



Nature is an Artist

Companion
Guide for
Teachers
and Parents





Title: Nature is an Artist

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RL.1.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9

W.1.1,3,5,6

SL.1.1,1a,1b,1c,2,3,4,5,6

L.1.1,1b,1c,1d,1e,1f,1g,1h,1i,1j,2,2a,2b,2c,2d,2e,4,4a,4b,4c,5a,5b,5c,5d,6

Introduction

It is my absolute honor to share the story of *Nature is an Artist* with you. I hope you will enjoy this book with your classroom or family by exploring the world's greatest art show, found in nature.

The goal of this companion guide is to assist you in the classroom or at home in exploring different art forms that are mimicked in nature—a beautiful sunrise that looks like a painting, a brilliant rainbow reminiscent of stained glass, a majestic carved mountain slowly shaped by the wind and rain.

Nature is an Artist is meant to inspire kids to create, and to appreciate the natural world around them.

This book features five art forms: painting, collage, sculpting, printmaking, and stained glass. As each new art form is introduced, a different craft is undertaken by children in the book. These crafts can easily be replicated in the classroom or at home! Using this guide, additional resources are also available to provide young readers with:

- A simple explanation of each art form, including practical supporting details on technique, tools, artistic process, and more
- A series of reflective questions to encourage critical thought and group discussion
- A “Did You Know?” section that shares interesting and relevant information about each art form.

Learning outcomes for reading *Nature is an Artist*, and undertaking the materials found in this guide, include the following:

1. Enabling a foundational understanding of visual art, the variety of media and techniques, creating, and expression of style
2. Building respect and appreciation for the environment and natural world
3. Instilling confidence in young readers to see themselves as creators.

So many styles to choose from—let’s get started now.

Getting Started

Nature is an Artist can be divided into five distinct activities using the learning materials below: painting, collage, sculpting, printmaking, and stained glass.

1. Start by reading *Nature is an Artist* in its entirety.
2. Commencing with the art form of your choice, introduce which media you will be focusing on as part of your planned activity. Reread the relevant pages to introduce the activity.
3. Use the learning material from this guide to explore the applicable media/art form. Engage in discussion using the questions provided.
4. Lead the class in undertaking the appropriate craft, inspired by *Nature is an Artist*.

Media/Art Forms

PAINTING

There are many ways to create a painting. Each way is called a technique. One thing all paintings have in common is that they include colors and shapes (or forms), put together on a surface—like a paper or a canvas—to make us think of ideas or feelings. Anybody can make a painting!

Some artists create watercolor paintings, meaning a certain kind of paint is used and mixed with water—as a special technique to create see-through images.

Another kind of painting is done with oil paints. The *Mona Lisa*, one of the most famous paintings in the world, is an oil painting. When working with oil paints, artists apply many layers of color to create their image.

In modern days, paintings can be done on the computer. Digital paintings are made when artists recreate traditional painting techniques on their computers or other devices. Realistic-looking brushstrokes, texture, and shading can all be included in a digital painting.

Other painting techniques include:

- **Acrylic painting**
- **Pastel painting**
- **Graffiti art**
- **Sand painting**
- **Miniature painting**
- **Wax painting**

If you were going to create a painting, what would you make?

Would it be a **BIG** painting or a very small painting?

What technique would you use?

What colors would you choose?

How do these colors make you feel?

DID YOU KNOW?

In the world of painting, special words are used like:

1. **Pigment:** A finely ground powder that gives paint color.
2. **Canvas:** A heavy cloth or other material on which a painting is made.
3. **Style:** The individual expression an artist applies to a painting technique that makes their artwork special to them.
4. **Abstract painting:** A painting that does not show an object (like a person or a place) as it appears in real life. Abstract paintings have no rules!
5. **Blend:** Mixing colors together so that you cannot tell where one color ends and the other color begins.

ADDED ACTIVITY: Have students create a painting of their favourite season, making special note of the five concepts/ definitions above throughout the process. Afterwards, have students identify their artistic style.

COLLAGE

Collage is an art form that fastens pieces of paper, photographs, and other things together to create an image. When different materials are assembled, an entirely new picture is formed. Collage can be created on paper, canvas, in a scrapbook, or on any other hard surface you can imagine. This art form is a unique way to represent an idea or share a message.

Other types of materials that can be used in a collage include:

- **Fabric**
- **Wood**
- **Advertisements**
- **Movie tickets**
- **Newspaper clippings**
- **Small objects (toys, buttons)**
- **Feathers, acorns, leaves**
- **Papers headed for recycling**

There are different techniques of collage.

1. **Papier collé:** A new image is created by pasting down printed or colored paper. In French, this translates to “pasted paper.”
2. **Découpage:** A new image is created by organizing and layering colored paper and pasting it down. This technique is sealed with clear glue or varnish.
3. **Photomontage:** A new image is created by arranging or cutting and pasting down photographs.
4. **Assemblage:** A new image is created by combining three-dimensional objects together.

Some of these techniques can be combined to create a unique and exciting collage! Artists can also add a painting or drawing to a collage for added visual effect.

What would it look like if you made a collage representing your favorite hobby?

What types of materials besides paper or photographs would you use in your collage?

Have you ever seen a collage of many photographs where, when you step back, a new picture is revealed? What was the new picture?

DID YOU KNOW?

ARTIST FEATURE: Andy Warhol

A twentieth-century visual artist and leading creator in an artistic movement called pop art.

Warhol created famous collages, combining photography of famous faces with interesting design. He added colored and torn paper to his pictures to create vivid portraits.

ADDED ACTIVITY: Ask students to select a person they look up to, and have them create a collage portrait of that person.

SCULPTING

Creating a sculpture means an artist is making a three-dimensional work of art—the creation is not flat (like a drawing), but rather it is lifelike with edges, corners, and/or depth. A sculpture can be made from many things—like wood, stone, clay, metals, plaster, etc.

There are four primary techniques in sculpting.

1. **Carving:** Creating shapes with tools that cut or scrape away the material the artist has selected, such as stone, wood, or bone.
2. **Modeling:** Shaping soft material into a form. Since the material used in modeling is soft (like clay or wax), an artist can shape and reshape their creation as they desire before it becomes solid.
3. **Casting:** Forming a mold out of clay, wax, or plaster to hold liquid material until it solidifies. The mold is discarded to reveal a sculpture of metal, plastic, rubber, or other material.
4. **Constructing:** Fusing interesting and unexpected materials together to create a form. Using this technique, artists might weld, glue, weave, stitch, bend, and balance objects into one piece.

If you were going to create a sculpture, what type of material would you use, and what would you make?

Do you think it is harder to make a very big sculpture or a very small sculpture? Why?

What kind of tools do you think sculptors use?

DID YOU KNOW?

If you want to share a story, the first thought you might have is to write your tale down in a notebook. But did you know there are other ways to tell a story that don't include words in a book? Artists, like sculptors, can tell stories through their artwork.

By carving symbols or figures into a block of wood, for example, an artist might be describing the story of an event, a belief, or a person. When modeling figures in clay, an artist might choose to make an element of their creation bigger or smaller than you might expect as a way to represent an idea. Even the materials used when an artist is constructing a sculpture can contribute to their story (think of a sculptor who wants to talk about the importance of recycling—they might use only materials collected from their recycling bin!).

ADDED ACTIVITY: Create a series of symbols with corresponding meanings. Using modeling or polymer clay (or even playdough), have students create sculptures that tell a story using the symbols discussed (and any others they can imagine).

PRINTMAKING

In the unique art form of printmaking, an artist creates an image by transferring paint or ink onto paper or fabric from a matrix. A matrix is like a stamp in which an artist etches or carves an image onto one side of a wood, foam, plexiglass, or metal block. Remember that the image that transfers to the paper or fabric is the reverse image of what you see on the matrix.

Although many prints can be made from a single matrix, each might look slightly different depending on how the artist applies the paint or ink. Prints are made one at a time, and afterward, the matrix is sometimes destroyed.

Printmaking has been an art form for many, many years. In the past, not everyone could enjoy art in their homes because it was too expensive. However, thanks to printmaking, artists could share their work more widely because it became easier and faster to make multiple images using a matrix.

Have you ever made a potato stamp (*this is a kind of matrix!*)? What shapes did you carve into the potato?

Do you think it would be difficult for an artist to etch their drawing onto a matrix? How come?

Printmaking can be done on T-shirts. If you were creating a T-shirt, what would it look like?

DID YOU KNOW?

Rock art is an ancient printmaking form that can be traced back thousands of years. Rock art, which is found around the world, is created when images are painted onto a rock or on cave walls.

In Argentina, there is a famous work of rock art called “Cueva de las Manos” (Cave of Hands). There are many handprints painted along the cave wall, transferred from the actual hands of people centuries ago. In France, the “Hall of the Bulls” is found in the Lascaux Cave; created in 15,000 B.C.E., the images (of bulls) are printed in the cave. In total, over 900 animals appear on these ancient walls.

ADDED ACTIVITY: Draw the outline of several flower stems on white paper (photocopy as many as you need). Using stamps—homemade or otherwise—have students design and place down colorful petals.

STAINED GLASS

Stained glass is an art form that pieces together different sizes and segments of colored glass to create an image (sort of like a puzzle); the glass is usually held together with metal strips, like copper or lead. You may have seen stained glass in a window, as a lampshade, or as a dish. When light shines through stained glass, it is truly breathtaking!

Making colored glass is like making a potion—when the glass is very hot (molten!), different crystals or powders, called metallic oxides, are added to the liquid glass mixture to form color.

By adding copper, you will make red glass.

Iron will make green glass.

With cobalt, you will make blue glass.

Stained glass artists use many special tools like pliers, cutters, grinders, and soldering irons.

How do you think each of these tools are used when making stained glass?

Do you think it is tricky for the artists to make shapes out of glass?

**Have you seen stained glass anywhere before?
Where did you see it?**

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many interesting facts about stained glass.

- The most expensive color of glass to make is pink (because gold flakes are used to produce the color).
- The largest stained glass window is found in the United States and is over 22,000 square feet in total (according to *Guinness World Records*!).
- Glass is made from sand, and if you can believe it: lightning can create glass if it strikes on sand, due to a lightning bolt's incredibly high temperature (which is hotter than lava!).

ADDED ACTIVITY: Cut a piece of white paper so it perfectly fits into the ring of a canning jar (round part of the lid). Have students design the white paper with symbols of nature (e.g., sun, water drop, star). Color the designs with bright-colored markers. Using hot glue, fasten the paper into the ring, along with a string for hanging. (Hint: Hang the rings by a window to see the light shine through!)