

Activities

1. Ask students to look closely at one or more of the depictions of heaven. They should consider what choices the artist made and what effect those choices have. Are there figures in the scene? How many? What are they doing? What colors did the artist use? Are they bright or dark? Is heaven a city? Or a landscape? Or is it abstract? Using paper and crayons or colored pencils, the students should then make their own drawings of heaven, keeping in mind what they saw in the artworks they looked at. Encourage them to make artistic choices about color and line to help convey what they think heaven is like. Remind them to fill up the entire surface of the paper in imitation of the *horror vacui* they learned to identify in outsider art.
2. Have the students think about a person who lives in heaven. What does this person do? What is a typical day for this person, and who else is there? Once the students have an idea, they should write their stories down. Encourage them to consider the five senses in heaven: what do their characters see? What do they hear? What do they touch, taste, and smell?
3. Now that they have their own ideas about heaven, students could use the internet and the library to research other religious traditions' beliefs about the afterlife. They should try to find out as much as they can about the afterlife according to at least one other religion. Then, they should compare what they learned to their own ideas about the afterlife. What is different? What is the same?

Vocabulary

allover composition: interest is distributed across the entire picture equally, without emphasis on any one area

bas-relief: also called low-relief; a type of carving in which the figures are carved against a flat ground

chiaroscuro: an Italian word meaning light and dark; a technique by which artists shade and highlight their figures, modeling them to make them look three-dimensional

glyptic: in sculpture, refers to a carving technique with few protruding elements

horror vacui: a Latin phrase meaning fear of empty spaces; a visual tendency to fill all the empty spaces or voids in a picture

orants: ancient Christian prayer figures who spread and raise their arms in devotion

outsider art: the work of artists who demonstrate little influence from the mainstream art world and who instead are motivated by their unique personal visions. This includes what is known as art brut, non-traditional folk art, self-taught art, and visionary art

picture plane: the flat surface of the picture

plastic: in sculpture, refers to elements that protrude or project into space

visionary: imagery based on dreams or religious visions; revelatory imagery based on the Book of Revelation and other religious prophecies