



# Mixed-Media Scrolls

**Eileen Conlisk**

In a six-week art enrichment program for third, fourth, and fifth graders, I designed and taught a very successful project in which each student created a one-of-a-kind mixed-media scroll that narrated a topic of his or her choice.

## **Week 1: History & Brainstorming**

To introduce the project, I asked questions such as: What is a scroll? What are scrolls made of? How are scrolls used in art? I showed several examples of famous scrolls in history such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead, Dead Sea scrolls, and examples of Japanese scrolls, also called “hanging scrolls.” I showed examples of “mini scrolls” as well as scrolls that were over ten feet long. I also shared the work of contemporary scroll artists who sell their work as fine art.

This introduction opened students’ eyes to how scrolls can still be sold and exhibited today. Finally, we discussed modern uses of scrolls and came up with examples like diplomas, wedding invitations, and even the concept of “scrolling the web.” This was one of the most cognitively important weeks of the project because students had to brainstorm and conceptualize the meanings of their scrolls.

I asked students to make a list of topics they would want to make a scroll about. It was important that their topic be something that they could elaborate on—a topic that would tell a story and have several stages to illustrate. This was important because, as the scroll is unrolled, parts

should climax, excite the viewer, and hold visual suspense. I made a list of student ideas on the blackboard. Popular topics included family heritage, recipes, vacations, cars, treasure maps, outer space, the ocean, and flags.

## **Week 2: Research & Preparing**

Students began sketching their favorite ideas on paper. They had to have a clear idea of what images, titles, and text they wanted before starting on the final scroll, for which they were given white, matte, heavyweight paper.

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I showed them how to water down dark orange acrylic paint to create a light yellow color. Students painted their white scroll paper this color to give it a more antique look.

### Week 3: Sketching & Collage

Students began sketching with pencils onto the scrolls. For students who were not confident with drawing, I gave them the option of gluing photocopies or collage materials onto their scrolls. Many students combined photocopies with their actual drawings or painted on top of the photocopies.

### Week 4: Color & Application

Once their sketches were finished, students outlined their pencil work with markers. Once the scrolls were outlined, students could use colored pencils, markers, and/or paint to add color. Most students wanted their scrolls to have an antique look and chose to use only black ink.

Finally, I gave students gold acrylic paint to accentuate the details of their scrolls. We used this week to add last-minute touches to finalize the scroll. I also met with each student to discuss their scrolls and to offer suggestions.

### Week 5: Artistry

Each student glued a wooden dowel on both ends of the scroll paper and left it to dry. The next day, with the help of a partner, students rolled up their scrolls and tied them with ribbon. We had a celebration where each student unraveled his or her scroll and shared it with the class for a quick critique.

The most important components of this lesson were the art history and the process of producing a significant idea. Students had to speak about their topic, research it, visualize it, sketch it, and then actually tell the story on paper. The final results were beautifully designed scrolls that could be rolled up for storage and kept forever.



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### NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students identify specific works of art as belonging to particular cultures, times, and places.*

### WEB LINK

[www.ukiyoe-gallery.com/scrolls.htm](http://www.ukiyoe-gallery.com/scrolls.htm)

### Materials

- 30 x 6" (75 x 15 cm) white heavyweight paper (one sheet per student)
- pencils and kneaded erasers
- 8" (20 cm) wooden dowels (two per student)
- black and colored markers
- acrylic and watercolor paint
- brushes
- water containers
- glue
- ribbon
- optional materials: gold acrylic paint, photocopies, and collage materials

