

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Elementary students will ...

- learn about artist Henri Rousseau and create a jungle scene inspired by his work.
- follow a directed drawing of a tiger.
- explore various ways to cut paper.
- use overlapping to create depth, working background to foreground.

NATIONAL ART STANDARDS

- **CREATING:** Conceiving and developing artistic ideas and work.
- **PRESENTING:** Interpreting and sharing artistic work.
- **RESPONDING:** Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning.
- **CONNECTING:** Relating artistic ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES

- 9" x 12" orange and 12" x 18" green construction paper
- Pencils, pastels
- Regular and decorative-edge scissors
- Tissue paper and construction paper scraps
- Glue sticks
- Visuals of Rousseau's jungle paintings (including this month's Art Print on page 24)
- Book: *The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau*, by Michelle Markel (Eerdmans Publishing Company; 2012)



Students glued their leaves and flowers down, overlapping them and filling up the paper.

It's a Jungle Out There!

by Chrissy Leishear



Some students placed their tigers front and center, while others chose to have them popping their heads in from either side of the paper.

Have you ever dreamed of doing something people doubted you could do?

No one thought Henri Rousseau could paint, but that didn't stop him! Critics doubted his ability and even laughed at his work. It wasn't until the end of his life that the public changed its mind about his paintings and now, 100 years later, he's recognized as an artistic genius and his masterpieces hang in museums around the world!

To introduce this lesson to my third-graders, I began by showing them some of Henri Rousseau's jungle scenes. It didn't take long for them to discover that some of the animals were carefully camouflaged in his paintings, often found hiding behind the plants or trees. This posed a fun challenge for them to see how many animals they could identify in each work, observing all kinds of different species in the lush, green jungles! Monkeys, snakes, birds and tigers were a few of the wild animals spotted.

Next, I read Michelle Markel's wonderful book, *The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau*, to the class and we discovered that the former toll-collector taught himself how to paint without any formal training or lessons.

The students also learned that, although Rousseau loved painting jungle scenes, he had never even been to one! All his inspiration came from illustrations in books and the botanical gardens and zoo in Paris where he would observe the plants and wild animals.

Just like Rousseau, we would also be using visuals from books and handouts to inspire us with our jungle scene.

The students used a tiger as the focal point in their composition, just as Rousseau did in his first jungle painting, *Surprised!* (also known as *Tiger in a Tropical Storm*). It appears on pages 24–25 of this month's issue.

They followed a guided drawing of a tiger on orange construction paper. I gave them a few shades of orange to choose from and they followed along step by step with pencil.



This tiger's sideways glance seems to say that it knows something we don't.



Madison



Amera

They used oil pastels to trace over their lines and add color, and then cut their tiger out.

During the next class session, we began the jungle background. I gave the students a piece of lime green construction paper for their background and laid out green scraps of construction paper and tissue paper for them to pull from for the leaves. We looked at visuals of different tropical leaves and I showed them a variety of ways to fold and cut into the paper to create leaves. Using scrapbook scissors allowed for some fun ways to cut around the edges.

Working from the background to foreground, the students glued their leaves down, overlapping each other

and filling up the paper. They used colored tissue paper to cut out tropical flowers for some pops of color, and then chose where to glue their tiger to their composition. Some wanted it front and center, others chose to have their tiger popping its head in from either side of the paper.

Learning about Rousseau's jungle scenes was not only a great art lesson, but also a life lesson about conquering the unimaginable, even when others doubt you. With a little perseverance and a lot of heart, Rousseau proved that anything is possible! ■

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