

# A Lesson in Landscapes

The The Historic Woodstock Art Colony: Art in the Arthur A. Anderson Collection at the New York State Museum

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## For Grades K–5



The New York State Museum is a program of | The University of the State of New York | The State Education Department | Office of Cultural Education

# Introduction

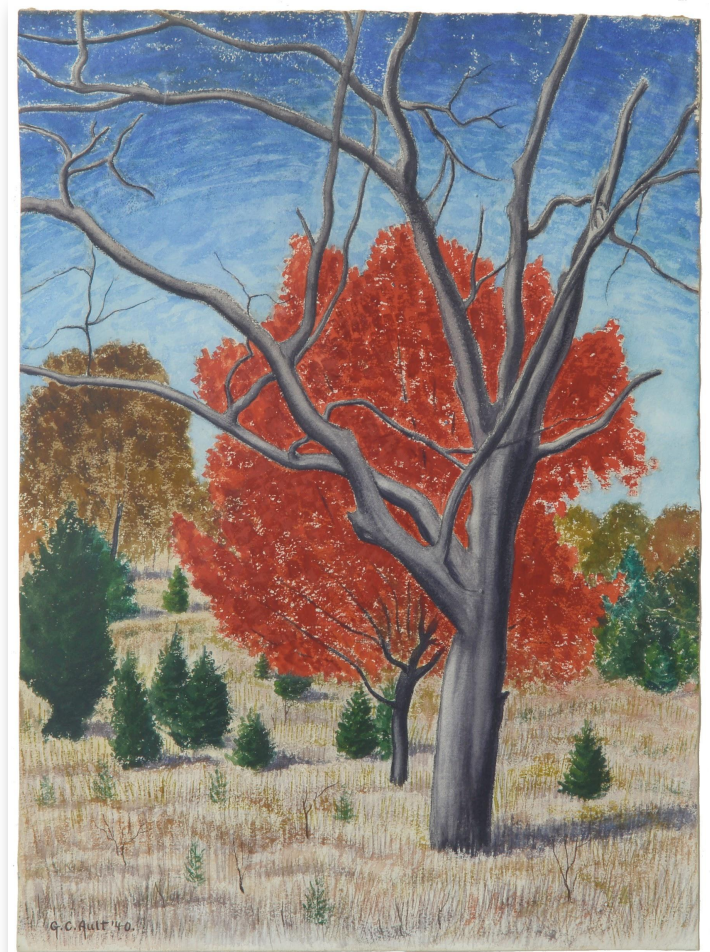
Under the leadership of Birge Harrison, an instructor at the Summer School of the Art Students League, landscape was emphasized as much as the figurative tradition, and given Woodstock's bucolic setting in the Hudson Valley, the landscape became a focus and inspiration for many artists working there. This lesson focuses on the importance of landscape as a key artform, the physical space of Woodstock, New York, and the connection between person and place.

## Warm-Up Questions

- ▶ What is a landscape?
- ▶ What features/forms might you see in a landscape?



**George Ault**  
*Autumn Hillside*, 1940  
Gouache on paper  
21 x 15 1/8 in.



# Guided Practice

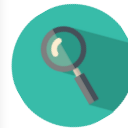
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# Guided Practice



## Encourage students to ask themselves:

- ▶ What is going on in this image?
- ▶ What do you see that makes you think that?
- ▶ What more can we find?
- ▶ Can you find evidence of people in the landscape?
- ▶ What colors are repeated?
- ▶ What evidence of time do you see in the painting?  
(*Think about the title.*)
- ▶ What do you feel, looking at this painting?



**Birge Harrison**  
*St. Lawrence River Sunset*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
25 x 39 in.



# Guided Practice



## Encourage students to ask themselves:

- What is the benefit of sketching before painting?
- Is this step necessary in the process?
- What level of detail is in the sketch?
- What forms can we find?



**George Bellows**  
*House and Trees, n.d.*  
Pencil on paper  
3½ x 5¼ in.

# Independent Study

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# Independent Study

Encourage students to look at the compositions and ask and answer:

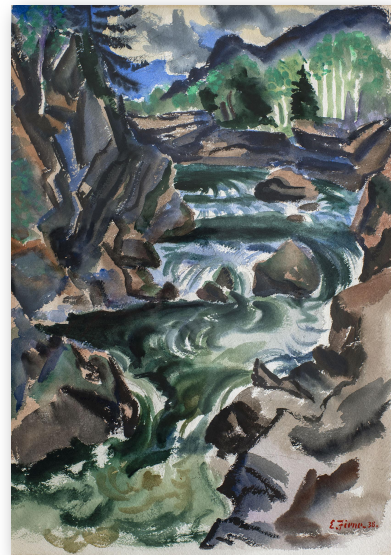
- ▶ What is the benefit of sketching before painting?
- ▶ Is this step necessary in the process?
- ▶ What level of detail is in the sketch?
- ▶ What forms can we find?

Have students compare the use of color and ask and answer:

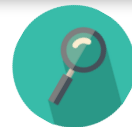
- ▶ What kind of colors make up the palette?
- ▶ How are colors repeated?
- ▶ Does the use of color impact the feeling or mood of the work?



**Birge Harrison**  
*St. Lawrence River Sunset*, n.d.  
Oil on canvas  
25 x 39 in.



**Ernest Fiene**  
*Mountain Stream*, 1938  
Watercolor on paper  
23 x 16 in.



# Artmaking Activities

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# Artmaking Activity

## Part I: Outdoors – *En plein air*



Materials: Pencil, Paper, Easel

### Conduct the class outside and have students create two sketches of the landscape:

- ▶ Have students draw a rough sketch of the overall landscape, focusing on shapes and general forms. Students may be encouraged to use their hands as a frame before they start sketching to choose an area or view to focus on. Encourage students to make a clear background, middle ground, and foreground. Remind them of horizon lines and vanishing points.
- ▶ On a second sheet of paper, ask students to create several studies, focusing on detail and texture. For example, they may draw the texture found in the bark of a tree or the patterns found on a rock. Students should focus on elements found in the broader landscape they sketched earlier.
- ▶ For both sketches, students should take written notes on light, movement, and color. They will use these notes and sketches for the next activity.

### LESSON TIP

Before leaving the classroom, model for your students how to use line to create different textures found in nature.

## Part II: Indoors – Memory and Mood



### Materials: Pencil, Paper, Paint, Paintbrushes

(Choose the painting medium that fits your available materials and instructional needs.  
This part of the activity works well with watercolors, tempera, or oil paints.)

### Conduct the class outside and have students create two sketches of the landscape:

- ▶ Instruct students to develop a full landscape in the chosen medium from their memory and the sketches they have made. Remind students that they should have a foreground, middle ground, and background and that objects in the foreground will be larger and have more detail than those in the background.
- ▶ Students can be asked to work in a specific style or instructed to think about what style they would like to create their landscape in: highly detailed and realistic, or more impressionistic.
- ▶ Challenge students to play with reflective properties of light on water.



### Wrap-up

- ▶ Have students reflect on why they included some aspects of the landscape and left out others.
- ▶ This is a good opportunity for students to present their artwork and to make connections and comparisons to the artwork of their classmates.

### LESSON

**Tip** To extend this lesson, have students create two versions of the same view: one in a limited palette (see Harrison's *St. Lawrence River Sunset* and one in a vibrant open color palette (see the jewel-toned palette used in Fiene's *Mountain Stream*).

### LESSON

**Tip** This is also a great time to review how to properly use and care for paint and brushes.

# Independent Activities

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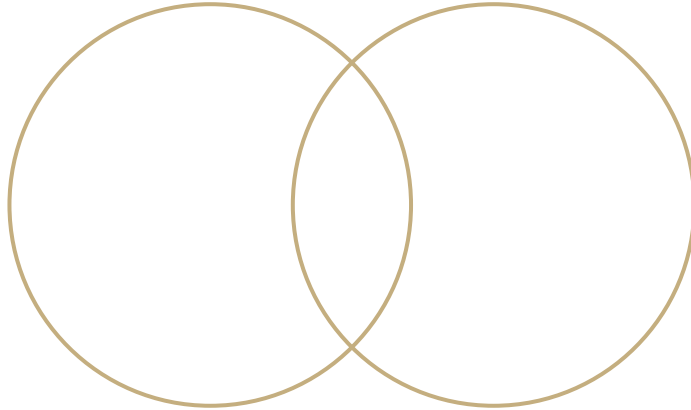
# Comparing Landscapes

Compare two pieces of artwork. Think about the use of line, color, shape, and pattern, along with any other elements you observed in these art works.

Whose artworks are you comparing?

1.

2.



Here are some ways they are the same:

Here are some ways they are different:

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# ELA Writing

## Extension

### ARTIST STATEMENT

The title of my original artwork is:

Medium:

Mood:

Color Choices:

This is how I would describe my artwork  
to someone who could not see it:

The location that inspired this landscape was...

What I like best about it is...

Something I wish I had done is...

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# Vocabulary

**landscape** – A work of art in which the subject is an area of land, and its features are the primary focus. Landscapes often draw on natural scenery but can also depict an urban setting.

**foreground** – The part of a view that is nearest to the observer.

**background** – The area or scenery behind the main object.

**linear perspective** – Perspective based on how we see objects diminish in size as they recede in space, eventually to a vanishing point.

**atmospheric perspective** – Perspective based on how we see objects fade in color and blur in detail as they recede in space.

**texture** – The appearance of a surface or substance.

**composition** – The placement or arrangement of visual elements.

**hue** – Color or shade.

**medium** – The materials used to create a work of art, whether oil paint, watercolors, clay, marble, fabric, etc. *The plural of medium is media.*

**monochromatic** – Containing or using only one color or colors derived from a single hue extending to its different shades or tones.

**limited palette** – An artwork that uses only a handful of colors.

**en plein air** – French-language term meaning “outdoors,” applied to drawing or painting landscape subjects directly from life, not from memory. This approach became popular during the mid-nineteenth century in France.

**Arts and Crafts movement** – A decorative and fine arts trend that focused on traditional craftsmanship and simple forms, in reaction to late nineteenth-century industrialization.

**Tonalism** – Artistic style that emerged in the 1880s that relied less on faithfulness to visual reality and more on creating a mood, often through memory. A prevailing sense of quiet was achieved in Tonalist landscapes by depicting subjects in either dawn or evening light and with a range of delicate or muted colors, thus “tonal.”

**Fauvism** – An early twentieth-century style of painting with vivid expressionistic and non-naturalistic use of color.

**Cubism** – An early twentieth-century style and movement in art that shows all of the possible viewpoints of a person or object at once.

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