DRAWING TO MUSIC

Est. Time: 30-60 minutes
Subjects: Art, Music, Social Studies
Age Range: Elementary, but fun for anyone!
See the full lesson here!
This lesson was created with support from the Blackwing Foundation
What is synesthesia and how might sound be reflected through art?

In this lesson you will:

• Identify what synesthesia means

• Discover how synesthesia affects the music of Billie Eilish and her collaborator/brother, Finneas Eilish

• Explore synesthesia in art through a painting by artist Wassily Kandinsky

• Draw to music!
Synesthesia
[sin-uh s-thee-zhuh]

a sensation produced in one modality when a stimulus is applied to another modality.

• For our purposes, “modality” means “sense,” like taste or touch

• Let’s explore synesthesia as the connections between sight and sound
Consider or ask a friend:

- When you hear music, do you picture images or colors?

- Can you think of a time you associate something you experience with one sense with an experience from a different sense?
Watch this video and focus on how the music and painting interact.
Consider or ask a friend:

• In what ways do you think the painter reacted to elements of the music?

• Did you feel any connections between the music and accompanying visual art? If so, how?

• If you were painting to this piece, do you think you’d approach it like this artist, or differently? If differently, how?
Billie Eilish - A Snippet Into Billie’s Mind

Watch Billie Eilish and her brother/collaborator, Finneas Eilish, discuss how they “see” music in this clip.
Consider or ask a friend:

• How do you think synesthesia is reflected in the work of Billie and Finneas Eilish?

• Do you feel that you can “see” Billie Eilish’s music? If so, how?
This is Composition VII (1913) by Wassily Kandinsky, a Russian painter whose work spanned the late-19th to mid-20th centuries. Kandinsky is considered a pioneer of “abstract art” and has been called a “visual musician.” He was most likely a synesthete.
Consider or ask a friend:

- Do you see anything “musical” in this painting, “Composition VII”? Feel free to zoom in!

- Think back to the painting to music video--do you see any possible connections to Kandinsky?

- How might the idea of “composition” between music, writing, and visual art be similar? How might it be different?

- Can you imagine Kandinsky painting to Billie Eilish? What might it look like?
SUMMARY

• We explored Synesthesia as connections between the senses of sight and sound

• Billie and Finneas Eilish experience synesthesia and the phenomenon is reflected in their music and music videos

• Painter Wassily Kandinsky was likely a synesthete who saw each painting as a composition—in the musical sense—of color and form
Draw to music!

Cue up our Synesthesia **YouTube Playlist** (or make your own!).

- Put out one piece of paper for each song.
- When the song begins, try to draw without thinking. What happens? If you’d like, continue to draw for as long as you wish.
CONNECT

• Connect with a classmate who did the same project. Show them your drawings without the music and have them guess which songs they correspond to.

• Share it with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your work with TeachRock on Instagram or Facebook, email to info@teachrock.org, or Tweet it to @TeachRock.
Visit us at teachrock.org for hundreds of other free arts-rich resources for every age range and classroom.

Please check back to teachrock.org/distancelearning frequently as we will update the material daily!