



Title: The Noisy Paint Box

Author: Barb Rosenstock

Themes: art, creativity, Vasily Kandinsky

Vocabulary: Metronome, palette, improvisation, composition,

See video of this book read aloud here: [The Noisy Paint Box](#)

Items needed for center: device to show video

Volunteer readers should review the Author's Note at the end of the story for relevant background information beforehand.

★ 3rd Grade Common Core Reading Standard ★

Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a

I. INTRODUCTION (PREP QUESTIONS)

- Direct students' attention to the special silver seal on the cover. Tell them this book was awarded the Caldecott Honor which is because of the outstanding quality of the illustrations.
- Ask students to share their "wonderings" about the title, the *sounds* of art, and *abstract art*.
- Ask students if they have ever felt that they were not understood by grown-ups, maybe family grown-ups, a teacher, etc. Have them to share how they felt when this happened to them. Tell them that this is the nonfiction story of a famous artist who was not understood by grown-ups in his life. Although the events in the story are true, the author invented the conversations in the book, which makes this book an example of the genre known as *historical fiction*.

II. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

During Reading Session

- P. 1: Read; discuss the meaning of **proper** (*following ideas or rules in the same way that most people believe to be the right of doing things*). [It is important that the students understand the meaning of **proper** since it is essential to the book's message and the word appears throughout.]
- Pp. 2-3: Read; have students infer how Vasya is feeling in the illustrations. Ask students if they have ever been at a table where the grown-ups just *talked and talked and talked*. Although hard to see, especially for the students, point out how the illustration conveys the talking of the three adults. (collage of words on their faces and coming out of their mouths)
- Pp. 4-5: Read; point out proper in the first sentence on p. 7; have students explain what the aunt believed.
- Pp. 6-7: Read; model a think-aloud: "I wonder what is happening with these colors...why are there **sounds**? I wonder if this is going to be the reason for the title? Tell students that **hiss** is a type of **figurative language** called an **onomatopoeia** (a word that copies the sound of the object or action it refers to). Tell students that when you pronounce an **onomatopoeia**, it will copy its sound (*meow, bang, pop*, etc.). Ask students how the illustration shows the *sounds*.

- Pp. 8-9: Read; model a think-aloud: “Now I am really wondering why Vasya is hearing the sounds of the colors that nobody else can. It must mean he has a very unusual ability that most of us don’t have. And now I understand the title, The Noisy Paint Box.”

Point out the **simile** and ask students what two things are being compared using **like** (swirling *colors* trilled **like** an *orchestra*). Ask students how the illustration shows the “sounds” that Vasya was hearing.

Direct the students’ attention to the conversation on p. 9. Ask them what Papa’s and Mama’s responses indicate.

- Pp. 10-11: Read; have students discuss the significance of the first sentence. Point out the two **similes** (lemon *circle* clinked **like** the highest *notes* on the keyboard; navy *rectangle* vibrated **like** the lowest *cello strings*). Point out how the adjectives that precede each color are adjectives of *sound*.
- Pp. 12-13: Read; model a think-aloud: “I can tell that his family did not like his painting because they were not used to paintings that did not show regular things. I think **abstract art** must mean a kind of art that does not show regular things but instead might be colorful or unusual designs. I can tell because his aunt wants him to take a **proper** art class so that he will learn to do paintings of things that are *normal*.” Ask students to explain the significance of the phrase, “...just like everyone else.”
- Pp. 14-15: Read; have students discuss how the sentence, “He ignored his noisy paint box and lived the way people expected” makes them feel, and why. Point out the sounds associated with the colors on p. 15.
- Pp. 16-17: Read; model a think-aloud: “When I read that Vasya *heard* the colors singing, I can tell that he had an amazingly different ability than I or most of us do because we *see* colors but we don’t *hear* them. We also can *hear* music but we don’t *see* music or *see* music dancing.”
- Pp. 18-19: Read; ask students to discuss the significance of the first sentence on p. 18 and then again with the last 2 sentences on p. 19.

Model a think-aloud: “Vasya’s painting in this illustration must be another example of **abstract art**. I wonder if Vasya invented **abstract art** because even his teachers didn’t understand or appreciate his painting?”

- Pp. 20-21: Read; ask students to infer why the other painters agreed with Vasya but they *didn’t know how* to paint feelings (they had been taught to create **proper** pictures of *normal* things). Ask students to observe how the illustration helps us *hear* the paintings *roaring* from his paint box.
- Pp. 22-23: Read the various sounds and remind students these are more examples of **figurative language** known as **onomatopoeia**. Ask students to infer what parts of the illustration the people would *not* be able to sense. (the onomatopoeic *sounds* since they will only be able to *see* the colors, just like the rest of us)
- Pp. 24-27: Read; ask students what they can identify in the abstract art painting and how it differs from a traditional depiction.

III. INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES

Post Reading

- Is it important for everyone to always do things in a **proper** way? Why or why not?
- What lesson can we learn from reading about Vasya’s life? What would have happened if he had only followed the **proper** art training rather than being true to how his art made him *feel*?
- What lesson can we learn from reading about Vasya’s life?

IV. **SMALL GROUPS**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7d6zscZF5I> (2:38; his first name is Wassily in this video)
- Discuss; share any information from the Author's Note (synesthesia).
- Let students revisit the illustrations in closer detail, especially notable ones like p. 2.