Storytelling with Mughal Miniature Paintings

Mughal Miniature Painting is a style of painting developed in India and often found in book illustrations. Developed in the 16th through 18th centuries, this artform was influenced by Persian miniatures created to illustrate an incident or tell a story. They are characterized by beautiful, elaborate borders and intricate designs. Join us as we look closely at one of these paintings.

Take a few minutes to look closely at this painting, which depicts an important ritual in the Emperor's life. Here, the Emperor Jahangir weighs his son, Prince Khurran, against gold and silver which he will give to the needy.

What do you notice about it? List five or more things you observe.

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Perhaps you observed some of these details:

- There is a beautiful garden outside the palace.
- Behind the Emperor’s head you can see the palace and his throne.
- The artist, Manohar Das, included himself in the painting.
- Bundles of gold and silver are weighed against the prince.
- Important men of court are in attendance, with their names written on their clothing.
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MATERIALS: Scrap paper, a pen/pencil, paint or colored pencils

STEP ONE: On a piece of scrap paper, brainstorm a story you wish to illustrate. Consider the following questions: Is there a particular event you remember or an observation you can make? If you could freeze an important scene from a book, movie, or your life, what would it be? How would you describe that scene?

STEP TWO: Using your pencil, sketch one scene from your brainstorm session. Remember to include important details and designs, like the example above. Don’t forget to leave room for a border!

STEP THREE: After completing your sketch, fill in the images with paint or colored pencils.

STEP FOUR: Fill in details with darker colors.

Finish by comparing your story to your finished image. Then, share with family and friends!

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