



LESSON SUMMARY

Students will explore seasonal changes in nature through art.



TD Friends of the
Environment
Foundation



Activity Information

Subject Area:	Visual Arts
Grade Level:	Junior/Intermediate
Estimated Duration:	4 hours (4 one hour lessons spread out across the year)
Materials:	Art supplies (e.g. crayons, coloured pencils, paper), clipboards
Setting:	Outdoors (Outdoor Classroom if possible)
Key Vocabulary:	texture, form, shape, line, colour, value, mood, inspiration

Teacher Background

Art is inspired by our inner world, our surroundings, and the interaction between the two. Many great artists have explored this connection and created enduring bodies of work based on their relationship with, and interpretations of, nature.

From early human cave paintings depicting animals and the hunt to Van Gogh's post-impressionistic rendering of the European countryside we have always sought to capture in art the form, shapes, colours and mood that nature has to offer. The Group of Seven are among the most iconic chroniclers of the Canadian wilderness. As a collection, their work spans the country from coast to coast, across time and space. They travelled far from the comforts of home for the artistic inspirations of nature, braving winter cold, spring rains and summer heat. Through their experiences, they were able to capture the seasons. This lesson will encourage your students to follow in their footsteps without ever stepping foot off school grounds.

Introduction

An outdoor classroom is an excellent venue to explore the fundamental elements of art (texture, form, space, shape, colour, value and line) in nature. It is possible to use the same setting in four different seasons to explore seasonal variations in these elements, as well as the emotional impression that the seasons have on the artist.

In this lesson, the students will produce and technique is up to the teacher one unique piece of art for each of the four seasons. The choice of medium and technique is up the teacher and may vary depending on the grade level and previous experience. Each session will take one class to complete, and the four pieces will be collected for a discussion at the end of the year.

Activity

STEP ONE

Give each student a blank sheet of paper, and have them fold it into quarters, then unfold it. Have students write the name of each season (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer) at the top of each box. Instruct them to draw in each box what they think each season looks like. Discuss how they think the school yard will change from season to season. Collect the finished drawings; they will be used at the end of the activity.

STEP TWO

Once per season, take class to the same location within the schoolyard. An Outdoor Classroom works well for this if available.

Suggested Timeline:

Fall – October

Winter – January

Spring – April

Summer – June

Timing may vary depending on local seasonal conditions.

STEP THREE

Discuss one or more of the design elements of *texture, form, space, shape, colour, value* and *line* while in an outdoor setting. How is the element depicted in nature? What are some examples in your school yard? Have students use one or two words to describe what they see, in relation to the design element being discussed. The list below provides some suggestions of questions/activities for each design element.

STEP FOUR

Tell students that they will be creating a piece of art depicting the nature they see around them. Remind them to use the design element(s) just discussed.

STEP FIVE

Distribute art supplies, paper, and clipboards to students, and have them complete a piece of art depicting the season around them.

Repeat Steps 2 to 5 at least once per season.

STEP SIX

Step 6 Give students back their initial drawing of what they thought the seasons would look like, along with their drawings from outside in each season. Discuss the changes in the seasons over time, in relation to their initial impressions and the design element(s) used. How did the school yard change over the seasons? Was it the same or different as expected? How did the design elements (texture, form, space, shape, colour, value and line) vary from season to season?

Design Elements**Texture**

- Examine texture of grasses, garden plants (Summer, Spring)
- Collect a variety of different leaves and compare their textures (Summer, Fall)
- Depict the texture of newly fallen snow (Winter)
- Depict the texture of the bark of trees you find around you (all seasons)

Form

- What form does a deciduous tree take in Summer compared to Winter (spherical canopy vs. branching)?
- What form do coniferous trees take (conical), and does it vary from season to season?

Space

- Where is the positive space and where is the negative space?
- What are the natural components of the positive space (trees, plants)?
- How does the negative space allow us to appreciate the natural components (provides contrast, allows space for viewing and exploration)?

Shape

- Explore and compare the shape of leaves and flowers (Spring, Summer, Fall)
- Explore and compare branch shapes of trees without leaves (Winter, Spring), or tree buds (Spring)

Colour

What colours do you associate with each of the seasons and why?

- Green – leaves, vines, plants, growth, new life (Summer, Spring)
- Brown – soil, nutrients, nurturing life (Summer, Spring), dead leaves, decay (Fall)
- Blue – water, rain (Summer, Spring, Fall), clear skies (any season)
- White – snow (Winter, Spring),
- Red, Orange, Yellow – flowers (Spring), leaves (Fall)
- Grey – cloudy skies (any season)

How do the different colours make you feel? Blue is often used as a cold colour (Winter), and reds and oranges for warmth (Summer).

Value (Light and Shade)

- Shorter days in the winter mean less light in the afternoon
- Snow cover can increase the brightness during the in the Winter
- Canopy cover creates shade in the Summer and Fall

Line

- Summer/Spring/Fall landscape may have more varied elements of line due to growing grasses, plants compared to starker and simpler winter landscapes

Extensions

Have students write a reflection on why their initial impression of the seasons may have been similar to or different from their observations.

Have students compare their nature art to different styles of nature art of the past (eg. Cave drawings, impressionists, Group of Seven). Is the style of their art similar to any of these styles? Why do they think similarities/differences may exist between their art and nature art over time?

Evaluation

The art pieces can be evaluated based on originality and the creative use of the elements discussed above.