

Sample Unit of
Study

A Place for Me... A Place for Me...

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Henry

Will

QuickTime™ and a
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are needed to see this picture.

Will Henry Stevens, *Untitled (Mississippi River Scene)*
Pastel on paper

Will Henry Stevens and a Place for Me 4th Grade Unit of Study

**Nancy Lilly, Lusher Alternative School
Ann Rowson Love, Ogden Museum of Southern Art**

WILL HENRY STEVENS...

Unit Overview

(See *A Place for Me: A Visual Scrapbook*.)

This unit of study represents a museum-school collaboration. Bringing together the specific curriculum needs of a fourth grade classroom teacher and a university art museum, this unit is designed to reflect curriculum development that incorporates specific state standards in visual arts, language arts, and social studies.

The starting place for the unit of study: Nancy Lilly's recent focus on Japanese art—it's compositional elements and sense of place—with the museum's focus on regional artists' who reflect an influence and understanding of the art world and world cultures. For the artist Will Henry Stevens the two are intertwined.

Although a significant American modernist artist, there is much to be researched about Will Henry Stevens. After receiving over 400 works from his estate, it is the mission of the museum to place him solidly in the history of 20th century art. Students have the opportunity to conduct and contribute authentic research.





During the unit, students will inquire into the artist's world as well as their own to conduct research, explore original works of art, compare and contrast cultures and regions, and thoroughly synthesize learning into their own understanding of... *A Place for Me*.

Grade Level 4th/5th grade (Nancy Lilly's students are involved in a gifted class focusing on science the natural world with language arts and social studies components infused into instruction. Therefore, this unit is also appropriate for fifth grade and may be adapted for older or younger students.)

Enduring Idea

Artists may be aware of and incorporate ideas or techniques from other cultures, yet still create a sense of place specific to their own region.

Essential Questions

-  How do artists express a sense of place in their works of art?
-  How are artists influenced by art and literature (poetry in particular) in their own and other cultures?
-  Can artists express knowledge of and incorporate design elements from another culture yet still create a sense of place particular to their own culture? If so, how?
-  How can I produce works of art and poetry that incorporate elements from another culture that influence my own sense of place?

Unit Objectives

- Students will analyze and compare works of art by American and New Orleans artist, Will Henry Stevens, to explore how artists create a sense of place in their art.
- Students will compare and contrast how an artist can be influenced by foreign cultures in order to better interpret their own environment.
- Students will discuss and write about how artists create a sense of place using design.
- Students will maintain a journal/sketchbook throughout the unit capturing their understandings and reflections.
- Students will integrate the disciplines in visual arts, language arts, and social studies to better understand concepts explored during the unit
- Students will create works of art and poetry that reflect understandings gained during the course of the unit

Materials and resources



Untitled (River Scene with Boats)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Path and Water)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Bridge and House)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Cypress Trees)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Small Boats and Ship)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Landscape with Levee)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

Planning and preparation

Read the article included with the unit, *The Louisiana Legacy of Will Henry Stevens*, by J. Richard Gruber, OMSA director, for information about the artist's life and career. You may wish to adapt or condense it for student research purposes.

Background information for teachers

“A painter would go far to find a richer field but to paint it one must love it. For my part I must feel rooted to a place, a sort of ownership in it, or I cannot take the expression of it seriously.” - Will Henry Stevens

Will Henry Stevens was born in Vevay (pronounced vee-vay), Indiana in 1881. He became a premier American modernist artist working through the mid-twentieth century. Although his work may yet to be seen in most American art history texts, it is the museum's mission to place him firmly among the regionalist and modernist movements of the century. You and your students may play a prominent role in contributing the museum's mission.

Will Henry Stevens taught at Newcomb College (now a part of Tulane University) playing a crucial role in shaping and influencing young women artists. During his tenure at Newcomb, the artist spent summers teaching and traveling. One of his recurring summer trips included the mountains of North Carolina and East Tennessee providing a contrasting environment to the nature and landscape of southeastern Louisiana. In both places, New Orleans and the mountains, the artist immersed himself in working directly from nature. He became known for his exceptional creation of color specific to each place primarily through the medium of pastel. Influenced by the movements of the day such as the European modernists and American regionalists, the artist created his own unique view of the natural world. Japanese design and composition influenced many artists and art educators, like the foremost design instructor, Arthur Wesley Dow, during the first half of the century. Using his knowledge of current trends in the art world, Stevens, likewise, incorporated the newest design techniques. In addition to his understanding of the newest trends in the art world, Stevens was a naturalist and highly influenced by the writings and poetry of the American transcendentalists, like Emerson and Thoreau, while equally intrigued with Asian poets. The following is a brief chronology of the artist's accomplishments.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1881 Born in Vevay, Indiana. Spent youth in the Ohio River Valley, a formative and lifelong influence
- 1891 First Art Lessons
- 1901-4 Studies at Cincinnati Art Academy
- 1904 Designer at Rookwood Pottery, a leading Arts and Crafts ceramics studio
- 1906 Studies at Art Students League in New York, a student of William Merit Chase
- 1910 Marries Grace Hall another artist at Rookwood
- 1912 Janet Stevens, daughter of Will Henry and Grace, is born
Views Chinese paintings (Sung Dynasty) and works by James McNeil Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Both had a lasting influence.
- 1913 Begins Teaching Private Courses in Louisville, Kentucky
- 1914 Wins first major award, the Foulke Prize in Richmond, Indiana
- 1916 First Visit to the Mountains of North Carolina
- 1921 Joins the Faculty at Newcomb College of Art (Tulane University)
- 1922 Director of Natchitoches Artist Colony Summer Program
- 1931 Tiffany Foundation Fellowship
- 1939 Painting No. 1 included in New York World's Fair Exhibition of American Art
- 1941 Successful show in New York
- 1948 Retires from Newcomb, returns to Vevay and builds a studio
- 1949 Dies in Vevay, Indiana

Vocabulary

See individual lessons.

State standards

See individual lessons.

Lesson 1:

Overview

Prior to beginning the unit, students will make a journal/sketchbook, where they will record all activities. In this lesson, students will begin to think about the unique features of place through a discussion about how one place is different from another. They will be introduced, through inquiry-based discussions and activities to the work of one artist, Will Henry Stevens, and one of his compositional influences, Japanese design. Following, students will research the life and career of Will Henry Stevens

Objectives

- 🖌️ Students will define “sense of place” and how artists create a sense of place.
- 🖌️ Students will compare and contrast Japanese works and those by the artist Will Henry Stevens creating conclusions through journal writing exercises.
- 🖌️ Students will review their understandings of Japanese design elements (from a previous unit of study) and apply their understandings to works by Will Henry Stevens.
- 🖌️ Students will conduct research focusing on the life and career of Will Henry Stevens.

Materials and resources

Large writing tablet, dry-erase board, or blackboard
Selection of papers of various weights, colors, textures precut to the size of the journal covers (watercolor and drawing papers)
Cardboard, matte board, or other strong material for journal covers
Fabric, oil pastels, or print-making materials to embellish covers
Strong string, ribbons, yarn or telephone wires for binding
2- or 3-ring hole punchers
Reproductions of Will Henry Stevens artworks

For Japanese Woodblock Print Comparisons:

<http://www.shoguninc.com>

www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/casfnart/amico/images/japan/japonisme.html

Planning and preparation

1. Materials and resources for the journal-making activity are listed above; however, make adaptations that suit the resources available to you. Hole-punch paper prior to the activity or create a station for students. Prepare a paper station that offers a variety of paper textures and colors (students will experiment with these during pastel and drawing instruction) and a binding station with strong string, ribbons, or yarns.
2. Print color copies of the Japanese prints from the above websites. Match compositional elements with each of the Will Henry Stevens works.

3. Create research packets with information pertaining to Stevens (see Background Information above and the article by J.Richard Gruber). There are a few websites that feature his work, but very little biographical information is available pertaining to the artist on the Web. This is authentic art history work for students! See what they can find in addition to the information provided here.

Background information for teachers

Websites featuring Will Henry Stevens:

www.ogdenmuseum.org – the Ogden has a digital collection of over 300 works by the artist. Archival information is added on an on-going basis.

<http://www.bluespiral1.com/stevens/whstevensmab1.htm> – The Blue Spiral Gallery in Asheville, North Carolina is the artist's dealer. Images and information are available.

Vocabulary

Japanese woodblock prints – relief carved woodblock... (see Technique: Japanese Woodblock prints in Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History*, p. 868)

asymmetry – lack of balance or symmetry

composition – the combination of elements to form a work of art

cropping – to cut off (such as the edges of a picture or part of a composition)

diagonal lines – slanting lines

perspective – viewer's point of view; creating the effect of distance by adjusting size and shapes of objects

sense of place – (student generated) e.g. unique physical, social qualities associated with a particular place – town, rural/natural environment, region

Instruction

1. Make the journal/sketchbook. Ask students to select a variety of papers – different colors and textures mixed with plain copy paper for writing and drawing activities. The order of the paper is immaterial, as students should date each entry. For students who prefer more organization, suggest a writing section and a drawing section. For front and back covers connect colored matte board, cardboard, or another strong material. (We used oversized postcards of the artist's artworks for the journal covers.) Resist embellishing the covers until after instruction to tie the bookmaking experience into the lesson (see Summary and Closure). Remind students that each entry in their journal/sketchbook should begin with the date and a heading that describes the activity. (Example: April 5 – Pastel color blending).
2. Begin instruction by asking students to write in their journal: Recall a place you've been to... somewhere not in New Orleans. How is that place different from here? Why do you think there are such differences? Follow with discussion using one or more student experiences. Write unique things about the place on a large tablet or blackboard. Under a heading:
Place (Robert: rural Indiana)

1. silos
 2. farms
 3. fields
 4. snow
 5. lots of open space and so on...
3. Ask students to make a new heading in their journal, **New Orleans**. List specific things in the community that are unique (or you think might be unique) to the community.

New Orleans

1. street cars
 2. old buildings
 3. Mississippi River
 4. steam boats and barges
 5. Mardi Gras
 6. Jazz and so on...
4. Write student responses on the large tablet. Compare and contrast the two columns. What do you think the phrase “sense of place” means? Write a definition. Discuss and write definitions on the tablet. Post the definitions along with the New Orleans list in the room during the course of the unit.
5. “Based on our list for New Orleans, could you justify whether this work of art is a New Orleans scene? How can artists create a sense of place?” Divide students into small groups and give each group a copy of (*River Scene*) following the lesson. All students should take notes during their group discussion. Return to the whole group to discuss small group responses.
6. “Where else have you seen artists creating works of art about a specific place?” Continue to brainstorm until students focus on their recent studies about Japanese art. Again, in their journals, ask students to recall the design elements of Japanese artworks (see Vocabulary; prints and scrolls were the primary focus of the previous unit). Discuss aloud. Returning to the reproduction on each small group table, ask students to point out where in the work they see Japanese design principles.
7. “So the big question here is: How can an artist create a work of art specific to a place like New Orleans, while borrowing elements from another place or culture?” We’re going to ponder this further. Provide each small group with two Stevens’ and two complementary Japanese print reproductions. Refrain from listing the artist’s name at this point. First, students will sort works from New Orleans and works from Japan. Then write how they made their decisions.
8. Tell students the name of the New Orleans artist, Will Henry Stevens. Let’s learn more about Will Henry Stevens. As a whole group generate research questions to guide student inquiry into the artist’s life and work. Discuss how answers to research questions should include referencing primary and secondary sources. Remind students to date and head another journal entry.

9. Provide small groups with research packets pertaining to Will Henry Stevens. If Internet access is available, invite small groups to conduct their own search for information. All students should take notes in their journal.

Summary and Closure

Using collage, printmaking, or drawing, allow students to embellish journals focusing on symbols or images that reflect their own places (school, city, state, family vacation spot, or other).

Keep the definitions of “sense of place” up in the room and tell students as they progress through the unit they may wish to adapt their definitions.

Tell students they will further their research and explore works of art by Will Henry Stevens at the Ogden Museum.

Extension

Art History Role-Play: Conduct the research component using a theme drama approach (To Be ADDED Next Year...)

Assessment

Formative

Using the research they’ve collected, ask students to form an opinion using evidence from research pertaining to the question, “Why does Will Henry Stevens use Japanese design elements?” Tell students they will shape and adapt their opinions throughout the unit. Read through the journals periodically to see how opinions are forming and adapt instruction if necessary.

Summative

Checklist student journal entries

- ___ List of unique aspects of a place outside of New Orleans
- ___ List of unique aspects of New Orleans
- ___ Definition of “sense of place”
- ___ List of Japanese design elements
- ___ Group work responses to Will Henry Stevens piece, (*River Scene*)
- ___ Student research on Will Henry Stevens: primary and secondary resource references
- ___ Reflection response

State standards

Visual Arts

- CE-1VA-E7 Maintaining an individual journal or sketchbook
- AP-2VA-E1 Developing skills in using elementary vocabulary, including the elements of design, to critic individual works and that of others
- AP-2VA-E3 Discussing the role and status of the artist and how art is used in daily life, in the workplace, and within the community
- AP-2VA-M3 Identifying and exploring the meaning of art and the relationship of the role of artists to their culture and environment

- AP-2VA-M5 Identifying, reflecting, and distinguishing differences of images, symbols, and sensory qualities seen in a work of art and in those of nature.
- HP-3VA-31 Recognizing art works by subjects, cultures, and time periods
- HP-3VA-M2 Understanding how works of art cross historical, geographical, and political boundaries
- HP-3VA-M5 Using individual artistic abilities and cultural influences to understand the arts within the community.
- HP-3VA-M4 Analyzing and identifying media and techniques used by artists throughout history
- CA-4VA-E3 Identifying works of art by media, subject matter, and culture
- CA-4VA-M1 Observing works of art and describing through visual, verbal, or written avenues how artists use the design elements and principles
- CA-4VA-M3 Classifying the style, period, media, and culture in works of art
- CA-4VA-M4 Discussing how culture influences artists' use of media, subject matter, symbols, and themes in relation to works of art

Language Arts

- ELA-1-M3 Reading, comprehending, and responding to written, spoken, and visual texts in extended passages
- ELA-1-M5 Using purposes of reading to achieve a variety of purposes
- ELA-2-M6 Writing as a response to texts and life experiences (e.g. letters, journals, lists)
- ELA-4-M5 Listening and responding to a wide variety of media (e.g. music, TV, film, speech)
- ELA-4-E2 Giving and following directions/procedures
- ELA-5-E3 Locating, gathering, and selecting information using graphic organizers, simple outlining, note taking, and summarizing to produce texts

Social Studies

Geography: Physical and Cultural Systems

- G-1B-M4 Describing and explaining how personal interests, culture, and technology affect people's perceptions and uses of places and regions
- G-1C-E4 Identifying and comparing the cultural characteristics of different regions and people
- G-1B-E1 Describing and comparing the physical characteristics of places, including land forms, bodies of water, soils, vegetation, and climate

History: Time, Continuity, and Change

- H-1B-E2 Relating the history of the local community and comparing it to other communities of long ago
- H-1A-M4 Analyzing historical data using primary and secondary sources
- H-1A-M6 Conducting research in efforts to answer historical questions

QuickTime™ and a
Photo - JPEG decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Untitled (Mississippi River Scene)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens



Untitled (Bridge and House)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

QuickTime™ and a
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Untitled (Landscape with Levee)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

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Untitled (Small Boats and Ship)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

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Untitled (Path and Water)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

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Untitled (Cypress Trees)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

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Untitled (River Scene with Boats)
Pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

Lesson 2: Museum Visit: Will Henry Stevens at the OMSA

Overview

During this lesson students will engage with original works of art in the exhibition, *Poetic Vision: The Art of Will Henry Stevens*, at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. They will see the works of art they examined in the classroom in addition to analyzing other works of art and family archival materials to further pursue research into the artist's sense of place. After analyzing the artist's working method (directly from nature), media, and color layering/blending, students will experiment with oil pastels. A highlight of the lesson/visit includes students interviewing a former student of Will Henry Stevens, Louise Kepper, who studied with the artist over 60 years ago.

Objectives

-  Students will explore the exhibition using writing prompts and discussion.
-  Students will compare and contrast the places the artist creates in his artworks including how the colors and landforms change.
-  Students will experiment with color-blending and -layering techniques in their sketchbooks using oil pastels.
-  Students will use interview techniques to further inquire into the artist's working methods, instruction, and color-blending techniques with one of his former students.

Materials and resources

Journal/sketchbooks
Pencils
Oil pastels

Planning and preparation

1. When the museum opens in 2003, a permanent gallery will feature the works of Will Henry Stevens, archival materials, and artworks by his wife and daughter. Visit the museum prior to the lesson to familiarize yourself with the artworks on view.
2. Prepare questions for analyzing the works of art and for the interview with students in the classroom prior to the museum visit (or use those found in the Instruction section below).
3. Reread the accompanying article by J. Richard Gruber to reacquaint yourself with the scope and span of the artist's career.

Background information for teachers

In addition to the works of art students examined in the classroom, they will see works of art that document place using realism to abstraction. They will also notice that Will Henry Stevens' interest in sense of place goes beyond New Orleans – to the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. In addition to the Japanese compositional elements, the artist defines each place uniquely through

color. Always producing his own pastels, the artist's sense of color—layering, and blending—techniques are exceptional.

Louise Kepper, who studied with the artist in the early 1940s, is one of a number of students intimately associated with the artist's instruction style and working manner. Her insights are extremely important in the research/archival mission of the museum. Mrs. Kepper not only studied with the artist at Newcomb, but accompanied the artist to the mountains. She will show students her teacher's and her own view of one expedition out into nature as well as black and white photographs and the pastels she made with him.

Vocabulary

(See Lesson One Vocabulary – reinforce those terms throughout the visit)

color blending – a process for layering and blending colors to create nuances (variations); change value and texture of color

horizon line – line depicting where a place (land or water) connects to the sky; a place where the land meets the sky

pastels – a mixture of pigment and gum-based adhesive used to create crayons; depending on the combination crayons may have an oil or chalk consistency

interview – to ask someone a series of questions geared toward understanding the person's experiences or opinions

Instruction

1. Begin instruction with the Stevens quote, "A painter would go far to find a richer field but to paint it one must love it. For my part I must feel rooted to a place, a sort of ownership in it, or I cannot take the expression of it seriously." Ask students how they would interpret the quote. Send students through the exhibition with a journal-writing task. Ask them to explore in writing how the artist embodies this quote in his works of art acknowledging the fact that not all of his works are representational views of nature, but also abstract.
2. Reconvene students for a group discussion. Ask them to share examples of what they found during the writing experience. Ask them why other artist's works are displayed in the exhibition (his wife and daughter were also artists).
3. Looking around the gallery, ask students to point out works of art that portray New Orleans. "What aspects of New Orleans does the artist seem most interested in (river-life versus the city)?" "As you look around the gallery, do you see any images that don't look like New Orleans? Point out where you think they're from?" After discussing the mountain scenes and the artist's trips to the Smokey Mountain region, ask students, "Is it possible to feel 'rooted' to more than one place? Why or why not?" Discuss personal experiences such as summer vacation spots visited every year. Revisit how the artist created works about specific places, while using Japanese composition techniques.

4. In order to portray a sense of place in two very different regions the artist created certain conventions (standard techniques or devices). Ask students what they think the artist developed. After discussing how the artist developed specific color palettes for each place, introduce the term “horizon line (this will be further developed in the following lesson).” Examine works from New Orleans and North Carolina to determine how the artist adapts the horizon line to match the land and water forms unique to each place.
5. Return to the artist’s use of color. Introduce the artist’s preferred medium, pastel. Focus on one work of art and ask students to identify the characteristics of pastels. Open a box of manufactured oil pastels. “Did the artist use these colors straight out of the box?” “How can you tell?” Discuss with students how the artist created his own pastels, but that he also used a number of techniques to create new colors from those he had available. Ask students to hypothesize how Stevens did that. Demonstrate color-blending and color-layering using one of Will Henry Stevens’ works as a source.
6. Pair students and provide each pair with a box of oil pastels. Define gallery etiquette for using art materials. Ask each pair to pick one work of art to work from. Each student should experiment with color-blending and –layering, while giving and receiving feedback from their partner.
7. Return to the large group. Ask students, “Was color-blending-layering an easy task? If so, how? If not, how?” Imply an added difficulty by stating and asking the following: “Will Henry Stevens preferred to work directly from nature. He sketched directly from nature and created color maps to help him create his final pieces in the studio (show two examples of drawings that depict initial charcoal sketches with intricate number systems and color palettes below the drawings).” In a time before color photography, how did the artist ever capture the colors specific to the places he depicted?”
8. Remind students from their research that the artist taught at Newcomb College (now a part of Tulane University) for almost 30 years. At the time, Newcomb was an important school of art for women. Explore with students why it would be important to seek out Stevens’ former students in order to better understand the artist and those he influenced. Tell students they are about to meet one student of Will Henry Stevens. Before they meet her, though, they should decide what would they most want to learn from her. In a new journal entry, ask students to write two or more questions they think are most appropriate for better understanding how Will Henry Stevens created a sense of place; used Japanese design elements; experimented with color; transferred his love of place to generations of women artists...
9. Introduce Louise Kepper. Invite students to ask their questions.
10. Debrief the interview.

Summary and Closure

After the interview, tell students, “Now we’re about to become students of Will Henry Stevens by following in his footsteps out onto the Mississippi River levee for a drawing experience.”

Assessment

Formative

Journal Reflection questions:

- ✓ How is viewing original works of art different from reproductions?
- ✓ What new knowledge did you gain about Will Henry Stevens?
- ✓ How have your opinions about the artist’s sense of place and design elements changed?
- ✓ Why is it important to interview, record, and archive former students of an artist?

Read through journal responses to adapt or reinforce instruction in the next lessons.

Summative

Checklist of journal documentation:

- ___ Writing response to independent viewing of the exhibition
- ___ Examples of color-blending and color-layering
- ___ Questions for the interview
- ___ Reflection question responses (make sure students responded to all four questions)

Create rubric criteria for the above, preferably with student assistance, if desired at this point in the instruction.

State standards

Visual Art

- CE-1VA-E7 Maintaining an individual journal or sketchbook
- CE-1VA-M1 Demonstrating art methods and techniques in visual representations based on research of imagery
- AP-2VA-E1 Developing skills in using elementary vocabulary, including the elements of design, to critic individual works and that of others
- AP-2VA-E3 Discussing the role and status of the artist and how art is used in daily life, in the workplace, and within the community
- AP-2VA-M3 Identifying and exploring the meaning of art and the relationship of the role of artists to their culture and environment
- AP-2VA-M5 Identifying, reflecting, and distinguishing differences of images, symbols, and sensory qualities seen in a work of art and in those of nature.
- HP-3VA-M5 Using individual artistic abilities and cultural influences to understand the arts within the community
- HP-3VA-M4 Analyzing and identifying media and techniques used by artists throughout history
- CA-4VA-E3 Identifying works of art by media, subject matter, and culture
- CA-4VA-M1 Observing works of art and describing through visual, verbal, or written avenues how artists use the design elements and principles
- CA-4VA-M3 Classifying the style, period, media, and culture in works of art
- CA-4VA-M4 Discussing how culture influences artists’ use of media, subject matter, symbols, and themes in relation to works of art

Language Arts

ELA-1-M3 Reading, comprehending, and responding to written, spoken, and visual texts in extended passages

ELA-1-E6 Interpreting texts to generate connections to real-life situations

ELA-5-M3 Locating, gathering, and selecting information using graphic organizers, outlining, note taking, summarizing, interviewing, and surveying to produce texts

Social Studies

G-1B-E1 Describing and comparing the physical characteristics of places, including land forms, bodies of water, soils, vegetation, and climate

H-1B-E2 Relating the history of the local community and comparing it to other communities of long ago

QuickTime™ and a
Photo - JPEG decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

An example mountain
scene students compared
to the New Orleans
scenes in the exhibition,
*Poetic Vision: The Art of
Will Henry Stevens*



Untitled, (Mountain Scene)
Charcoal and pastel on paper
Will Henry Stevens

Lesson 3: Drawing on the Mississippi

Overview

In this lesson, students will engage in a drawing experience following the footsteps of Will Henry Stevens. Visiting the levee (now the Riverwalk in downtown New Orleans) on the Mississippi River bank, students will explore working directly from nature, using the design elements studied, to create their own naturalistic drawings that incorporate the sense of place similarly explored by Will Henry Stevens.

Objectives

-  Students will create a sketch drawn directly from nature.
-  Students will incorporate horizon line, perspective, and cropping.

Materials and resources

Journal/sketchbooks

Drawing pencils (graphite or charcoal)

Slide mounts (or cut-out paper squares that allow students to experiment with cropping)

Drawing boards or cardboard with clips to secure sketchbooks for a stable drawing surface

Planning and preparation

1. Review the lesson content. Pay particular attention to the Instruction section to familiarize yourself with the drawing procedures.
2. Scope out an environment that will provide students with a drawing experience working directly from nature. In New Orleans, Stevens preferred to draw river or bayou scenes versus the familiar tourist spots in the French Quarter and Garden District. There are many places along the river levee that capture the artist's environment.
3. Assemble drawing boards or sturdy cardboard with clips to attach student sketchbook/journals.
4. Secure slide casings (we received them from a local photo lab, Colorpix) for the cropping activity; or, make your own with students. To make student "lenses" for cropping, hand out construction paper (or another heavy paper). Using rulers, guide students to make perfect squares in the center of the paper and cut them out. Smaller squares will create closer cropping.
5. Sharpen graphite-drawing pencils.

Background information for teachers

If you're insecure with teaching a drawing lesson, invite a local artist or draftsman, who specializes in landscapes (we invited local artist and educator, Warren Irwin, to teach this lesson). A local expert provides a community resource as well as exposing students to a working artist.

Vocabulary

cropping – to cut off (such as the edges of a picture or part of a composition)

drawing pencil (graphite) – soft dark gray or black drawing utensil

horizon line – line depicting where a place (land or water) connects to the sky; a place where the land meets the sky

diagonal lines – slanting lines

perspective – viewer’s point of view; creating the effect of distance by adjusting size and shapes of objects

Instruction

1. Introduce the slide mounts. After each student receives a case, allow him or her to explore how the mount provides a cropping device. First, ask students to focus on a common scene. “Notice the changes in the scene when the case is nearer their eye (providing a larger, or panoramic scene) or further away, cropping objects. Particularly focus on a scene that allows students to crop a large ship, barge or bridge. Ask students, “Once you put your cropping device away, how will you remember the scene?”
2. Pass out drawing boards and pencils. Show students how to secure their journal/sketchbook using clips. Find a common scene or ask students to select a common scene that will include cropping major objects.
3. Using your own blank piece of drawing paper, tell students the first step is to define a horizon line. Review the term if needed. Point to the scene the students selected. Ask, “Where is the horizon line? Is it low on the paper making the sky the majority of the page or is it higher on the paper making the river more predominant?” Tell students to examine the horizon line by asking, “Is the line straight or is it slightly uneven exposing the land forms that stick out into the river?” “Is it straight across the page or diagonal from their perspective?” Demonstrate placing the line, not straight and dark, but light, uneven, and diagonal.
4. After placing the horizon line across the page ask students about perspective. How would they create perspective? When they look at the scene are all objects the same size? How do the objects change in size? Place a central object on your page. Point out an object close to the original one. How does that object’s size compare? Ask students to add these objects to their drawings. Continue until all objects in the scene are added. Next, address the water. Is the water still or moving? What conventions can be used to make water look as if it is moving? Apply lines, subtle and blended to make the water seem like it’s moving. Look at the sky and ask students about the shape of clouds. “Are clouds formed by strong outlines?” “How can we create clouds?” Again using blending and soft lines, create the shapes of clouds. Above the river, discuss with students how to add a cropped element in the middle section between the water and sky, such as the iron bridge.
5. When students finish their drawings representing a collective scene, ask them to discuss with a neighbor how they will remember the colors of the scene using standard oil pastels.
6. Pass out the oil pastels. While students discuss how to map the colors of their scene, point out they sky. Is it the sky blue found in their pastel box? Is the Mississippi River a bright blue or green? If not, how will they capture the colors. Tell students to experiment with their oil pastels. In addition to experimenting with color on a new page in their sketchbook, students can add color directly to their sketch.

Summary and Closure

Since time may be limited during an outdoor drawing experience, tell students they will need their color maps to help remember colors in the classroom (or as an example of a technique they can use for other scenes).

The next step will be taking outdoor sketches to a final work of art the students will create at school.

Assessment

Formative

Journal Reflection questions:

- ✓ How is working from nature different than working from memory?
- ✓ Does learning specific techniques aid your drawing abilities? If so, how? If not, how?
- ✓ How can you create a sense of place in your own artwork?
- ✓ Where did Will Henry Stevens and Japanese design elements influence your work?

Examine student responses to the above questions. If students have a difficult time relating to working from nature, drawing techniques, Japanese design elements, and the work of Will Henry Stevens, further discussion or instruction may be needed before proceeding to the next lesson.

Summative

Checklist of journal documentation:

___ Drawing example

Have students examine their own or a partner's drawing. What significant elements should be included in each student's work? Create criteria for assessing student comprehension of the drawing lesson. (An example rubric is listed below.)

Example Drawing Lesson Rubric

Criteria	Level 1 Below Expectations	Level 2 Meets Expectations	Level 3 Above Expectations
Placement of horizon line	Student creates a straight line across the page and/or doesn't apply ration of sky/river	Student created a subtle line and incorporated a diagonal line	Student created a subtle, diagonal line exposing the sky and river with the bridge

			overlapping the two
Use of cropping	Student did not attempt to crop the scene	Student attempted to crop the scene by cutting off objects on the edges of the composition	Student cropped the scene effectively by cropping river, bridge (between sky and river) and objects in the composition
Creating perspective	Student exhibits little to no effort to differentiate the size of objects in the scene	Student used devices to delineate perspective with few errors	Student used all devices to delineate perspective with no errors according to instruction given
Creating a color map	Student did not create a color map or did not use color-blending/color-layering effectively	Student used color-blending/color-layering to attempt most colors represented in the scene	Student used color-blending-layering effectively and captured many colors found in the scene

State standards

Visual Art

- CE-1VA-E7 Maintaining an individual journal or sketchbook
- CE-1VA-M1 Demonstrating art methods and techniques in visual representations based on research of imagery
- CE-1VA-M2 Selecting and applying media, techniques, and technology to visually express and communicate
- CE-1VA-E1 Exploring imagery from a variety of sources and demonstrating visual representation
- CE-1VA-E3 Using art vocabulary, elements and principles of design to communicate the language of art
- AP-2VA-M5 Identifying, reflecting, and distinguishing differences of images, symbols, and sensory qualities seen in a work of art and those of nature

Social Studies




- G-1B-E3 Describing how the physical and human characteristics of places change over time
- G-1B-E1 Describing and comparing the physical characteristics of places, including landforms, bodies of water, soils, vegetation, and climate

Lesson 4: A Place of My Own

Overview

In this lesson, students review what they've learned about the art of Will Henry Stevens to apply sense of place and design elements to their own work of art. Using a large piece of drawing or watercolor paper, students will create their own "sense of place" scene. After discussing how students will work from an outdoor sketching experience or memory experience, they will incorporate Japanese design elements to enhance their sense of place.

Objectives

-  Students will create pastel drawings incorporating horizon line, Japanese design elements, and color-blending/layering.
-  Students will select their subject, a special place, to express a sense of place.
-  As a pre-drawing experience, students will use descriptive writing to define their scene.

Materials and resources

Large drawing paper of various colors and textures (11"x14") – preferably watercolor or drawing paper

Drawing pencils

Oil pastels

Planning and preparation

1. Read the following Instruction section.
2. Prepare your own demonstration work that includes the elements from preceding lessons and your own special place to share with students.
3. Prepare a choosing table of papers with various weights, textures and colors.

Background information for teachers

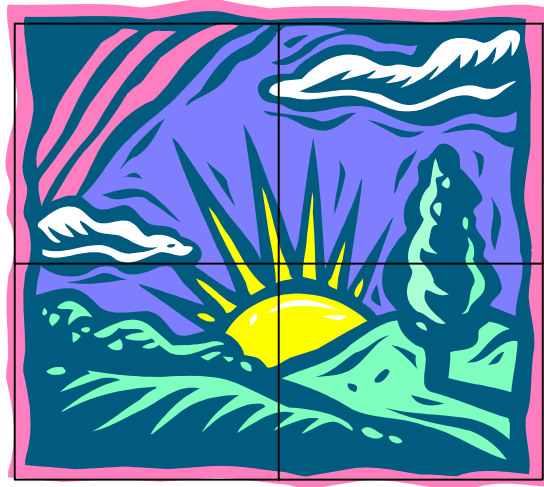
Students are now ready to create their own sense of place in a visual medium. If further instruction is needed beyond the levee drawing experience, conduct lessons needed. Students may need to reexamine Japanese works and learn how to create horizon lines behind close-up cropped images such as trees or other natural phenomenon.

Vocabulary

(See previous lessons and reinforce or reintroduce if needed.)

Instruction

1. Ask students to open their journal/sketchbooks to review all of their written material, color exploration, and sketches. Ask them, “If you were to create your own sense of place using what you’ve learned, what would you choose as subject matter and what elements would you include?” Have students write down a place and what elements would help them create it. Using descriptive writing, ask them to write about a scene in their special place so that someone else could read the passage and visualize the scene. Invite students to work with a partner for feedback. (Students may choose the scene from the Mississippi drawing experience.)
2. Using drawing pencils, ask students to sketch their scene. Review horizon line, perspective, and Japanese design elements.
3. Ask students how to move from a small sketch to a large piece of paper. Will they start with a drawing pencil or pastels? Provide a range of colored papers (clay, apricot, tan, ivory, gray, white...) and invite students to choose a color that best fits their scene (atmosphere, warm or cold environment). For students who feel challenged by the larger proportions, share the drawing grid technique:



4. Rotate among students during the lesson. Encourage students to experiment with the colors—blending and layering—in their sketchbooks before applying them to their drawings.

Summary and Closure

Students may continue working on their drawings for some time. Invite students to take their drawings to their special place (if near by) or look at family photos from their place to aid with color and landform specifics.

Tell students the finished works will be part of an exhibition in the school art gallery. Parents and students will be invited. During the course of the next lesson, ask students to think about possible titles for the exhibition. Will Henry Stevens' exhibition is called, *Poetic Vision: the Art of Will Henry Stevens*. Ask students, "What will we use as a descriptive title?"

Assessment

Summative

With students, create criteria for assessing the descriptive writing and works of art. Write criteria on a large tablet and post in the room. Encourage students to write the rubric in their journals to use as a guide during the writing and art-making experience. A sample rubric follows.

State standards

Visual Art

- CE-1VA-M4 Communicating knowledge of art concepts and relationships among various cultures, disciplines, and art careers
- CE-1VA-H5 Producing imaginative works of art generated from individual and group ideas
- CE-1VA-E2 Exploring techniques and technologies for visual expression and communication
- CE-1VA-M3 Using the elements and principles of design to visually express individual ideas
- CE-1VA-E1 Exploring imagery from a variety of sources and demonstrating visual representation

Social Studies

- G-1C-E4 Identifying and comparing the cultural characteristics of different regions and people
- G-1B-E4 Identifying and differentiating regions by using physical characteristics, such as climate and landforms, and by using human characteristics, such as economic activity and language

Example Student/Teacher Designed Rubric for Assessing Writing and Artwork

Criteria	Level 1 Below Expectations	Level 2 Meets Expectations	Level 3 Above Expectations
Descriptive writing	<p>Student did not use paragraph form and/or did not complete at least one paragraph.</p> <p>Descriptive language lacked specificity. (example: There was a bush next to the house.)</p>	<p>Student used paragraph form completing at least one paragraph.</p> <p>Adequate descriptive language. (example: There is a lilac bush beside the front door.)</p>	<p>Student used paragraph form completing more than one paragraph.</p> <p>Descriptive language successfully defined the scene. (example: The soft cone-shaped lavender flowers perspired with dew on the lilac bush beside the front door.)</p>
<p>Sense of Place Pastel Drawing:</p> <p>✓ Color</p> <p>✓ Design</p> <p>✓ Subject</p>	<p>Student did not attempt to blend or layer color appropriate to the environment of the place.</p> <p>Student incorporated less than three design elements studied.</p> <p>Subject matter was unclear or lacked a sense of place.</p>	<p>Student attempted to blend and layer colors suggesting the environment of the place.</p> <p>Student incorporated at least three design elements studied.</p> <p>The student adequately created a sense of place through subject matter.</p>	<p>Student blended and layered colors to successfully portray the environment of the place.</p> <p>Student incorporated more than three design elements studied: horizon line cropping strong diagonal lines perspective symmetry/asymmetry</p> <p>Student successfully created a sense of place through subject matter chosen.</p>

Lesson 5: Poetry and Place – Where I’m From...

Overview

Often the boundaries of the arts are blurred. In addition to influences by other visual artists, Will Henry Stevens likewise turned to naturalists and poets, both American and Asian, for inspiration. In this lesson, students will explore poetry by American and Asian poets and write their own works of poetry that interpret the sense of place in their works of art.

Objectives

- 🎨 Students will analyze American and Asian poetry.
- 🎨 Students will compare and contrast the media of poetry and visual art.
- 🎨 Students will write about how poetry affected the work of Will Henry Stevens.
- 🎨 Students will write their own poems using the stem, “I am from...” related to their artwork.
- 🎨 Students will democratically decide on a title for their exhibition of artwork and poetry and curate the exhibition in the gallery.

Materials and resources

Websites for Poetry:

<http://www.eserver.org/thoreau/thoreau.html> - Thoreau Reader with texts
<http://www.walden.org/institute/> - Thoreau Institute, the foremost collection of Thoreau-related materials
<http://www.transcendentalists.com> - Emerson and Thoreau
<http://www.okcom.net/~ggao/Asia/China/china.html> - Poetry from China; Will Henry Stevens was inspired by painting and poetry of the Sung Dynasty
<http://pages.whowhere.com/arts/wen.teo/sung.html> - Background information on Sung poetry
http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/japanese_poetry.html - Japanese poetry and description; focus on the natural world

Planning and preparation

1. Locate and print poems appropriate for your students. Emerson and Thoreau are challenging for young students. Select a poem appropriate for their comprehension level. The following Emerson poem, or an excerpt from it, may work well. See *The Snow-Storm* found at http://emersoncentral.com/poems/snow_storm.htm. Review new vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to Louisiana students.
2. Likewise, Chinese poetry may be challenging. Select short nature poems such as: *On the Lu Shan Mountain* found at <http://www.okcom.net/~ggao/Asia/China/sushi1.html>. (Nancy’s students were already familiar with Japanese haiku from previous studies. Nature haikus may be appropriate for your students.)
3. Using the Writing Project method, where teachers become writers along with their students, create your own poem using the stem, “I am from...”

Background information for teachers

Although Will Henry Stevens was influenced by Chinese poetry, many Asian forms were familiar to him. Think about how the American transcendentalist poets and the Asian poets are alike and different in content and form.

Nancy Lilly participates in the Writing Project, a national program that trains teachers to become writers along with their students. She pulled a teacher poem-writing activity called, “I am from...” This stem worked perfectly with the goal to create poetry pertaining to place. Additionally, since free verse or other abstract formats may be challenging to students in this grade level, poems that use a stem make the process more accessible.

Vocabulary

poetry – a literary work written in verse that may deal with a sense of beauty or emotional insight

stem – in poetry, a phrase that begins each line

Instruction

1. Provide copies of one American poet and one Asian poet. In small groups ask students to discuss and write about the following questions in their journals, or write their own questions:
 - ✓ How are the American and Asian poems alike and unlike?
 - ✓ How might these types of poems influence a visual artist like Will Henry Stevens?
 - ✓ What are the similarities and differences between visual art and poetry?
2. Discuss the definition of poetry. Based on the small group work activity, ask students to write their own definitions, or expand on the one presented to the class.
3. As with artists, poets may use conventions (techniques or formats) to frame their works. Introduce the term “stem.” Introduce the stem, “I am from....”
4. Share your poem, “I am from,” with students.
5. Ask students to create their own “I am from...” poems to create a sense of place through words that relate to their artworks.
6. Remind students to review their descriptive writing that informed the artwork and the lists they created in Lesson One.
7. After the poetry-writing experience, discuss with students the art gallery opening. State that the works of art and poetry will be on view in the school for a special reception. Parents, siblings, and peers will be invited.
8. Tell students, “Like with the Will Henry Stevens exhibition, we will have to create a title for our exhibition. Let’s brainstorm and decide on a title.” Write down student ideas on a large tablet and vote. (Nancy’s class decided on the title, “A Place for Me.”)
9. Matte and frame artworks, poems, and student artist labels. As curators, decide how to hang the works. Ask students, “How should we decide

which artworks should hang together? Should we categorize by subject matter, color palette...?”

Summary and Closure

Prepare and hang the exhibition. Create a title heading. Create postcards or notecard invitations for parents and peers inviting them to the special event.

Assessment

Summative Reflection

Although it went unstated during the course of instruction all the visual arts standards overlapped with state language arts and social studies standards. As a summative reflection piece ask students to review their journals and write about the following after reviewing their journal entries:

- ✓ Where did we engage in language arts?
- ✓ Where did we engage in social studies?

Discuss as a group and document student perceptions/understandings on a large tablet or blackboard. Then ask the following:

- ✓ How did your definition of “sense of place” change during the course of this unit?
- ✓ How did you adapt your understanding of Will Henry Stevens’ use of Japanese design?

Summative

Based on student journal/sketchbooks, create an overall rubric with students for evaluating their understandings. Use the checklists in the previous lessons to construct the criteria for assessment.

State standards

Visual Art

- CE-1VA-E6 Understanding relationships among the arts and other disciplines outside the arts
- CE-1VA-E7 Maintaining an individual journal or sketchbook
- AP-2VA-M5 Identifying, reflecting, and distinguishing differences of images, symbols, and sensory qualities seen in works of art and those of nature
- HP-3VA-M2 Understanding how works of art cross historical, geographical, and political boundaries
- CA-4VA-E4 Relating individual and collective knowledge and experiences to works of art in forming opinions

Language Arts

- ELA-2-M6 Writing as a response to texts and life experiences
- ELA-2-M3 Applying the steps of the writing process
- ELA-2-M2 Using language, concepts, and ideas that show an awareness of the intended audience and/or purpose in developing complex compositions
- ELA-2-E4 Using narration, description, exposition, and persuasion to develop compositions (e.g. notes, stories, letters, poems, logs)
- ELA-3-M5 Spelling accurately using strategies and resources when necessary
- ELA-3-M4 Demonstrating understanding of the parts of speech to make choices for writing
- ELA-3-E2 Demonstrating use of punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations in final drafts of writing assignments

ELA-6-M2 Identifying, comparing, and responding to a variety of classic and contemporary literature from many genres [including poetry...]

ELA-7-M3 Analyzing the effects of an author's purpose and point of view

Social Studies

G-1B-M4 Describing and explaining how personal interests, culture, and technology affect people's perceptions and uses of places and regions