

ART

Landscape Watercolor

By David Perez
Pajaro Valley High School

LANDSCAPE WATERCOLOR

Summary:

Students paint a section of the Pajaro Valley High School's surrounding landscape in watercolors.

Students will examine aspects of native plants to develop and create a landscape painting. Their paintings will be composed of close-up, near close-up and landscape views of their chosen native plant specimen(s). From nature center visits and selected school campus natural settings, students will draw multidimensional views (a complete aspect) to compose a basis for their watercolor paintings. Professional plant specialists, illustrated plant study guides and selected potted plant specimens will support students in developing an accurate representation of native flora. Through this experience, student swill have an opportunity to develop accurate drawing and painting skills and to explore native flora as they produce a watercolor portrait of a natural landscape surrounding their school campus.

Subject Area(s): Visual Art

Grade Level(s): 9 – 12th grades

Lesson Duration/Instructional Sequence: 4 class periods

Instructor may choose either four days throughout the semester (for one season), or a set of four 4-day exercises to create a yearlong project of seasonal landscape changes. This project may be done early in the year (late August), and then repeated in early November, mid-February, and late April to create a progressive four-season project. These four paintings can be mounted together to show the seasonal changes across the same section of landscape, which also demonstrates how the students' painting and drawing skills have progressed over the course of one academic year.

Meaningful Experience: In order to pre-assess students' prior knowledge will share amongst their peers a perception they have of their school campus natural setting, This may accomplished by a cooperative learning strategy (“think-pair-share”/Kagan))where students think about a specific prompt.

California Content Standards:

1.0 Artistic Perception

Students perceive and respond to works of art, objects in nature, events, and the environment. They also use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.

Develop Perceptual Skills and Visual Arts Vocabulary

1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

2.0 Creative Expression

Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Visual Arts

Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

Skills, Processes, Materials, and Tools:

2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the principles of design.

2.4 Review and refine observational drawing skills.

Communication and Expression Through Original Works of Art

2.5 Create and expressive composition, focusing on dominance and subordination.

Assessment:

Evidence of student learning will be indicated by:

- Student use of a sketch book as a visual record
- Student products of three watercolor paintings representing natural landscapes
- Products meet minimum requirements of:
 - A visual record with at least three close-up representations of native plants illustrating stems, leaves, and blooms if present
 - Representations showing three different directions of view such as front-side- back, top-bottom-diagonal, or a combination of these views
 - Representations illustrating value (light-dark)
- Authentic assessment of watercolor techniques will be based on a three-part rubric to include:
 - Use of a view finder
 - Craftsmanship
 - Neatness
- A subjective assessment will be completed by the teacher to measure student effort based upon time, creativity and detail represented in completed projects.
- Peer assessment may be accomplished by each student or groups of students assessing completed student work in terms of:
 - Color
 - Depth
 - Subject capture

Learning Objectives:

Through these activities, students will:

1. Learn watercolor techniques;
2. Observe and record changes in (the environment surrounding the school) their school's surrounding environment;
3. Develop representation skills starting from a singular plant to grouped forms, and finally to a landscape representation;
4. Experience "meaningful" outdoor experiences through
 - a. exploration of native plant specimen field sites, and
 - b. guided explorations of the visual characteristics which apply to native flora.

Equipment, Materials, and Resources:

- One set of watercolors for each student including brushes
- Viewfinders (to make these you will need index cards, rulers and scissors),

- Bowl with water
- Paper towels
- Watercolor or heavyweight drawing paper
- Drawing board
- Masking tape
- Sketchbook
- Pencils

Lesson Narrative / Procedure:

Students choose an aesthetically pleasing section of the school's surrounding landscape and recreate it in three parts, close up, short distance and long distance with watercolors. This lesson plan can easily be extended to become a 4-part exercise by having the students paint the same section of landscape during each of the four seasons—thereby depicting the seasonal color changes through their watercolor paintings.

Prior to beginning the activity, the teacher shall instruct the students on composition and watercolor techniques.

Day 1: In the classroom, students will experiment with and practice watercolor techniques by painting two plant examples in their sketch books. Watercolor techniques should include:

- Wet on wet
- Wet on dry
- Lift off
- Sgraffito
- Splatter
- Masking
- Graduated wash

Next, using color transparencies on the overhead, students will draw a flower and an example of poison oak leaves by blind contour drawing. (Not looking at their drawing at all while following the edges of the examples slowly with their eyes and moving their pencil in the same directions) This provides a very organic shape to start from. Students are allowed to make only minor adjustments to their drawings before beginning to paint.

Painting can now begin. Drawings should be taped to a board to keep paper from curling, techniques sheet should be on table and overhead example should be left on.

Teacher explains the 1/3 – 1/3 composition rule, which places the main object or emphasis away from the center at one of the four intersections of a drawing. The intersections are made by dividing the drawing surface into thirds both vertically and horizontally. Where these lines cross are the desired intersections.

Making a Viewfinder:

Students make viewfinders using 4 x 6" index cards. Have students mark a ½" border on the unlined side of their index card, forming a 3" x 5" rectangle. Students then carefully cut out their rectangles. The use of the viewfinder can be practiced in class with a still life, or its use can simply be explained and then practiced out in the field. The viewfinder is used to compose the view, which is about to be drawn or painted. Using the arm extended or close up and one eye closed, the student searches for an interesting composition inside the viewfinder window, then does a quick sketch on their paper in which a rectangle has been pre-drawn to a ratio of two to three matching the ration of the viewfinder window. The scene is quickly sketched with particular attention to the edges of the window. This helps the student to know where the composition or drawing stops. Details are refined and the painting can begin.

Field Activity Classroom Experience (F.A.C.E) Day 1:

Class will walk to chosen area near campus. Students will bring a sketchbook, viewfinder, pencil, and a chair outside to the instructor's pre-selected area. They will then choose one sample among the plants in that area to make a detailed close up line drawing in their sketchbooks.

We will then hike to the Fitz Wetlands Educational Resource Center demonstration garden to see if they can identify their plant/flower and write some interesting facts about their plant. They may also edit or touch up their drawing from the samples they see on the computer, poster or actual potted samples if available.

Note: If no demonstration garden is available, instructor may provide plant field guides for students to use to identify their plants.

Day 2: F.A.C.E. We will return to the area from the previous outing to draw the area directly surrounding their chosen plant (mid-range view). Students will bring Art Kit: board with watercolor paper attached, pencil, watercolors with brushes, viewfinder, water container with water, paper towel and chair.

Using their viewfinder, students will compose a drawing which places their plant at a 1/3 - 1/3 intersection (see 1st day classroom instruction). Students will then paint the close up from the previous trip and the mid-range view alternating between paintings to allow one painting layer to dry before continuing. This may take an additional day of painting.

Day 3: F.A.C.E. Students return to their selected viewing spot and make three landscape sketches using their viewfinders on their sketchbooks. All three sketches should be done to the best of the students' ability and the instructor should not be able to see any notable difference in the level of quality of these sketches. This helps push the students to find three good compositions and to refine their drawing skills.

- Students should date the sketches for future reference.
- After returning to classroom, students decide which sketch they would like to paint and be able to explain their reasoning for selecting this particular sketch.

- If time permits, students can prepare the drawing board with watercolor paper wetted and stretched for the following day.
- Students should lightly sketch their chosen drawing onto the paper. Further refining of their drawings will take place when the students are outside on the next field day.

Day 4: F.A.C.E. Students should bring with them:

- Board with watercolor paper attached
- Pencil
- Watercolors and brushes
- Viewfinder
- Container with water
- Paper towels
- Chair

Students should take these items back to their selected viewing spot and further refine their sketch. During this time, they should make observations of present weather conditions, such as cloud cover, and wildlife, including any animals that may be present at the time.

Note: Do not allow students to actively shade with their pencils, as pencil lead does not blend with watercolors. Paint should be used for shading purposes.

Once sketches are refined, students should begin painting. The amount of time spent painting will vary from student to student, but each student should invest at least one hour for an 8 x 10" painting. After returning to the classroom, students should sign and date their paintings.

Reflection: Have students write about their painting experiences:

- List two (or more) things they like about their painting.
- Name one thing (or more) they could, or would like to improve upon.

References:

- Taylor, Richard. 2004. Watercolor landscapes: The complete guide to painting landscapes. Collins & Brown, London.
- Bellamy, David. 2004. David Bellamy's developing your watercolors: Techniques to improve your painting. HarperCollins, New York.
- . 2004. Watercolour Landscapes Course. HarperCollins, New York.
- Fellows, Miranda. 1994. 100 keys to great watercolor painting. North Light Books, Cincinnati, OH.
- Reid, Jack. 1998. Watercolor basics: Let's get started (Watercolor Basics). North Light Books, Cincinnati, OH.
- Asensio, Cerver Francisco. 1999. Watercolors for Beginners. Konemann.
- Horowitz, Elizabeth. 2006. Watercolor: A beginner's guide. Watson-Guption, New York.
- Willenbrink, Mark. 2003. Watercolor for the absolute beginner: A clear and easy guide to successful painting. North Light Books, Cincinnati, OH.
- Ballestar, Vincent. 2002. Painting landscapes with watercolor. Design Books International, Rockport, MA.