

What Does a Candle Look Like?

Estimated Time: 30 minutes

SUMMARY

Students will have a chance to test their observation skills by drawing a burning 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 otherwise missed details.

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

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 those 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 from a small candle, keep combustibles away and have a plan to smother the fire should it 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 their findings 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.