

GROWING CHAMPION CLASSROOMS: Lesson Plans for Arkansas Educators

These lesson plans and accompanying poster files are based on the 2012-2014 traveling art exhibit *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey, Drawings by Linda Williams Palmer*. The exhibit was organized for travel by the Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. "Growing Champion Classrooms" materials fulfill the mission of the Committee: to educate the public about Arkansas women artists and to contribute to the cultural life of our state. The Committee created this outreach material in support of teachers who encourage students to appreciate Arkansas' natural resources.

"Growing Champion Classrooms" includes 2 art lesson plans, visual aids, and activities for K-2, 3-5, and 6-8th grade students. While the lesson plans relate to 6 of the 18 images from the original traveling exhibition, all images are provided online and educators are encouraged to use them as is appropriate to enrich units in a variety of disciplines. However, the "Growing Champion Classrooms" lesson plans are primarily organized to encourage original art making in honor of the artist and the art work that inspired this educational component. The plans are designed for traditional and non-traditional educators in our state, identify applicable State Frameworks, and include options for Common Core guidelines.

UNDER THE CHERRYBARK: HAIKU

Grade Level: Upper Elementary (3-5)

Subjects: Visual Arts, English- Language Arts

Time Required: 3 sessions, 50 minutes per session

Authors: Virmarie DePoyster, Lisa Krannichfeld Walden

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts gratefully acknowledges the generous sponsors of "Growing Champion Classrooms" **Entergy Arkansas** and the **School of Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello**. "Growing Champion Classrooms" is supported in part by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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Lesson Overview:

Students will learn about color pencil artist Linda Williams Palmer and her works of art. Students will analyze her piece *Cherrybark Oak / Leaves* and learn how the artist's use of line variation captures the essence of the tree. Students will discuss the historical background behind this tree as stated by the artist. Students will visualize standing inside the drawing and capture that moment in time by writing a Haiku. Students will show their understanding of different types of line, light and shadow by using charcoal to create a drawing. Students will also experiment with color pencil and cross-hatching technique in a drawing.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Compose a Haiku based on imagined moments from Linda Palmer Williams' drawing.
- Use descriptive words to add imagery to their writing.
- Use visual art to interpret their written images.
- Understand how a painting can tell a story and express their ideas.
- Investigate and draw value using different types of line.
- Practice drawing from direct observation using charcoal.
- Create a drawing that illustrates their understanding of cross-hatching.

Standards utilized in this lesson:

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1.c Use abstract nouns (e.g., childhood.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3.a Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.

Visual Arts:

VA.5.5.1 -Demonstrate knowledge of qualities of line and line variations (e.g., implied line, line as texture and pattern.)

VA.5.5.4 -Identify other elements of art as components of texture (e.g., use of line in cross-hatching.)

VA.5.5.6 -Demonstrate knowledge of value (e.g., gradation.)

Materials:

- Linda Williams Palmer's *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey* poster, *Cherrybark Oak / Leaves*
- Artist biography, artist's process, attached
- Definition of a champion tree, attached
- Historical background information, on poster
- Colored pencils, writing pencils, vine charcoal
- 9" x 12" white drawing paper

- Writing paper
- Brown Kraft paper
- Q-tips and Cotton balls

Glossary:

1. Value: an element of art that refers to lightness or darkness.
2. Texture: An element of art that refers to the surface quality of an object or composition
3. Emphasis: A principle of design that can be achieved through placement, contrast, size, etc.; the special attention or importance given to one part or element in an artwork.

Procedure:

Day 1

1. Ask students to think about the current season, and share words that represent it (nouns), phrases that describe it (adjectives), and things we do during the season (verbs):
 - Nouns (buds, butterflies, grass, leaf, light, ladybugs, sun, garden, woods)
 - Adjectives (breezy, green, lush, hot, humid, joyful, cold, dark)
 - Verbs (grow, blossom, renew, explore, sizzle, freeze)
2. Write lists out on board.
3. Prompt students to share the most vivid sounds, images, smells or textures of the current season.
4. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, *Cherrybark Oak / Leaves* and allow students to take time to closely look at the work of art.
5. Share with students Linda Williams Palmer biography and artist's process, attached.
6. Discuss with students what inspired Linda to paint and her journey to documenting Arkansas champion trees. Definition of champion tree, attached.
7. Explain that students will be trying to capture a moment in time, just like Linda was trying to capture a moment in time with her drawing.
8. Introduce the concept of a haiku:
 - 3 line poem with 17 syllables
 - Written in 5-7-5 syllable count
 - Focusing on images from nature
 - Emphasizing simplicity, intensity, and direct expression
 - Uses provocative words that portray colorful images
9. Read out loud, 2 or 3 haiku, one at a time, allowing time for student reaction in between readings.

10. Share with students that a Haiku is:

- The shortest poetry in the world
- Invented hundreds of years ago in Japan
- Tiny poems that say how we feel about a particular moment
- Used to express feelings about nature, animals, seasons
- Focuses on nature, color, seasons and surprises

11. Ask students to write a haiku.

12. Ask students to close their eyes and imagine they have just stepped inside Linda's Cherrybark Oak tree drawing. Ask them to describe that moment in time. Is it in the past, the present, or the future? What do they feel, hear, see? Is there another person or animal in the drawing with them, tell what that person says, or what that animal does.

13. Students will share with class their haiku.

Day 2

1. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, *Cherrybark Oak / Leaves* and allow students to take time to closely look at the work of art.

2. Ask students to share their initial observations about the artworks on poster.

3. Start a discussion about the work of art by discussing the following:

- Take a moment to look closely. How big do you think this tree is?
- Recall your poem; could you add something you imagine being in the distance beyond the tree?
- What's happening?
- Have students complete the sentence: "This tree drawing makes me feel _____."
- What season was it?
- What do you think the artist hoped to convey about this tree?
- What do you see that supports that idea?

4. Now, share with students that this Cherrybark Oak has a historical background. This oak tree is the largest oak on the Arkansas Champion Tree List. It grows in an open field where it has room to spread its limbs out and down to the ground, creating a beautiful shape. The acorns of Cherrybark Oaks make up at least 10% of the diet of many species of mammals and birds such as squirrels, raccoons, deer, turkeys, wood ducks and blue jays.

This tree is located in Phillips County, Lexa

Circumference: 301 inches

Crown Spread: 118 feet

Height: 125 feet

5. Handout white writing paper and vine charcoal. Explain that vine charcoal is charred sticks of wood, so today we will be drawing with pieces of a tree!

6. Students will recall their written poem and create a drawing that illustrates it. Encourage them to explore with different types of line as Linda did in her drawing.
7. Areas that are in shadow should have darker amounts of charcoal, applied with more pressure and stronger use of charcoal. Areas in the light should have lighter application. Students can use Q-tips or cotton balls to blend in the charcoal as necessary.
8. The focal point in the drawing should be where the lightest light and darkest dark meet.

Day 3

1. Revisit Linda Williams Palmer's poster with students.
2. Today students will be investigating layers of colored pencil and color on brown Kraft paper.
3. Ask them to think about the Haiku poem they wrote and what feeling they were trying to portray with their poem. Explain that color use can also portray feelings in a drawing. For example, an overall dark color painting will be more moody. An overall light color paintings will appear happier and more airy. Reds and orange colors are warmer and happier colors, while blues appear cold and distance. Students will create a color pencil drawing with colors that evoke the feelings in their haiku poem.
4. Ask students to think about feelings that Linda was trying to evoke in her drawing. Her colors are warm and inviting. The trees bare limbs are graceful and welcoming.
5. Linda used a cross-hatching application method with her color pencil. Cross-hatching is layers of lines at right angles. Cross-hatching can be used to create a darker area within a layer of hatching, or to create a visual blending effect of two different colors. This method allows for many more layers of color and also can produce darker colors depending on which colors are blended.
6. Ask students to test color hatching different colors before starting on their final drawing.
7. After work is complete, have students compare side by side the charcoal drawing and the color pencil. Ask them to talk about their experience in handling materials and what they enjoyed most.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on:

- Student participation in discussion.
- Did students follow format for Haiku?
- Did Haiku capture a moment in time?
- Did charcoal drawing have good use of light and shadow?
- Did color pencil drawing have good use of cross-hatching technique?
- Did student use multiple colors in cross-hatching to create darks and lights?



LINDA WILLIAMS PALMER
Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey
CHERRYBARK OAK

(Quercus pagoda) - Phillips County, Lexa 2008
 Colored pencil on paper by Linda Williams Palmer - 30 1/4" h x 38 1/2" w framed triptych
 Detail: *Leaves, Cherrybark Oak* by Linda Williams Palmer - 14" h x 18 1/2" w framed

CHAMPION STATISTICS

Circumference: 301" Crown Spread: 118' Height: 125' Bigness Index: 456

The acorns of Cherrybark Oaks make up at least 10% of the diet of many species of mammals and birds such as squirrels, raccoons, deer, turkeys, wood ducks and blue jays. This Cherrybark Oak grows in a large open field. It has had room to spread its limbs out and down to the ground, creating a beautiful shape. I've photographed it, and the property owners, in all seasons! The Cherrybark Oak is the largest oak on the Arkansas Champion Tree List. - LWP

EDUCATIONAL SPONSORS



"Growing Champion Classrooms" materials are based on the 2012-2014 exhibit *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey, Drawings by Linda W. Palmer*, and are provided by Entergy Arkansas and the School for Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello, with support, in part, by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage and by the national Endowment for the Arts. 

Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey
Drawings by Linda Williams Palmer
Introduction

Many of us have lived with trees so long that we take them for granted. We climb them as children, and we rest in their shade. We write poems about them, and we harvest them for our fireplaces, our furniture and our paper. We study them in school, and we mark the seasons by their foliage in spring and fall. This exhibit gives us an opportunity to contemplate the trees we sometimes take for granted: to notice their singular beauty and to consider what events have taken place in their presence over time.

Linda Williams Palmer is one of the few artists who have created a series based on individual trees. She is the only artist who has chosen to interpret the largest of each species in Arkansas: the champion trees. This exhibit tells why and how she did it, and shares the results of her artist's journey through excellent colored-pencil drawings of trees that communicate majesty and familiarity at the same time.

Each tree portrait represents a specific place, time of day, and season chosen by the artist — often after multiple visits, copious notes, and interaction with the site. Photographs communicate the scale and size of the actual trees, and hint at the humble locations where they took root. Exhibit writing provides anecdotes and information about the trees and the artist's process. It is our hope that this combination of information will encourage Arkansans to appreciate our state's natural and artistic heritage, and inspire them to celebrate the beauty and history that is sometimes found in their own backyards.

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts

Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey
The Artist's Process

Linda Palmer grew up playing in the woods by her family home in eastern Oklahoma. As a first-grader, she played under a large oak tree on the playground. These childhood experiences inspired her interest: many of her drawings included trees. Trees are still a significant part of Linda Palmer's artistic life. She is captivated by how weather and season, light and shadow, and time of day affect the visual impression of a tree. She calls upon her preferred medium, Prismacolor Pencils, to accurately represent her observations while artistically interpreting the majesty of the champions.

Palmer developed her own technique of layering different colored pencils on textured paper. In this series, her mastery enables her to achieve colors found in nature, add implied texture to that of the paper, and suggest the fragility of delicate leaves and blossoms. For example, the trunk of the Shortleaf Pine is composed of 25 different colors. The brilliant autumn leaves of the Cherrybark Oak contrast with the partially-rendered ones to capture the thin dryness that precedes their fall to the ground.

Her technique is time-consuming, and demanding—especially for large work: colored-pencils make slim lines and layering cannot be erased. However, Palmer chose this medium because that's how she pictured the drawings in her mind. She soon realized that the time required by her technique allowed her to interact with her subject, and therefore better translate her feelings and imaginings about each tree onto paper. The largest drawing in this series took her eight weeks to finish, working an average of 5 hours a day 6 days a week, or 240 hours.

Add actual drawing time and preparatory research to understand the investment Palmer has made over the past 5 years to bring this series to the public. Travel (in the thousands of miles), reference photographs, and interviews with landowners and residents combined to create an impression that helped her interpret the special thing she sees in each selected tree. Sometimes it's the trunk that speaks of age and history. Sometimes it's the composition of branches against the sky. Linda Palmer has developed her "artist's eye" through many years of drawing and painting. She knows when a drawing is complete: "...when another stroke would detract from what I want to say." Rather than thinking about the hours put into the work, Linda Palmer measures her success by her pleasure with the result: a drawing that becomes a visual statement honoring nature, memory, and time.

Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey
Champion Trees

An Arkansas champion tree is the largest example of its species. Trained foresters make the final assessment, but often the public is the first to notice a specimen and nominate it for the list maintained by the Arkansas Forestry Commission. A champion tree is re-measured every 10 years to confirm its status: younger examples of the species have champion potential, and existing champions can be felled in a storm or fall victim to an uninformed pruning.

Arkansas champions have been nominated by individuals, art museums, cities, churches and cemetery associations, hunting clubs and wildlife refuges, and the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs as well as timber and paper companies, national and state parks, and the Arkansas Fish and Wildlife Service. A wealth of information is available through the Arkansas Forestry Commission website to guide those who want to nominate a potential champion. Think of the trees you've seen and consider the three necessary measurements to that process.

- Trunk Circumference (inches): measure at 4.5' above ground level
If the tree forks at or below 4.5', record the smallest trunk circumference below the fork; if the tree is on a slope, measure 4.5' up the trunk on the high and low sides and average the numbers; if the tree is leaning, measure the circumference at 4.5' along the axis of the trunk at a 90 degree angle to the trunk
- Height (feet): measure from the base of the trunk to the topmost twig
Use a clinometer, laser, hypsometer. Or use a straight stick! Hold the stick vertically at arm's length: the length of the stick above your hand must equal the distance from your hand to your eye. Walk backward away from the tree until the stick section above your hand is the same length as the tree in your field of vision. From where you are standing, measure the distance to the tree. This measurement is the approximate height.
- Average Crown Spread (feet): measure at points where water drips from the tree's canopy to the ground
Measure the widest crown spread (greatest distance between any two points along the drip line). Turn the axis of measurement 90 degrees and find the narrow crown spread. Average the two measurements with the formula: (wide spread + narrow spread) divided by 2 = average crown spread.

These measurements combine to calculate the official "Bigness Index (BI)" of a tree with a point system: one point for each inch of circumference, one point for each foot in height, and one point for every 4 feet of crown spread. The "bigness" point system accounts for the differences among species. Tree age calculations are not included in the index: boring into a trunk for a core sample is potentially damaging and not recommended. Bigness defines champions, and was calculated to confirm all 142 of the currently confirmed Arkansas species.

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts gratefully acknowledges generous support for the educational component “Growing Champion Classrooms”, poster sets and art lesson plans based on the content of the 2012-2014 touring exhibit “Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist’s Journey.” Sponsors Entergy Arkansas and the School of Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello, have made it possible for traditional and non-traditional educators across the state to use the materials to inspire and enrich learning long after the tour concludes. “Growing Champion Classrooms” is supported in part by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.

