

The One-Colour Challenge

Grade 7 - Visual Art

The One-Colour Challenge

☆ Learning Goals (WALT)

- We are learning to create visual contrast and depth using a single colour.
- We are learning to innovate within a constraint - finding new possibilities when options are limited (Innovation & Creativity).

☑ Success Criteria

- I can mix at least five distinct values of one colour.
- I can plan a composition that uses range, not variety.
- I can explain how a value choice creates feeling.

🌐 Career Connection

Designers, architects, and brand strategists work within constraints every day. A logo that works in one colour. A space built for one material. The constraint is not the obstacle - it is the brief.

Overview

Students choose one colour and create a composition using only that colour - varied through tint, tone, and shade by mixing with white, grey, and black. The challenge is creating visual interest, depth, and emotion without the tool most students rely on: colour variety.

Materials

One colour of tempera or acrylic paint per student (student chooses), plus white, black, and grey. Heavy paper or canvas board. Brushes.

Three-Part Lesson

MINDS ON (10 MIN)

Show three examples of monochromatic art - one painting, one photograph, one graphic design piece. Students write two observations about each: what they notice, and what emotion or feeling the work creates. Brief share - what do these three things have in common despite being so different?

ACTION (35 MIN)

Students mix at least five distinct values of their chosen colour before touching the paper - a tint progression from near-white to near-black through their colour. Then they plan and execute a composition using only those values. Teacher checkpoint at 15 minutes: students hold up their value scale and point to which values they've used so far. Redirect students who are using only two or three values.

CONSOLIDATION (10 MIN)

Gallery walk - works in progress displayed on desks. Students leave one written observation on a sticky note for three different pieces: not "I like it" - one specific observation about how the artist used value to create depth or contrast.

Differentiation

- Scaffolded: Pre-mixed value scale provided; student focuses on composition only.
- Standard: As written.
- Extension: Student writes a one-paragraph artist statement explaining the emotional intent of their colour choice and how their value decisions support it.

✓ Exit Ticket

Which value in your composition does the most work? Why?