

ART(ISH) THEORY 01.02

LESSON 1

Bright & Dark

Grade Level: 3-12

Time: (30-40 mins)

Subject Areas: Art, Science

Objective:

Students will learn how to classify colors as either bright or dark.

Overview:

One of the most important but often overlooked skills that artists have to learn is how to distinguish between bright colors and dark colors. This skill has applications from paint mixing to design layout. The earlier this skill is developed the better. This exercise is a good introduction to paint mixing and a practical way to imprint the lesson concerning the ancient color theory of Aristotle. **It is important to remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this lesson, though answers can be more right and more wrong than others.** The point of the exercise is to promote critical thinking in the art classroom and studio.

Preparation:

1) Listen to the Art(ish) Theory podcast “Episode 01.02 // What is Color?”

2) You will need the following materials for **each student:**

- Plain white sheet of paper (preferably art paper not printer paper)
- Paper plates or bowls (2 or 3)
- Paint brush
- Cup of water
- Paper towel (2 or 3)
- Black marker (preferably a permanent marker)
- 8 bottles tempera paint in the following colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, white, and black

Lesson:

PART ONE

- 1) Discuss Aristotle's theory of color.

This does not have to be a long conversation. Simply describe how people used to believe that colors were made up of two different "forces", bright (white) and dark (black).

- 2) Discuss the idea of a "**continuum**."

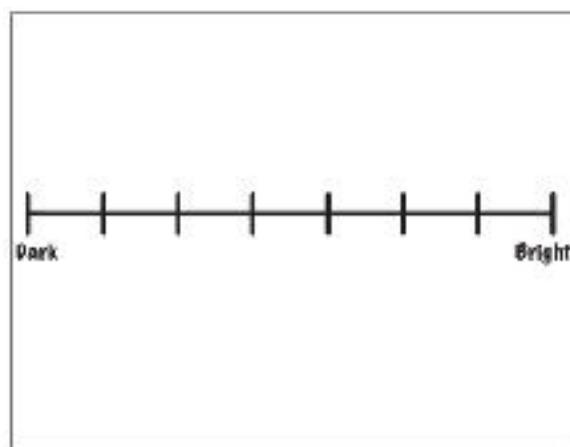
A simple explanation is "a continuum describes something that changes gradually (little by little) from one thing, to a different thing, but without any sudden changes." Draw some example continuums on the board. A good example is "Hot — Warm — Lukewarm — Cool — Cold."

- 3) Draw a continuum line from "bright" to "dark" on the paper with the marker.

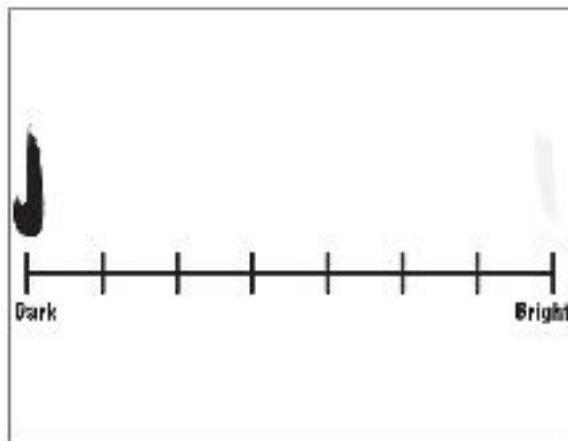
This exercise is easiest when the line is drawn length wise across the paper. If kids need help making a straight line, have them fold the paper in half and then draw a line down the crease of the paper.

Make sure the line has tic marks on each end to indicate the end of the continuum. Then divide the line using 6 more tic marks spaced equally apart from each other. Write "dark" and "bright" on either end of the line.

Use the image below for a reference guide.



- 3) Paint a black brush stroke over the word “dark” and a white stroke over the word “bright.”

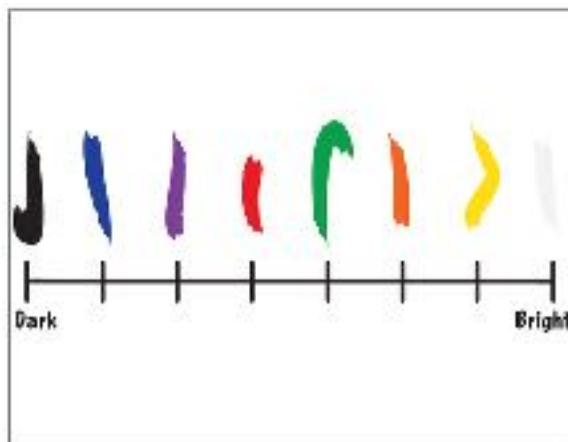


- 4) Discuss where the other six colors belong on this continuum.

*The students must now decide individually where the other six colors belong on the continuum. Have them discuss their opinions out-loud. This can be a fun exercise if there is disagreement, as long as everyone knows that there are no right or wrong answer. There are, however, more correct and more wrong answers that you will need to guide your students toward a Orange is almost always a bright color. Blue and Purple are usually dark colors. Red and Green fall somewhere in the middle. **The exception to this rule is always yellow because yellow is always the brightest color other than white.***

- 5) Paint a stroke of each color above the tic marks with the darkest colors toward the word “dark” and the brightest colors toward the word “bright”.

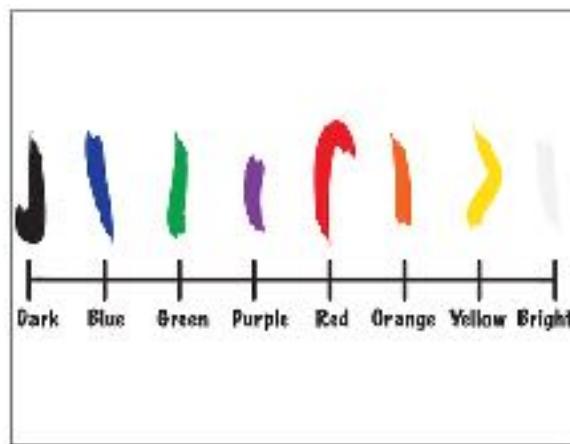
After discussing where each color belongs, paint the colors in that order. If they want, students can write the color names underneath the tics.



6) Compare your results to Aristotle's.

If the students have created the continuum independently, have them discuss their results. How are they different? How are they the same?

*Reveal to the students Aristotle's continuum. Reference the image below.**



Have them discuss the differences between their continuum and his. Ask them why they think Aristotle thought these colors belonged in this order? (If your students have listened to the podcast, remind them about the clouds in the sky turning different colors as the sun sets.)

** Orange as a color did not exist in ancient greek. They, like most europeans until the 17th century, called the color orange yellow-red.*