

# What Does a Candle Look Like?

**Estimated Time: 30 minutes**

## SUMMARY

Students will have chance to test their observation skills by drawing a lit candle. Observation is an important skill in science and needs to be practiced like any other skill.

## WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- Drawing and observing objects in action can help you spot details you normally would miss.

Materials Used	Resources Used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candle</li> <li>• Matches (for lighting)</li> <li>• Paper</li> <li>• Pencil</li> <li>• Crayons (Optional)</li> <li>• Optional: other objects (see "Tips")</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent resource for science observation tasks to encourage students. <a href="https://www.calacademy.org/educators/sketching-for-observation">https://www.calacademy.org/educators/sketching-for-observation</a></li> </ul>

## WHAT TO DO

1. Set the candle (unlit) in front of the students.
2. Have students use their paper and pencil (and crayons) to sketch what they think the candle will look like when lit. They should include as many details as they can think of and label details if they want.
3. Light the candle and ask students to complete a *new* drawing of the lit candle. Again, include as many details as you can and feel free to label the drawing for clarity.
4. Ask students to share their drawings with you and with the rest of the group. What changed between their initial drawing (working off memory) and their second drawing (working from observation). Which has more detail and are there any details that are wrong in the first drawing?

## TIPS

- **Fire safety** is essential with this activity. Even though the flame is only a small candleflame, keep other combustibles away and have a plan to smother the fire if it should spread.
- A good extension for this activity is to do repeated observational drawings. After comparing their drawing from memory to their observational drawing and sharing with the group, have them complete a third drawing to see if they now see details pointed out by other students.
- Another good extension is to try other phenomena. Ask students to draw a puddle of water from memory, then use a straw to pick up water and make a small puddle on the table. Have them draw a plant or tree outside from memory and then go to the window or



front stoop to draw it from observation. This extension is endless and practicing it regularly will make great observers of the world.