

# Hairstones and Halibut Bones

By Janis Doukakis

*“Like acrobats on a high trapeze,  
The colors pose and bend their knees  
Twist and turn and leap and blend  
Into shapes and feelings without end”*

—Mary O’Neill

**Grade Level:** 3rd - 5th grade

**Time Required:** 3 45-min. class periods

**Objective:** Students will come to appreciate the poetry of Mary O’Neil in a project that combines both the art of block printing and graphic design.

## National Core Arts Standards

Creating: #1, 2, 3

Presenting/Producing: #4, 5, 6

Responding: #8

<http://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

## Vocabulary:

Graphic Design

Typography

Block Print

Imagery

Brayer

Stanza

Pull

Burnish

## Materials:

Tempera Paint

\*Brayer

Colored and White Paper 9 x 12

Dull Pencil/Chopstick

Scissors

Styrofoam

[www.greatartstartshere.com](http://www.greatartstartshere.com)

[www.fabercastell.com](http://www.fabercastell.com)

**Hailstones And Halibut Bones** by Mary O'Neil, 1906-1990, is a collection of thirteen poems, each about a different color. Written with a keen sense of visual and emotional observation, it has become a modern children's classic.

Read aloud to students, and discuss the imagery and powerful feelings that carefully chosen words can evoke. Have each student choose a favorite stanza and from it create a block print of an image. Students then create a piece of graphic art combining their block print and the typeset stanza.



**1. Begin.** Have students choose a **stanza** from the poem. Using a dull pencil or chopstick, demonstrate how to draw a simple line-art image from it onto a sheet of Styrofoam. Angle the pencil and draw in a slow, dragging motion. This is the **plate**.



**2. Paint.** Cut out the image leaving a 1/4" border. Attach it to a painting surface with double stick tape. Role a **brayer** in the desired color, and then role gently and evenly over the plate. The grooved line art should remain mostly unpainted.



**3. Transfer.** Lay white paper on top of the freshly painted plate and **burnish** with the brayer, being careful to include all edges of the art. Students can also use their hand.



**4. Pull.** Carefully pull back paper to reveal the printed image. Let dry.



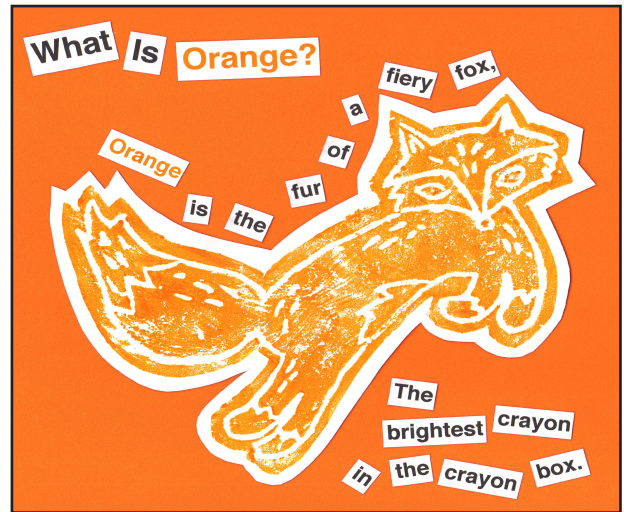
1. **Typeset.** Typeset each student's chosen stanza. A simple typeface works the best; pictured here is Helvetica Bold in 24pt. and 34pt.



2. **Cut.** Have students carefully cut up the words. This will allow for a fun lesson in creative *typography* and design.



3. **Combine design elements.** Demonstrate how to cut out the image, again allowing a 1/4" border, and show various ways to arrange the type along with the printed image on matching colored paper. Encourage students to take time and experiment with fun designs before gluing in place.



4. **Marvel at what students do!** Children seem to have a knack for combining an image and type in very unexpected and delightful ways. This is what adds character and charm to the overall piece.

\* The brayer pictured in this lesson plan is from the Faber-Castell Block Printing kit. A variety of individual brayers are available in art stores.