

Art Appreciation: The Sistine Chapel

The Paintings and history of how Michelangelo created this painting, on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel never fail to amaze and inspire. The details of the history and the making of that creation, and the dedication and time spent are quite interesting to learn about.

Tell the children how long it took, what he had to do to work on this painting, how old it is now and so forth.

Show them pictures of different parts of the painting and of the chapel as a whole from the inside. That way they can see where the paintings are. It will put it in perspective for them.

To give them a small idea of what it must have been like to paint on his back, this masterpiece is perfect to show the lengths some artists have to go, to paint one of their masterpieces. This is a somewhat different way to have them do a drawing, but it will give them a feel of what it was like for Michelangelo to paint while on his back, for such extended periods of time.

Supplies Needed:

White paper

Masking tape to fasten the paper to the bottom of the desks

Colored pencils or crayons (If you don't mind a mess, you can even try paints for this project, to give them even more of a sense)

Multiple Tables or desks with all the chairs pulled away, so the children can be under them.

Instructions:

Tape one piece of paper, for each child participating, under the desks or tables.

Then after the lesson about Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel, have each child lay on their back with some colored pencils or crayons. Then instruct

them to try and draw their own scene. A very detailed scene from a party, classroom, playground, etc. Somewhere with lots of people, animals, and/or things. Instruct them that they should be as detailed as they can, to really get a sense of what Michelangelo accomplished. It is not a contest for the best piece of art. It is a way to partially experience what the creation of the Sistine Chapel was like for Michelangelo and to appreciate his masterpiece.

After they are all done, gather the pictures they created and ask them what it felt like drawing that way. Ask them how they think Michelangelo might have felt and why.

One word of caution comes with this particular piece of artwork. Do be aware that the original Michelangelo paintings of The Sistine Chapel portray some nudity. Please take the appropriate measures to cover up the parts of the painting, that may be deemed inappropriate, before you show the children the photos of The Sistine Chapel paintings by Michelangelo. Another suggestion is to show another, more appropriate piece of Michelangelo's ahead of time.