

# What colour do I feel?

Social Sciences and Visual Arts



L2

**I found I could  
say things with  
colour and  
shapes that I  
couldn't say  
any other way;  
things I had no  
words for.**

**Georgia O'Keeffe**

# Finding a way to empathetically discover how your students are feeling on any given day is tricky. We could spend the whole day talking things through!

This unit leads to a way that we can check in with our learners in seconds at the beginning of the day!

## Part 1 — Colour symbolism

Near the door of the classroom, students should create a box for emotion cards to be accessed from. Cards that have colours that represent a range of emotions are created by the students.

Red = angry	Green = unwell
Blue = sad	Yellow = average
Pink = happy	Etc...

These colours should be decided on by the students taking into account cultural differences in the interpretation of colour.

### ① Meaning of colours

Student generated — Cultural differences in colour symbolism mean that students are the best people to talk about what colours mean to them.

### ② Colours of emotion

Discuss a range of emotions with your students:

Happiness	Anger
Love	Anxiety
Fear	Calmness
Comfort	Excitement
Sadness	Surprise

Share that all of these emotions are normal and healthy but what you do when you feel them is the important thing.

# Method

### 3 Split into groups

Ask your students to split into groups of four and discuss the colours that they think of when they think of the emotions provided.

Feedback from groups.  
What were the similarities?  
What were the differences?

### 4 Gather together several works of art which have a strong single colour basis

‘The Starry Night’ —  
Vincent van Gogh (Blue)

‘Self Portrait with Monkeys’  
— Frida Kahlo (Green and  
contrasted Black and White)

‘Guernica’ — Pablo Picasso  
(Black and White)

‘Dancing in Colombia’  
— Fernando Botero  
(Warm reds and oranges)

‘The Kiss’ — Gustav Klimt  
(Gold)

A series of Marilyn Monroe  
screen-prints Andy Warhol  
(Various) — Good for seeing  
how colour changes the mood  
of a picture.

‘Hinetitama’ — Robyn  
Kahukiwa (Bright yellow  
highlighting)

### 5 Discuss mood and colour in art

After viewing the pictures, discuss with the children what mood the paintings portray. Scaffolding here would be useful if the discussion doesn’t flow — “I reckon that this one is full of energy because red makes me feel energised”.

Follow this process with all of the paintings.

Discuss the idea that nothing in these pictures happened by accident. “The artists spent a lot of time making sure that they said exactly what they wanted to say”.

## Part 2 — Colour and emotion

When part 1 has been completed, introduce the following concepts:

Sometimes when we feel a certain way, it can affect how we get on with other people.

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Sometimes even our friends can react in different, unexpected ways when we do or say things to them depending on how they feel on a particular day.

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A person who is sad, scared or angry about something will react differently to someone who is happy, calm or excited.

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It's really important to check in about how our friends and classmates are feeling.

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Sometimes people feel a bit whakamā or embarrassed about talking about their feelings with others.

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Sometimes teachers can make mistakes because they don't know how their students are feeling.

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Introduce the concept of the 'What Colour am I Feeling Today?'

At the beginning of the day after you've got everything you need out of your bag. Grab a card that represents how you are feeling and place it somewhere in the space you will be working in for the first learning session. It needs to be close to you.

This way you don't need to discuss the way you are feeling with anyone if you don't want to but it lets those around you know that they need to treat you in a certain way.

Your teacher might have a talk to you in a private moment just to check in if you have chosen one of the harder emotions or they may even celebrate with you if you are feeling one of the more "UP" emotions.

If you don't want to speak about how you are feeling THAT'S TOTALLY FINE! But if you do, then go for it.

Our emotions are a very important part of who we are and everyone reacts in different ways. Finding out those ways is one part of getting to know people.

## Part 3 — What does emotion look like

Choose an emotion and draw a picture that represents how the emotion would look if it could be seen with the human eye.

It doesn't have to be representative art — it can just be shapes, textures or fields of colour.

It can be a picture of a person or an animal but scaffold the appropriateness of the images. Anger is a tricky one as the iconography that young people might have been exposed to can be a little graphic. “Draw a picture that you wouldn't mind your Gran seeing” has been useful for me in the past.

# Equipment & Materials

Card stock — various colours

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Copies of paintings from list below (Projected, printed, shared through docs system (whatever fits the Kaupapa of your classroom))

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Art making equipment —  
Strong colours

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Quality drawing paper

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# Curriculum links

## Social Sciences

Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values.

## Visual Arts

### Developing ideas

Investigate and develop visual ideas in response to a variety of motivations, observation, and imagination.

## Health and Physical Education

### A4 Personal identity

Identify personal qualities that contribute to a sense of self-worth.

### C3 Interpersonal skills

Express their ideas, needs, wants, and feelings appropriately and listen sensitively to other people and affirm them.