

St. Thomas School/Bird Drawings

by Washington-based artist and art teacher Hannah Salia

Note from the TCA: During the *Birds of a Feather* curriculum development process, 4th grade students at Rover Elementary School in Tempe, AZ studied local ecology, wrote about plants and birds in addition to creating drawings and ceramic tiles. In a “pen pal” inspired side project, Rover students shared drawings, reports and information about Southwest birds online with Hannah Salia’s students from St. Thomas School in Medina, WA. In exchange, similar information from field guides created by WA students about Pacific Northwest birds that is part of an arts-integrated STEM curriculum this year including local artist Jack DeLap was shared with Tempe students.

Salia and her students were kind enough to share a summary of their drawing lesson which you may find useful as well.

Lesson Summary

This project is appropriate for 3rd grade elementary students.

Enduring Understanding

“Studying the natural world around us gives students insight and understanding into the deep connections between art, science, history and the local environment.”

Specific Learning Objectives

- Students develop observational skills in identifying and drawing the birds of the Pacific Northwest.
- Students develop drawing competencies using line and shape.
- Students understand connections between their own experiences, art, art history and scientific observation.

Assessment Criteria

- Student artwork reflects bird-specific identifiers.
- Students use different kinds of line, shape and marks to depict different parts of bird.
- Students can verbally identify John James Audubon through descriptions of his artwork and times.

Materials

- *St. Thomas School Bird Drawings* PowerPoint includes images of bird illustrations by John James Audubon, digital drawing by artist Jack DeLap and sample student bird drawings.
- Magazine clips or web print-outs of birds to draw.
- Construction paper, markers and colored pencils.

Procedure

1st Session:

Introduction: *Bird Drawings* Powerpoint

- John James Audubon discussion with possible talking points:
 - What is scientific illustration?
 - Different purposes for naturalized drawings (identification)
 - Audubon's work as both science and art.
 - Visit Audubon Society website about artist's work:
www.audubon.org/birds-of-america
- Jack DeLap, contemporary artist, discussion with possible talking points:
 - What is similar or different between Audubon and DeLap?
 - What benefits does drawing on a digital tablet offer a nature artist?
 - Visit DeLap's website: <https://jackdelap.wordpress.com>

OPTIONAL: Search websites for bird calls of local birds to build student interest. Such as: www.allaboutbirds.org from Cornell University or www.askabiologist.asu.edu from Arizona State University.

OPTIONAL: Use this opportunity to incorporate scientific research and observation into this project. Salia collaborated with a science teacher at her school. Students learned about native plants, bird behaviors, biology and habitat. Outdoor observation and nature walks were part of the process. The drawings and reports gathered by students were incorporated into informational field guides about the birds in the local area.

OPTIONAL Resource: *Birds of a Feather* unit's [Bird Research worksheet \(pdf\)](#).

2nd Session:

Bird drawings:

- Each student chooses an image of a bird from the Pacific Northwest (random selection encouraged).
- Students should pay attention to special bird "identifiers" such as shape, coloring and attributes specific to that bird. Is it male or female? Is it large or small? What makes it different? Where does it live (habitat)?
- Revisit John James Audubon's work as a reminder that art can also incorporate science.
- Revisit bird websites for more specific information about bird choices.
- Teacher demonstration drawing:
 - Start with the eyes of the bird
 - Draw using line/circle families
 - Do big shapes first
 - Note differences in types of feathers and use varied marks.
- Students experiment on scratch paper first.

- When ready, students complete a black line drawing of the bird they choose.

3rd -5th Sessions:

Adding color and realism:

- Revisit bird images. Pay special attention to color and texture. (Bird feathers are not just one color.)
- Teacher demonstrates colored pencil techniques:
 - Use each pencil in two ways – press softly or firmly for two different effects.
 - Use variations of the same color (different blues) for more visual realism.
 - Try blending different hues for a variety of effects.
- Students use colored pencil effects to fill in bird drawings.
- Students complete drawings with backgrounds reflecting bird's habitat.

Time allotment: 5 sessions (approximately 45 minutes each).