

Lent Reflection on Art – Week 3

‘Hope,’ Chris de Hoog.



Teacher Notes

Many people associate Lent with giving things up and see it as rather a negative time of year, but it wasn't always like that. Lent was once seen as a time of hope and joy as Christians prepared for Easter and some churches today are trying to reclaim Lent as a time for reconnecting with the natural world and looking forward to celebrating Easter. Hope is a particularly appropriate theme at the moment. The Christian idea of hope is much more than just wishful thinking; it's about putting our confidence in a God who is compassionate and constant, even when the world around us seems to change on a daily basis!

Today's artwork comes from the [Lent 2020 'Becoming People of Hope'](#) campaign, run by the charity TEAR Fund Australia. They say that having hope doesn't mean shying away from the realities of the world, but acknowledging the brokenness and injustice and working together to change things.

The Australian artist Chris de Hoog creates abstract designs, based on nature, which encourage people to connect with a painting and come up with their own interpretations. He says that sometimes we can't express our feelings in words and so we need art and music to understand and convey our thoughts.

Explain to the children:

Slide 1:

What are you hoping for? A new puppy? An end to the pandemic? Chips for tea? Saving the rainforest?

Slide 2:

Sometimes it can be hard to have hope. What are some of the things that are wrong with our world? This picture shows the opposite of hope. What do you think it says about the world we live in?

The artist says 'I have painted a harsh, barren landscape with no life in it. The trees are thin and stretched and the people are wandering around, trapped in a kind of no man's land, lost and without community.'

Slide 3:

In this picture things are beginning to change. What signs of hope can you see? (More colour? Things growing? A stream running through the middle?)

The artist says, 'My painting shows communities that are connected, growing and alive. A life-giving stream runs through the painting, providing plants with water and enabling them to grow. The dots represent seeds, new beginnings, new life in Jesus.'

Slide 4:

This painting shows the future. What changes can you see? What do you think the artist is trying to say?

'My painting is bright and lush, has hints of rainbows and new growth. The figures are living in communities that are open and full of life.'

Slide 5:

Give the children a minute to think, then ask them to complete the sentence 'Hope is...'

It can be very effective if you ask them to read out their answers randomly (without you choosing people) – if they want to – they just need to watch other people's body language, so they don't all speak at once. They might take a little while to get started, so reassure them that silences are fine and that it can take courage to be the first one to speak. Resist the temptation to comment on their ideas, except to praise them all at the end for their creativity and thoughtfulness (!)

OR Slide 6:

Work together to make a class acrostic poem based on the letters HOPE (or Hopeful?)

E.g.

Have confidence that things will get better

Open your eyes to the good things in life

Pray for God's help

Expect the best

Faith in the future

Unlock the potential

Live life to the full!

Closing prayer

Slide 7:

For our final prayer, you might like to close your eyes or look at the picture of Hope.
If you'd like to make it your prayer, you can say amen at the end.

Dear God,
Life can be hard sometimes.
Thank you that there is always hope.
Help us to trust you when things are difficult
and work together to make the world a better place.
We pray for people who have lost hope
and ask that you will help them too.
Amen.