

ArtStream

Written Instructional Guide



“Nature Collage with Organic Materials”

For 6th - 8th Grade Students

With Teaching Artist Alex Ever

Lesson 4: “Life in the Imagined Environment”

Introduction

- We'll be making a non-permanent natural collage today.
- I'm going to ask you to envision an imagined environment and create an imagine creature out of organic materials.



Materials

- Paper or a clean surface
- Natural materials (harvested from a yard, neighborhood, or nearby park)



Step 1: Organize your materials

- Begin by organizing your materials. Match similar shapes, sizes, and colors.
- Organizing your materials is an important part of the process of creating work.
- As you organize your materials, identify some of the shapes, colors, and details you notice.
- Model by sorting materials on the table (leaves, acorns, blades of grass, shells, etc.)



Step 2: Setting up your workspace

- Once piles have been made, move them to the edge of the “workspace”. The workspace can be a blank piece of paper or a clean, flat surface.



Visualization exercise

- I'm going to ask you to use your imagination to create an environment in your head. Once we take time imagining these details we will work together to create a collaged creature that has physical traits best suited to thrive in your unique environment.
- "Close your eyes. Imagine you are walking through a forest. Feel the ground under your feet...Are you stepping on rocks? Maybe twigs that snap under your shoes? A gentle crunch of leaves? What kind of forest is it? Maybe it's a humid rainforest. Maybe it's an autumn forest full of different color leaves. Or maybe it is a snowy forest full of tall evergreens. Take a moment to commit to a forest that feels good for you. Once you have identified your forest, take a few breaths and keep the image in your mind. Let's look closer. What's the weather like? Is it rainy, sunny, misty? What does the air feel like against your skin? Can you feel the sun against your face? Let's take some more breaths together as we observe this weather. Now, we've taken a few moments to look at this forest. We want to recognize that this is a whole ecosystem full of life. Let's take some final breaths together as we open our eyes."
- Re-read the paragraph if you need. Take time to envision these ideas as best as you can.

Step 4: Create the body

- With your forest in mind- we're going to build a creature that lives in this world. Don't feel pressured to create a copy of a creature you have seen in real life. We're going to piece together qualities based on what this creature needs to thrive in your environment.
- Think about the size of the creature. How big or small is it? What kind of coat does it have? What would make the most sense based on your forest?



Step 5: How does the creature move?

- Think about how this creature would travel. Do they catch prey? Do they primarily hide and forage?
- Remind students that it is okay to not have the full image in their head. Look at your natural materials for ideas.



Step 6: Add a face

- Take time to add to its face. Does it make sense to have horns? Does it need feelers? A large nose? What would help it survive in your environment?
- You can tear/rip off smaller pieces of your organic materials to create smaller pieces for details



Step 7: Adding patterns

- Reflecting on your time when you went foraging for organic materials- you saw a number of patterns and texture and details in nature.
- What kind of textures and patterns would you envision your creature having? Is there anything surprising to ward off predators or to help it attract a mate?
- Let's take time to create that pattern. It can be spots, layers of scales, stripes, large quills, etc.



Step 8: Adding extra details

- We are almost complete! Now that you have spent time adding all this detail maybe you want to add other details to your creature.
- Consider things like a large tail, wings, antenna, spikes, or a second mouth. What are the things you can imagine?



Step 9: Finishing the collage creature

- Allow yourself to come to a pause wherever you are on your creature
- You can keep working on and building out your creature or you can clean up your supplies.
- Our work is not permanent so we will take it apart and use the pieces for next time.
- You can take a picture with a phone to remember the piece.



Closing reflection

- Take a moment to place your hands in your lap, straighten your back, and close your eyes. Imagine the portrait you just made. Take a moment to identify a choice that you made when creating your creature that you feel especially proud of. What was one of the things that you appreciate about your imagination? Take a moment to appreciate the good work you just did. Take a deep breath together.



Thank you!

- Way to trust yourself and explore how imaginative you can be!
- You thought about the unique needs of your imagined creature. Imagine giving that same level of thoughtfulness to the living spaces you inhabit. Take time to go out and reflect on the details of living organisms where you live. What must they do to survive? What creatures do they have to be mindful of? How can you show this thoughtfulness through actions?