Elements of Art: Color

The elements of art are the basis from which artists create their artwork. To discuss color, we must mention light.
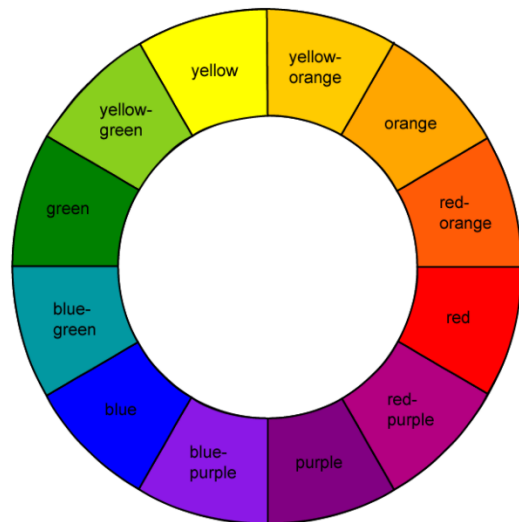
Isaac Newton demonstrated that color is a property of light. When a beam of light is passed through a glass object, a prism, the light divides into seven colors of the rainbow. Each color represents a different ray of light. All seven rays make up a spectrum.

Most people think of color in relation to objects. For example, when we think of the color orange we instantly relate it to objects like a pumpkin. In truth, there is a difference between light and reflected light.

Light is the true source of the color. Reflected light is given off by objects. For example, when white light strikes a red apple, the apple looks red to our eye because it absorbs every color of light except the red, it reflects it. Or a lemon, it absorbs all of the colors except for yellow. When all light is absorbed by an object it reflects black. This is how hue is determined. Hue is one of three elements of color.

Color has three characteristics:

1. Hue: the name of the color, such as red, blue, etc.
2. Value: how light or dark the color is.
3. Intensity: how bright or dull the color can be.

The color wheel shows the relationships between the colors.

For our activity, we'll use intensity to analyze color. Intensity is the brightness or dullness of a color. We see low-intensity colors as dull and high-intensity colors as bright. Warm colors are the yellows and reds of the color spectrum. They are associated with fire, heat, sun, and other hot
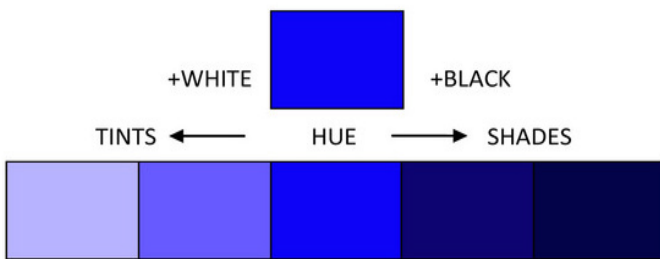
colors. Cool colors are the blues and greens of the color spectrum. They are associated with water, sky, ice, and other cold colors.

Fishy Activity:
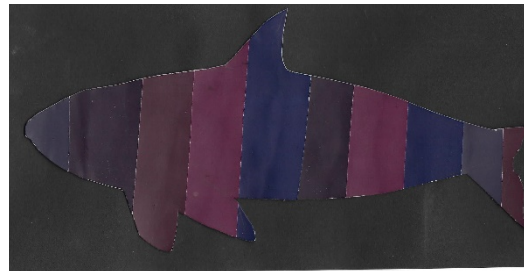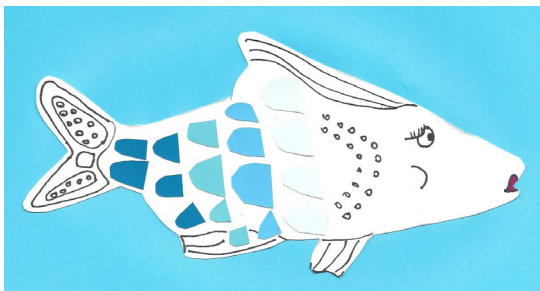Create your own fish using intensity to paint your color.

Supplies: glue; scissors; watercolor or acrylic paint: red, yellow, blue, white, and black; brushes; water; paper towels; black marker; paper.

1. Use the fish template to cut out and paint your colors on.
2. For the example, we chose the primary color blue to tint and shade. You need one primary color, white, and black. See note below to alter the primary color.
3. As you create each tint or shade, add them to your fish. See our examples for ideas.
4. Once you've completed painting, cut out the fish and enjoy your creation. If you want more of a challenge, continue on.
5. Place your fish on a white piece of paper and glue down.
6. Paint a seascape to surround your fish. Use black marker to add detail to your fish and the seascape.

Note: Add white or black to a primary color, blue in the example, you can create a tinted or shaded color that appears more intense or dull.

Examples:

Fish template: