Memory Drawing Book: Create Confidence and Build Visual Recall Skills

This lesson aims to build confidence in students by showing they can cultivate their visual memory by using visual resources. It also aims to foster an appreciation of the student’s own interpretations and artistic hand. It rings home the message that any act of creation is a bit of a leap of faith and encourages students to trust themselves and keep an open mind about their own abilities. Students do not expect to be able to draw based on just their memory, and when asked to try, they usually find they can capture more detail than they expected. This helps them build trust in their eye and hand.

As a diagnostic, this lesson demonstrates a student’s baseline skill in observational drawing, their artistic style and how they organize imagery in compositional space. The lesson shows how a student copes with challenges, both due to the amount of drawings made in a short amount of time, and the challenge of drawing from memory. It illuminates the learning styles of my students and creates a great opportunity to see where students are at with their problem solving and resilience and how to coach them where needed.

The pocket-style books help organize the drawings in time and let the students appreciate the process as a project. They enjoy the process of making the book and we talk a little about alternative book forms and ways books could be used for artworks. When I began teaching this lesson, however, there were no books. The initial ten views were done on a large sheet of paper, and the memory drawings on small loose pieces of paper – paint chips one year. If time or budget is prohibitive for the book, the memory drawing process can still be valuable.

Overview

Students are given a small object; I use small toy figures, mostly animals. Their assignment is to draw ten different views of the object within one class period, minus the time it takes to set up. So really students get an average of about three or four minutes per drawing. I talk about these drawings as a way to study and get to know the object, rather than as an end on themselves. I provide an array of non-erasable drawing materials and students can switch or stick with one. I give reminders as to time passing and estimates of about how many views they should have done as the period progresses. Students hand in their drawings at the end of class.

The next day, students are given a small sheet of paper, asked to close their eyes and think about their object and the process of drawing it. Then they are given about three to four minutes to draw their object from memory. They date and sign their drawing and the drawings are collected. They then receive their object back and create a long study of one view of the object, which will become the cover for their memory book. It is also a way to really study the object in detail. They date and sign their drawing and the drawings are collected. The next day, once again students are given three
to four minutes and asked to draw a different view of their object from memory. They date and sign their drawing and the drawings are collected. The process is repeated at the next class meeting. I usually try to schedule the third memory drawing after a weekend, so that there has been a gap of time, but the rhythm of the process is the same at the start of class.

There will be five more drawings from memory, and I always try to have the rhythm be the same each time we complete a memory drawing. At the start of class, students close their eyes and think back to the original ten views, draw in non-erasable material, try to draw a different view of the object, sign and date the drawing. I space the remaining drawings at least four days apart. The last memory drawing will become the back cover of the book. I give five to eight minutes and ask for a more detailed drawing.

I like to begin to make the memory book before we start the drawing process, and finish the book on the day of the third memory drawing. A step by step of the book-making process is detailed below.

**Supplies**

- pieces of paper numbered 1 – how many students you have in class.
- small objects to draw – I use small-scale model animals.
- precut 3” x 30” LamaLi or mulberry (or other thin drawing paper.)
- non-eraseable drawing materials
- precut 5” x 30” LamaLi paper
- notepaper for student names
- precut 4” x 4” cover boards of chipboard
- precut 3”x 3” color paper (LamaLi, various colors), enough for 2 for each student
- precut 3” x 3” paper (LamaLi, mulberry or other), enough for 7 for each student
- linen self-adhesive hingeing tape, precut to 8” lengths.
- twine – precut to 30” lengths
- clean paper down on tables
- clean yardsticks
- wide popsicle sticks
- large cutting mats or craft paper with prepared markings
- glue sticks
- template handouts (below)
- template boards 3”x3” chipboard or railroad board for spacing
- paper clips or very small binder clips.

A note on paper choice. The LamaLi paper is a handmade beautifully colored paper that folds well and thin. It adds richness and specialness to the books but it is the material in mix that adds to the cost per book per student. Feel free to substitute another paper, though I recommend something thin and that will stand up to folding.
Day One: Paper Preparation (My classes are 40 minutes, 5 days a week)

- pieces of paper numbered 1 – how many students you have in class.
- precut 3” x 30” LamaLi or mulberry (or other thin drawing paper)
- precut 5” x 30” LamaLi paper
- notepaper for student names
- precut 4” x 4” cover boards of chipboard
- precut 3” x 3” color paper (LamaLi, mulberry or other)
- linen self-adhesive hinging tape, precut to 8” lengths.
- twine – precut to 30” lengths
- clean paper down on tables
- clean yardsticks
- wide popsicle sticks
- large cutting mats or craft paper with prepared markings
- glue sticks
- template handouts
- template boards 3” x 3” chipboard or railroad board for spacing
- paper clips or very small binder clips.

Classroom set up: Lay clean craft paper down on tables. Have blank sample books for display. If you are short on space or materials you can set up paper folding stations with clean yard sticks and 24” x 36” cutting mats, or if you do not have large cutting mats, you can prepare craft paper templates with two parallel lines 34” long and spaced at 3.5” apart.

Each student will need: a popsicle stick, glue stick, 3” x 3” chipboard template, two 4” x 4” chipboard squares for covers, piece of notepaper for identifying student’s book, a pencil.

Have a selection of different colored 3” x 5” and 5” x 30” LamaLi paper strips available for students to choose from.

Students pick a number as they come in. When a student’s number is called, they choose colors for their pocket paper (5” x 30” strip) and ten-view paper, (3” x 30” strip) and two 3” x 3” squares of LamaLi paper for their front and back cover. Have students put their name or initials in small writing on the front and back cover papers. Have papers and sample books ready to go. Have students write their name on a slip of notepaper or a post it to identify their paper and cover since the book will not be finished in one day.
Day One continued: Folding the Ten-View Strip.

Demonstrate how to fold the 3” x 30” strip into 10 3” sections using the 3” x 3” template square.

Align the 3” x 3” template square with one end and edge of the 3” x 30” strip. Holding the template in place, fold the paper up against the template to crease. Check that the edge aligns when you fold at the crease. Flip the paper and repeat the process, holding the template against the new end to create a crease in the opposite direction. Check that the edge aligns when you fold at the crease each time. Continue the process until you have 10 sections. Check your fold directions and then gently use the popsicle stick to finalize each crease.

Folding the pocket strip.

Do a demonstration for the students of how to fold the pocket strip and create the accordion fold.

The pocket strips are 5” x about 30”. Using either a large gridded 24” x 36” cutting mat or a prepared craft paper template with two parallel lines 34” long and spaced at 3.5” apart, have students align the paper along the baseline. Align a clean straight edge or yardstick at 3.5” up from the baseline. Pressing down on the ruler so it does not move, carefully fold the small edge of paper up against the ruler to crease it. Remove the ruler and check the crease. If satisfactory, use the popsicle stick like a bone folder to make a clean crease all along the length of the paper.

Next, create the accordion fold for the pocket strip…

With the pocket face down, fold the strip in half along its length and finger crease. Unfold, again with the pocket face down, fold one end to the middle along its length and finger crease. Repeat with other side. Unfold. Flip so that the pocket side is up. Fold one end to the nearest crease and finger crease. Repeat for the remaining sections so that you end up with 8 roughly equal segments. Double check the direction of folds and then use the popsicle stick to carefully finish the creases.

Have students put both of their folded strips together with the 3” x 3” squares of LamaLi paper with their name or initials showing, and collect the bundles.
Day Two: Ten Views Drawing

Supplies needed

- Pieces of paper numbered 1 to how many students you have in class.
- Small objects to draw – I use small scale model animals.
- Prepared 3” x 30” folded strip
- non-erasable drawing materials

Students pick a number as they come in. When a student’s number is called, they choose an object to draw (or you may assign objects.) I use small-scale toy animal figures. I usually let all students select and then give them a last-chance swap with any remaining figures. I provide a selection of non-erasable drawing materials: ebony pencils with no eraser, thin gel pens, flair pens, ballpoint.

Students will be given 30 minutes to create a focused visual study of a small object from multiple viewpoints. This is the primary visual research and foundation for the project. Students are asked to use their time well. Students are asked to draw a minimum of ten different views of an object in about 30 minutes. They may use any or all of the drawing materials on your table. Ten views in thirty minutes gives an average of three minutes per view, but students can do a mix shorter or longer drawings as long as they do at least ten. You will be notified of the time passing in an effort to help your time management. If ten views are finished ten views before the time is up, find more views to draw. “Focus on the fact that you are studying and trying to get to know this object, not on how finished your drawing is.”

Students are asked to sign and date the strip at the end of class and strips are collected.
Day Three: First Memory Drawing and Long Study for Cover

Supplies needed
- Small objects to draw – I use small scale model animals.
- 3” x 3” paper square for memory drawing
- 3” x 3” paper square of LamaLi paper that the student has already chosen for cover drawing.
- Non-erasable drawing materials

Students are asked to draw the object from memory for the first time, memory drawing 1 (MD1.) Then they get the object back and have 30 minutes with the object to create a small-scale detailed study of one view of the object. This drawing will become the cover of the book.

When students arrive distribute the students’ paper bundles from the day before (minus the ten-view drawing) and a 3” x 3” paper square for memory drawing and drawing materials. Ask students to close their eyes and envision the object from the day before and the drawing that they made. Encourage students to believe in their capacity to recall their object. Ask them to open their eyes and spend three to four minutes making as realistic and detailed a drawing as they can from memory. Ask them to sign and date the drawing and then collect the drawings.

Redistribute the objects that the students had the day before. On one of the LamaLi squares students will make a 25-30 minute study of one view of the object. This will become the cover image for their book. At the end of class collect the drawings and the paper bundles.

I organize the drawings by student and keep them together, checking for names and dates on each drawing. Students will not see the drawings again until the end of the project.
Supplies needed
• precut 4” x 4” cover boards of chipboard
• precut 3” x 3” paper (LamaLi, mulberry or other)
• linen self-adhesive hinging tape, precut to 8” lengths.
• twine – precut to 30” lengths
• clean paper down on tables
• wide popsicle sticks
• glue sticks

Students are asked to draw the object from memory for the second time (MD2.) When students arrive distribute the students’ paper bundles from the day before (minus the ten-view drawing and first memory drawing and cover drawing) and a 3” x 3” paper square for memory drawing and drawing materials. Structure the memory drawing as before at the start of Day Three.

Do a demonstration for the students of how to create the cover.
Using the template found below, position the linen hinging tape, with the protective backing removed face up oriented vertically about halfway above and below the center line, and centered from side to side.
Find the center of the twine and lay it, centered in horizontal orientation, crosswise to the tape as noted on the template.
Carefully position the cover boards, maintaining the gap as noted on the template page. Press the boards down onto the tape, and then carefully, keeping the tape taut, wrap the tape around the boards from top to bottom. Smooth the tape into the gap. Use a popsicle stick to gently reinforce the gap.

Flip over and adjust the string as necessary, smooth the tape on the outside of the cover.
Check that the folding on your paper strip is correct. Glue the end paper to the inside front cover, with the fold aligned with the center edge of the board, centering from top to bottom, smooth and press. Repeat for the back cover.
Day Five: Third Memory Drawing (MD3) (5-8 minutes of class time)

There will be five more drawings from memory, and I always try to have the rhythm be the same each time we complete a memory drawing. At the start of class, students close their eyes and think back to the original ten views, draw in non-erasable material on 3” x 3” paper, try to draw a different view of the object, sign and date the drawing. The third memory drawing should take place the first class meeting after finishing the book. I usually try to schedule the third memory drawing after a weekend, so that there has been a gap of time, but the rhythm of the process is the same at the start of class.

Day Six, Seven, Eight and Nine: Memory Drawings (MD4, MD5, MD6, MD7)

I space the remaining drawings at least four days apart. Each time takes about five to eight minutes of class time to distribute paper, complete and collect the drawings.
Day Ten: Back cover drawing from memory and filling in the book (MD8)

**Supplies needed**

- Students’ memory books
- Students’ ten-view strip drawings
- Students’ memory drawings
- Glue sticks

The last memory drawing will become the back cover of the book. I give to eight to ten minutes and ask for a more detailed drawing. This last drawing is done on the colored LamaLi paper that the student chose at the start of the project.

When the back cover drawings are complete students books and previous drawings are all returned. Students are asked to lay them out and arrange them in chronological order. Students are asked to write a brief reflection on the process, their mindset and what they observe about their drawings over time. Then we circulate to admire and inspect the drawings as a class and discuss aspects of the project, how the results compare with expectations, how the drawings changed over time. What was a student’s experience like going through the process?

Next, the front and back cover drawings are centered and glued on. The 10-view strip is carefully re-folded and put in the inside cover pocket. The other drawings are placed in chronological order, and the book is finished.
Create a book of drawings made from memory after careful study of an object.

On the first drawing day of this project, you will be given 30 minutes to create a focused visual study of a small object from multiple viewpoints. On the second day, you will have 30 minutes to create a small detailed study of one view of the object. Thereafter you will be periodically asked to re-draw that object from memory, each time from a different viewpoint. After the first two days you will not have the object in front of you again.

**Day One:** Draw a minimum of ten **different** views of an object in about 30 minutes. You may use any or all of the drawing materials on your table. Ten views in thirty minutes gives you an average of three minutes per view, but you can do shorter or longer drawings as long as you do at least ten. You will be notified of the time passing in an effort to help your time management. Keep drawing. If you finish ten views before the time is up, try to find more views to draw. Focus on the fact that you are studying and trying to get to know this object, not on how finished your drawing is.

**Day Two:** You will be asked to draw the object from memory for the first time. Then you will get your object back and have 25-30 minutes with the object in front of you to create a small-scale detailed study of one view of the object. This drawing will become the cover of your book.

**Day Three and On:** You will be asked to close your eyes, recall your object and your original drawings and then open your eyes and re-draw your object. We will use a variety of materials, and intervals of a few days, to four or five days between drawings. All drawings will be the same scale and should be dated and labeled with your name.

Your handmade book will be an archive of your memory drawings. The longer study will become the cover image of the book. There will be pockets inside the book to hold your drawings and document how they develop over time. The book will be compiled when 8 memory drawings are completed. The final drawing will go on the back cover.

This project serves multiple purposes...

- It shows a baseline of your skill in observational drawing, artistic style and mark-making,
- It shows how you choose to organize imagery in compositional space,
- It shows how you cope with the challenge of multiple drawings in a short amount of time,
- It is a way to set expectations for the year, as far as focus, flexibility and problem solving,
- It is meant to demonstrate that you can cultivate your visual memory - whatever you like to draw, whether it is monkeys, people, hedgehogs, racecars or power tools... the more you draw it from observation, the better at drawing it from imagination you will be.
**Top Edge of Boards**

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**Center Line (center and align string)**

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**Bottom Edge of Boards**