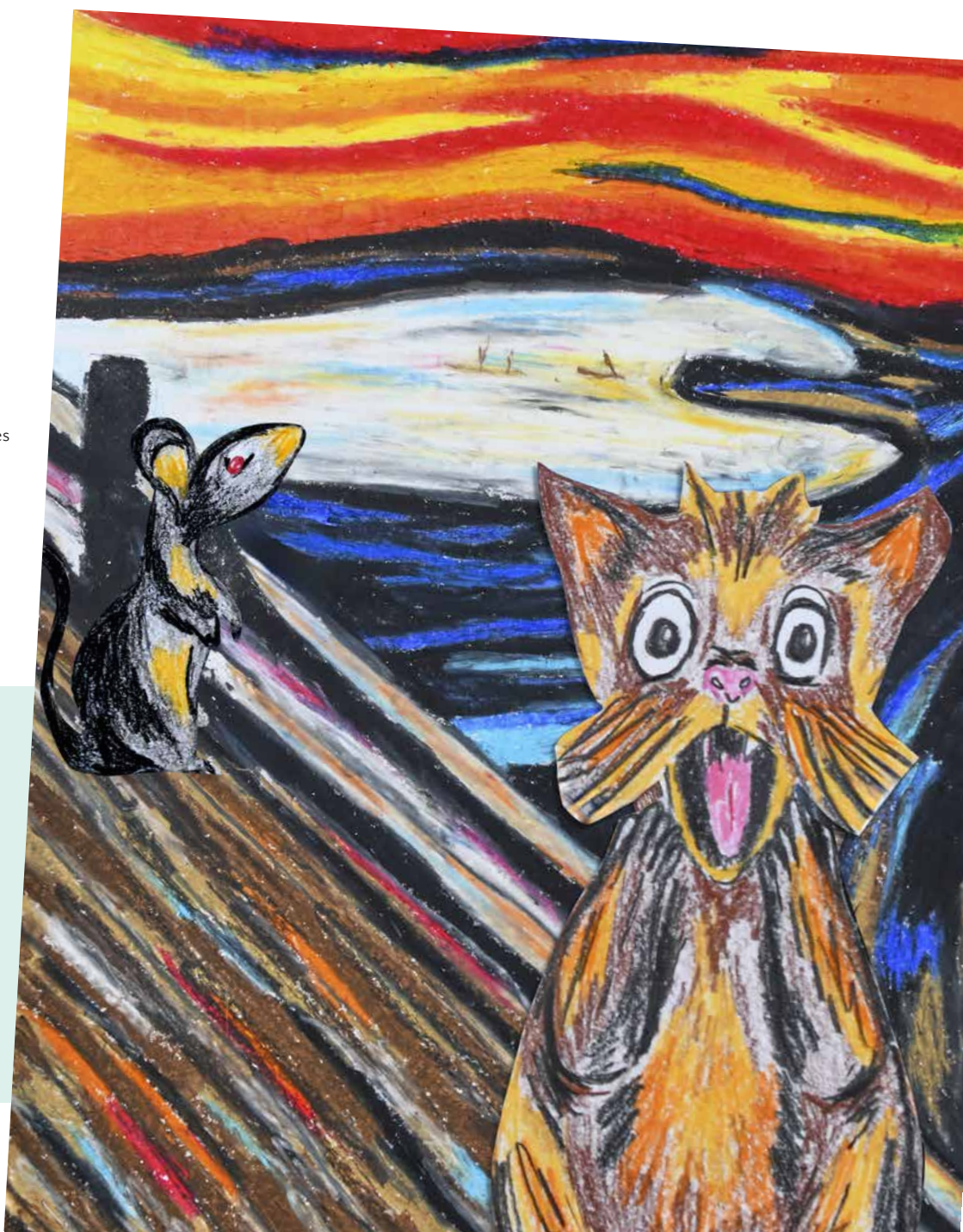
**VA:Re7.2.5a:** Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.

**VA:Cn10.1.5a:** Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through art-making.

## Objectives

*Students will:*

- Learn about Edvard Munch and the historical and emotional context of *The Scream*
- Explore how color, line, and figure can express emotions
- Create a parody of *The Scream* using their own ideas for a central figure
- Practice layering techniques with oil pastels to create a dramatic sky





## Teacher prep:

Prepare a short slide deck showing Edvard Munch's *The Scream* and several kid-appropriate parody examples (e.g., a screaming cat, banana, or cartoon character).



## Artist background:

Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was a Norwegian painter whose early life was shaped by illness and loss. Encouraged by his mentor to “soul paint,” Munch explored how emotion could be shown through color and form. Over time, his style evolved from Naturalism and Impressionism to the moody, emotional scenes he’s now known for.

His most famous work, *The Scream*, shows a figure in distress beneath a swirling red sky. The artwork has become a symbol of anxiety and emotional turmoil. Some say the sky was inspired by the colorful sunsets after the 1883 Krakatau volcanic eruption. Others interpret the painting as a reaction to the overwhelming pressure of modern life.

Munch helped shape the Expressionist movement, where artists focus on showing how something feels, not just how it looks.



## Directions:

1. Introduce Edvard Munch's background and his most famous artwork, *The Scream*. Guide a class discussion with questions such as:
  - Why do you think Munch used such intense colors in the sky?
  - How do the swirling lines and sky colors make you feel?
  - What emotion do you think the person in the painting is experiencing, and how can you tell?
  - If Munch wanted to show happiness or calm instead of fear, what might he have done differently with the colors and lines?

2. Then ask students to think about what makes them scream (in a funny or exaggerated way).
3. Have them come up with three ideas for a central figure — it could be a person, an animal, an object, or food.
4. Share ideas as a class and have them sketch a few thumbnails. As they sketch, ask them questions like:
  - How might your character show emotion with their facial expression or body language?
  - What kind of emotion do you want your version of *The Scream* to show: fear, silliness, surprise, or something else?
5. When students are ready to start their final drawing, have them sketch their background on a full sheet of paper. Remind them to take inspiration from *The Scream* and focus on the sky, water, railing, or bridge.
6. Then have them use oil pastels to create dramatic sky colors by blending colors such as orange, red, violet, and blue. Remind them to emphasize motion with swirling lines and expressive strokes.
7. Prompt students to reflect as they work with the following questions:
  - How do your colors help show the mood of your scene?
  - If you wanted to change the emotion of your picture, like making it peaceful, sad, or happy, what colors would you use instead of red and orange?
8. On separate small sheets, have students draw their figures with pencils first, outline them with bold lines, and then color them. Once finished, they should cut them out and glue them onto their backgrounds.
9. Display finished projects and hold a discussion and critique with the following questions:
  - How does your version of *The Scream* compare to Munch's original?
  - How do the colors you chose affect the mood or emotion of your artwork?
  - What kind of emotion were you trying to show? How did you use shapes, lines, and color to express that?
  - How does the background in your artwork help tell the story or support the emotion you chose?
  - Did you change anything about the figure (the person screaming)? If so, why?
  - How did it feel to create a version of such a famous and emotional painting?
  - What would you title your artwork, and why?







## Materials list

- Examples of *The Scream* (original and parodies)
- Nasco White Mixed Media Paper (9" x 12") ([9728251](#))
- Nasco Hexagonal Oil Pastels, Set of 12 ([NE20074](#))
- Nasco No. 2 Pencils, Pkg. of 144 ([NE20211](#))
- Glue sticks ([9726017](#))
- Scissors ([NE20513](#))