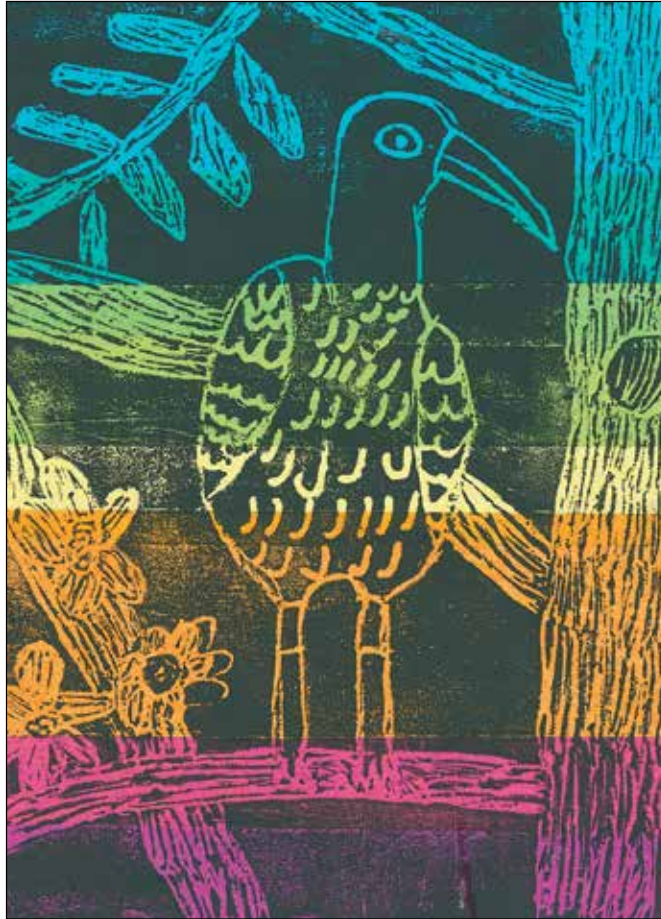


# Rainforests *and* Rousseau

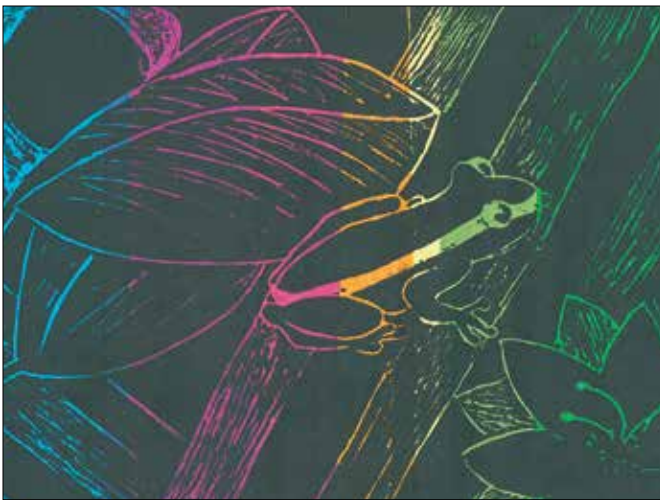
by Marla Rohrbach

One of our fifth-grade art-curriculum objectives is to create a relief print. In this era of budget cuts, I was looking for a way for my students to meet this objective by making colorful prints without using a lot of expensive printing ink. I knew I wanted to use a rainforest animal theme, as well as share the colorful art of Henri Rousseau.

We began this lesson by viewing examples of Rousseau's jungle and rainforest paintings. I had prepared a PowerPoint to introduce students to his life and work. They were amazed to learn he had never visited a jungle or a rainforest. He gained his knowledge of plant life by visiting the Paris' botanical gardens, and his knowledge of jungle animals came



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from taxidermy specimens. We learned about the rainforest and its plants and animals by visiting the website, [www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org). The Rainforest

Alliance works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. They have great educational resources for teachers, one of which is "Introduction to the Rainforest" ([www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/site-documents/education/documents/introduction\\_rainforests.pdf](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/site-documents/education/documents/introduction_rainforests.pdf)).

From this presentation, students learned about the four layers of the rainforest, what plants, animals and insects live in each layer, and the importance of preserving and protecting the rainforest. They were fascinated by the diversity of plant and animal life. As they viewed the presentation, they looked for ideas and subject matter they could use in their prints.

After their introduction to Rousseau and the rainforest, students were ready to create their own rainforest art work.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Upper-elementary students will ...

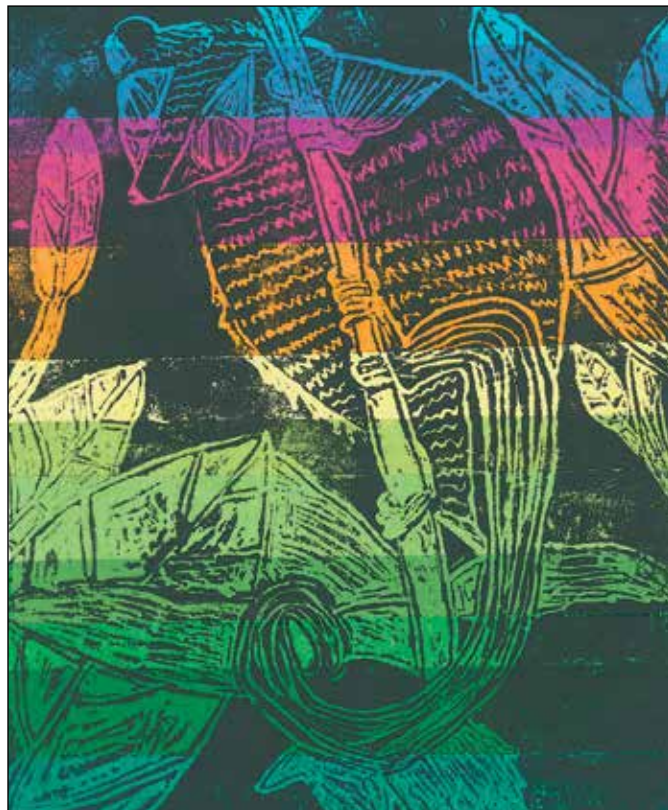
- learn about the rainforest, its inhabitants and conservation.
- discuss an artist from a different era and culture.
- produce a relief print.
- make decisions about what is needed to improve and complete their artwork.

## MATERIALS

- 9" x 12" foam printing sheet
- 9" x 12" newsprint paper
- Visuals of rainforest plant and animal life
- Brayers and black-printing ink
- 9" x 12" white construction paper
- 3" x 9" pieces of colored tissue paper
- Examples of Rousseau's work



Dailen ^



^ Jessica

I had pre-printed examples of animals and insects for the students. However, it was really interesting for them to choose different animals, and then look them up online to see if the animal was indeed one that lived in the rainforest.

Once the students had selected their animal or insect, they made a pencil drawing on 9" x 12" newsprint. They then filled in the background, including the plants that would make up that animal's habitat. We revisited the Rousseau paintings, and looked at the different types of plant life he incorporated into his work. We discovered some of Rousseau's jungles included roses and other flowers that might be seen in our own backyards.

Once satisfied with their pencil drawing, students transferred it onto a soft plastic-foam printing plate. They simply taped their drawing down and traced with a pencil. After removing their drawing from the plate, they traced their drawing one more time directly on the foam. They

discovered a dull pencil gave them a nice wide line that was easy to see.

It was then time for a review of relief printmaking, positive and negative space, and different types of texture. The students had to make decisions about which areas to leave black and in which areas they wanted the color to show. We talked about how lines pressed into the surface would reveal the paper color. Any areas left untouched would print black.

The students made a test print of black ink on newsprint paper and evaluated their print. If they thought they had too much black ink, then it was time to wash and dry their plate and add more texture to their work. If they were satisfied with how their print looked, they were ready to prepare their print paper.

After experimenting with different techniques, I discovered using black ink on tissue paper was the best solution to make colorful, inexpensive prints. I pre-cut strips of colorful tissue paper into 3" x 9" sections. The students used a glue stick to glue the pieces down onto a white background piece. We talked about how lighter colors would show more contrast with the black ink.

After the tissue was dry, the students used a brayer to put black ink on their printing block and make their relief prints. The results were bright and colorful, and made a great display in the school hallways.

With this lesson, the students were able to create beautiful, fairly inexpensive, colorful prints. They learned about Henri Rousseau and his work, and discovered the beauty and importance of the rainforest. ■



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