



# The Art Lesson

*Tomie dePaola*

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## **The Art Lesson** Tomie dePaola

Tommy knows he wants to be an artist when he grows up. He can't wait to get to school and have real art lessons. When Tommy gets to school and finds out that the art lessons are full of "rules", he is surprised and dismayed. How the wise art teacher finds a way to give Tommy the freedom to create and stay within the "rules" makes a wonderfully perceptive picture book about growing up and keeping one's individuality.

Tomie dePaola is the author and illustrator of many beloved books for children, including the Caldecott Honor Book *Strega Nona*. Fans of all ages will be pleased to hear that *The Art Lesson* is, in fact, based on the artist's own experiences growing up, and offers a welcome glimpse into his past. This bright picture book is as covered with drawings as the walls of Tommy's parents' and grandparents' houses, and sends an inspirational message to budding artists and individualists. Break out the crayons!

## **The Art Lesson Details**

Date : Published December 21st 2001 by Puffin Books (first published January 1st 1989)

ISBN : 9780698115729

Author : Tomie dePaola

Format : Paperback 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Art, Realistic Fiction, Fiction

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## **From Reader Review The Art Lesson for online ebook**

### **Janelle says**

Tomie dePaola is one of my favorite children's author/illustrators. I love that this book is about how he became an artist.

It also discussed how other children have other hobbies and interests and talents, and how one finds a balance between conformity/following rules, and individuality. The main focus is on how Tommy (Tomie) develops and shares his talents with the world (including through this book)

I especially loved the reference to the 64 box of Crayola crayons because everyone knows the Crayola crayons drew so much better than "school crayons."

This would be great to read with a few other dePaola books, and maybe follow it up with some coloring, with Crayola crayons of course!

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### **Season Neal says**

What I believe to be Tomie dePaola's life story. A young Tomie dePaola is excited to begin school because of art class. Yet, when his dreams of art class are destroyed by a teacher who doesn't let the students be creative, the little boy doesn't let this bring him down. This is a cute story that students love and helps teach perseverance and believing in yourself.

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### **Ted Percival says**

Disappointing story, clearly autobiographical that goes into a bit too much unnecessary detail. The lesson is that you can still use your Crayola™ crayons in art class if you follow the rules of copying the sample artwork first, even if you've learned that real artists don't copy and you have your own full set of crayons.

The Crayola™ product placement is particularly jarring. They're just crayons. Kids shouldn't be making brand-identity value judgments. (Nor should adults.)

It's a bit of a let down. Not an optimistic story or a strong lesson about being rewarded, just a middling tale of how maybe, after you follow all the rules, you'll get a tiny bit of leeway to actually express yourself.

It might be a sad, realistic view of the world and its arbitrary rules and scant opportunity for self-expression, but that's not the kind of fun, optimistic book I want to share with my kids.

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### **Heather says**

Welcome to "Heather over-analyzes a children's book yet again!"

I got this book at the library because I thought Margaret would like it. She's in a coloring phase and thought it would go well with that.

The story started off nice enough. His parents and family are supportive of his desire to do art. When Tomie gets to kindergarten, he finds the quality of the art supplies disheartening. It was a nice reminder: it's probably better that my kids have a few good art supplies than a lot of crappy ones. I think the quality of the materials definitely affects whether or not they'll want to continue with art. Who really wants to draw with those waxy crayons from the restaurant anyway?

But then it just got crappy. Tomie wasn't allowed to use the crayons he brought to school- with no explanation. "You must all use these same crayons- and you can't wear down the points!" Oi. I hate that schools have rules just to have rules. And how are you supposed to use a crayon if you can't use the point? Then when he finally does have art class, it's about copying. The "compromise" of "you can draw what you like after you do what we say" is a slap in the face. "The most important things in school are crowd control and getting through curriculum. Actually encouraging you to want to learn and grow is something that might come later, after we regulate and put stipulations on you." Arg.

Having worked in the schools- in fact in a school district that didn't feel art was important/academic enough for elementary schools, and having seen the herding and curriculum push, this just emphasized why I don't want my kids in schools.

I think dePaola was lucky to go through all that (this was autobiographical) and still become an illustrator. I don't think he came out unscathed, though, because he doesn't seem to realize that the "happy compromise" was no compromise at all.

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### **Angelica Nucico says**

This miniature autobiography is written and illustrated by Tomie dePaola. This book covers only a small portion of his life in extensive detail. The last part just lets the reader know what Tomie currently does. This book is illustrated very well and the characters all actually have a little character to them even there is not much time for character development in a short story such as this. Somehow Tomie manages to make each character very personal while still getting his point across, without making the book excessively long. The book is a very easy read and it is sure to please. The reader wonders the whole time whether or not Tomie will ever get to draw. They are also left frustrated every time Tomie is mad because the way that the author describes his experiences is very real.

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### **Atiyah Stewart says**

This book takes you through Tommy's life as a developing artist. The main character expressed his love for drawing, but was met with rules about what he could and could not do with his art. Tommy drew many pictures that related to the events or people in his life. Although Tommy was a good little artist, he was met with a lot of push back from the adults in his life in regards to pursuing his dream.

The illustration in the story conveyed a warm and adorable feeling for the reader, even when the character had issues with conveying his art on many surfaces. I appreciate the author's delivery of informing the reader's of his past. He also gives young readers a sense of familiarity, as a young six year old boy who finds a knack for drawing. It is great to have a story that my daughter can relate to in retrospect of becoming an artist since she is beginning to draw more than circle people.

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### **Lynn Davidson says**

Tommy's favourite thing was to draw pictures. In fact, he wanted to be an artist when he grew up. Tommy could hardly wait to start school where he'd have an art teacher, but when he got to school he found out he'd have to wait until grade one. When school ended that year Tommy practiced all summer. When school started again Tommy took his new box of Crayola crayons to use in grade one. Things didn't go as well as Tommy hoped, but when he followed his teachers' instructions he found their compromise was the best way to work out his problem.

This is a delightful story about individuality and recognizing talent.

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### **Kate Sanders says**

This book is good for children because it's about someone who is artistic but is forced to follow rules of the school. He just wants to use his imagination and be an artist.

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### **Lorraine Ryan says**

A cute little book that teaches children to do what they are passionate about and to never give on their dreams. I loved this book because it showed a child growing up and doing what he always wanted to do, draw. 'Tommy', is passionate about drawing and has always been encouraged by his family in creating wonderful pictures. He loved to draw his own pictures however when he started art lessons in school, this wasn't always the case. He found his teacher dictated him into drawing what she wanted and not what he wanted. Tommy and his teacher soon worked out how they can let him draw his own pictures. A simple, yet happy story with excellent illustrations. I would recommend this book for children aged 4-8 years of age. If I was a child again, this book would encourage me to think of a talent I might have and to think about how I can practise at making it successful. It could bring up a discussion in class in relation to the children's talents and how they can make it their own.

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### **Lisa Vegan says**

This is a short autobiographical work about the artist author, and about how even as a boy he was an artist. It did bring me back to how I valued those boxes of Crayola 64 colors of crayons. (When I was a bit older and found boxes with an even bigger color selection of crayons, I was in art heaven.) I was a bit bothered by the

form of the resolution this story had re the boy's "permission" to be a the artist he was as a first grader, although Tomie dePaola certainly did ok with his background, so I guess I shouldn't be perturbed. This book did remind me of how art is sometimes taught in ways that do not encourage the creativity almost all children possess if allowed to express it. I admit inciting my attitude is not what the author/artist seems to have had in mind when he wrote and illustrated this book.

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### **Sadia Mansoor says**

My 999th book here :D

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### **Luann says**

My college professor read this to us in my "Art of the Picture Book" class. It is another great story from the life of Tomie de Paola. He knows he wants to be an artist when he grows up, so he draws pictures everywhere - once even on his sheets until his mom finds out. When he gets to school, he is excited to have art lessons with a real art teacher, but then finds out he is required to use school crayons, use only one sheet of paper, and COPY what the teacher draws for them. He does work out a compromise with the art teacher, and happily for all of us, really did become an artist when he grew up.

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### **Erin Schoenherr says**

1. Summary: This story is about Tommy comes from a family of artists and who loves art. He is excited for art class in school, but when he gets to school his art teacher is rude and doesn't let him be creative, the way he would like to be. Although, Tommy knows what the true meaning of art is because of his aunts.
  2. Review: I think this is a wonderful story to read to young children because it tells a story about a boy who loves art! This book is relatable to children in school and experiencing teachers like Tommy's. It is also relatable to children who love to draw or paint! It is a great read with great illustrations!
  3. This book can be paired with "Henri's Scissors" by Jeanette Winter because they are both stories that have to with loving art and being artistic!
  4. "Tommy knew that real artists didn't copy". This quote can be used to connect literacy to art and have the students create their own art and be creative.
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### **Anthony Minieri says**

Realistic Fiction

Awards: N/A

Appropriate Grade Levels: k-5

Summary: The Art Lesson is a fantastic story based on Tommie dePaola's life--revolving around a young boy named Tommie who loves to draw. Tommie knows that being an artist is what he wants to do for the

rest of his life, and by the end of the story it comes to fruition.

Review: I am a big fan of Tommie dePaola's work and this story is no exception. The Art Lesson is a true "follow your dreams" story that will hit home with a lot of children. As always, the artwork is amazing and truly adds to the work.

In-Class Uses:

- Inspire children to share their own passions and future goals
  - Encourage children to use artwork as a form of expression
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### **Savannah Schneider says**

This is another book I read to my little sister. She didn't seem to be interested in it much, and I found it incredibly boring. There was a lot of big words that I could barely even read so I don't think children will really understand it unless you substitute them with different words. I think it'd be more for a younger boy than a girl. It was about how the author came to be an artist. I would recommend it to young boys that are interested in art.

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