

Falling into Winter

by Carolyn Lang Harrington

Nature is amazing. No matter what the time of year, it always manages to capture our attention. This is especially true when fall arrives in New England. The foliage of the trees is stunning and charms us year after year.

As an art teacher, it is a pleasure to take advantage of this colorful display and let it become artistic inspiration for my students. Keeping in mind the many goals and objectives to be accomplished, I came up with this lesson that satisfies several requirements, plus has a wonderful way of connecting art to science and nature.

After a discussion on deciduous trees and why the leaves turn color in the fall, students create a torn-tissue collage. They select several fall colors of tissue and tear them in a variety of shapes and sizes. Using thinned glue and old paintbrushes, students apply tissue to a piece of white oaktag and create the collage. They are sure to overlap shapes, a technique that results in the mixing of new colors and an interesting layered effect.

Students paint a thin coat of glue on top of the tissue so that it will stay completely flat on the background. Many students like to take advantage of bleeding tissue and pull the resulting colors out in different directions with their brushes. No matter the technique of gluing, however, flat tissue is necessary for the successful execution of the second half of the lesson.

The focus, for the second part, returns to deciduous trees. Stories are read to show how art, nature and science are connected. Two great books to share with the class are *Sky Tree: Seeing Science Through Art* by Thomas Locker (HarperCollins Juvenile Press, 1995) and a big book titled, *It Could Still be a Tree* by Allan Fowler (Children's Press, 1990).

Both books have different approaches. The first provides

a more artistic view of a single tree, demonstrating how season, weather and time of day affect a tree and the way it looks. The latter has a more scientific, fact-based approach to all kinds of trees.

The artistic motivation continues with observation and a group discussion of how trees look after they have lost their



Veronica Maroun, grade 3.



Liz Kenny, grade 3.



Adam Riegel, grade 3.

leaves. Naturally, if conditions permit, a trip outside would be most ideal. Students compare and contrast trees and even like to share observations and stories about trees that exist in their own yards and neighborhoods.

For the hands-on part of the lesson, I reinforce students' understanding of silhouettes and how they will be incorporated in their tree drawings. Students often find it helpful to practice drawing several trees on a separate piece of paper.

Once warmed up, they draw their winter-ready tree in silhouette with black crayon directly on the collage. For a final touch, some students can't resist adding smaller details in silhouette, such as squirrels and birds.

And so we have it—this exciting transformation from fall to winter is complete. Time to put your rakes away and get your snow shovels ready! ■

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