

Seasonal Trees

Aileen Pugliese Castro

Kids love trees. They love to climb them, collect their fall leaves, and play around them. In my artroom we watch the leaves from trees fall in autumn, snow fall on each tree limb in winter, and the tiny flowers blowing off branches in the spring. Students get excited to see how trees change with the seasons.

In the fall, I take my students for a walk to see the change of colors on each of the trees around our school. We gather fallen leaves and look at different types of trees: tall skinny trees, thick-limbed climbing trees, wavy trees, and trees without leaves.

We then perform the tree's form from bottom to top. We observe the structure of the trees from the roots (wiggling our toes), the trunk (wrapping our arms around our knees), the branches (reaching out with each arm), to the tiny twigs and leaves (waving our hands and fingers).

Drawing Trees

Back in the classroom, students begin drawing. I ask them to break down the shapes of the tree into letters, using Vs for roots and parallel lines for trunks.

I remind them that every time a branch moves away from the tree's trunk, the branch gets thinner and

how some of these branches overlap and go in and out of one another. When the drawing is finished, they use oil pastels to color in the tree and watercolors to paint the background.

I ask students "What's missing?" "The leaves!" students respond. They can put tempera paint on their fingers, paint a leaf they collected and make a leaf print, or glue on the actual leaves themselves.

From 2-D to 3-D

In the next class we talk about our two-dimensional drawings of a three-dimensional tree. We discuss the differences between two-dimensional

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and three-dimensional objects. I ask "Can we make a three-dimensional tree from flat paper sandwich bags? Are they three-dimensional?"

Students giggle in response "No, it's flat!" I then ask "What happens if I put my hand into the bag and open up my fingers inside? Now is it three-dimensional?"

I am always greeted with a resounding "Yes!"

While my hand is inside the bag I ask a student to grab and squeeze the bag around my wrist. Next I pull my hand out, grab where the student let



Nikolai Damnholz, preschool.

go and squeeze the bag together, and then push down on the bottom of the bag to create roots.

Leaving the top of the bag opened up like a goblet, I demonstrate making the tree's branches by tearing, pinching, and twisting the pieces.

I demonstrate how students can make leaves by crumpling colored tissue paper, dipping it in glue, and adding it to their branches. When students are finished with their trees we look at all of them together on a table.



Maya Chariandy, preschool.

I ask students "What do all of these trees make?"

My students respond with a "A colorful forest!"

Adaptations

This lesson can be adapted for any season by changing the paint colors. You can use white tissue paper or cotton balls for the snow in the winter, or pink tissue paper for cherry blossom trees in the spring. This is a great way to compare or transition two-dimensional to three-dimensional works of art! 📄

Aileen Pugliese Castro was a visual arts instructor at Arts Umbrella in Vancouver, British Columbia, when she taught this lesson. She is now a visual arts educator in Montreal, Quebec. aileen@aileenpcastro.com

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories.

WEB LINK

www.arboday.org/trees

Materials

- sturdy paper 18 x 24" (45 x 60 cm) or 12 x 18" (30 x 45 cm)
- dark oil pastels (browns, blacks)
- watercolor paints or tempera blocks
- liquid tempera paints
- large brushes
- water containers
- brown paper bags (lunch-size)
- colored tissue paper
- cotton
- liquid glue